

Caritas et veritas

Journal for Christian reflections in the context of social sciences and humanities
Časopis pro reflexi křesťanských souvislostí v sociálních a humanitních oborech

**Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
in the Promotion of Regional Peace and Security
in Nigeria: the Role of the Church**

Olumuyiwa Aduralere Ajetomobi,
Timothy Opeyemi Yayi, Tosin Success Abolaji

**Volunteerism of University Students
in the Czech Republic as a Path to Sustainability**

Zdeňka Dohnalová, Iveta Zelenková

**Readiness of Religious Communities
to Live Today and Tomorrow. Do Consecrated
Persons Take Seriously Contemporary
Theological, Social and Environmental Challenges?**

**Připravenost řeholních komunit žít dnešek i zítřek.
Berou zasvěcené osoby vážně současné teologické,
společenské a environmentální výzvy?**

Dana Jakšičová, Vít Hušek, Alice Košárková

**The Ontological Status of Nature
in the Era of Humanity**

Lucie Kolářová

Contents

Editorial 7
------------------	---------

Studies	Topical	<p>Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Promotion of Regional Peace and Security in Nigeria: the Role of the Church 18 Olumuyiwa Aduralere Ajetomobi, Timothy Opeyemi Yayi, Tosin Success Abolaji</p> <p>Volunteerism of University Students in the Czech Republic as a Path to Sustainability 31 Zdeňka Dohnalová, Iveta Zelenková</p> <p>Readiness of Religious Communities to Live Today and Tomorrow. Do Consecrated Persons Take Seriously Contemporary Theological, Social and Environmental Challenges?..... 44 Dana Jakšičová, Vít Hušek, Alice Košárková</p> <p>The Ontological Status of Nature in the Era of Humanity 75 Lucie Kolářová</p> <p>Future Primitives 88 Michael Forest</p>
----------------	----------------	---

Studies**Varia****Transformation of the Values of Agape
Love as a Learning Agent for Moral
Change in the Context of Theology
Students 104**

GP Harianto, Ester Widiyaningtyas,
Urbanus Sukri, Desire Karo Karo,
Victoria Woen, David Ming

**The Multidimensional Scale of
Perceived Social Support (MSPSS-SK):
Validation Study of the Slovak
Version for Adolescents 117**

Katarína Šišanská, Magdaléna Hovanová,
Lucia Tóthová

Obsah

Editorial	5	
Rozhovor	O udržitelnosti, rozvoji, spravedlnosti a žalu.....	13	
	s Vojtěchem Pelikánem		
Studie	Tematické	Připravenost řeholních komunit žít dnešek i zítřek. Berou zasvěcené osoby vážně současné teologické, společenské a environmentální výzvy?	60
		Dana Jakšičová, Alice Košárková, Vít Hušek	
Recenze	133	

Editorial

Lidský rozvoj a budoucnost Země

Tematické číslo věnované otázkám lidského rozvoje a budoucnosti Země kriticky reflektuje koncept rozvoje člověka a lidské společnosti, který byl po dlouhou dobu nezpochybnitelnou součástí západní kultury, avšak již několik desetiletí – zvláště ve své nejbezohlednější podobě – vykazuje povážlivé trhliny. V tomto konceptu figuruje člověk jako ten, kdo na základě mnohdy problematických kritérií suverénně a sebestředně určuje, co v realitě je nebo není žádoucí. Rozhoduje o tom, co je považováno za rozvoj, nastavuje a spouští procesy. Rozvoj má znamenat trvalý růst; kumulaci disponibilních poznatků, hmotných statků a blahobytu; neustále narůstající efektivitu ve všech možných i těžko představitelných oblastech; také dosažitelné štěstí jako nárok a výtěžek. Avšak právě samozřejmost těchto předpokladů je dnes otřesena. Jako teoretický koncept vycházející z osvícenských myšlenek byl rozvoj některými západními intelektuály – zejména filosoфы a umělci – poprvé masivně zpochybněn v reakci na dvě světové války, rozpoutané uvnitř civilizace hlásící se k idejím rozumu a pokroku. Technologická vyspělost daná do služby ideologického běsnění a bezskrupulózního ničení – to byl políček do tváře idealizované budoucnosti pro člověka na planetě Zemi.

Další otřes přichází s ekologickou otázkou, probuzenou dílem *Silent Spring* od Rachel Carson (1962). Na pozadí následně se rodícího a již nezadržitelného environmentálního hnutí jsou pojmy jako růst, rozvoj, pokrok či blahobyt zásadně relativizovány. Je vnímána odvrácená strana technologických procesů, sílí hlasy volající po jiné než antropocentrické optice. Ukazuje se, že ekologická otázka není izolovanou otázkou několika málo specialistů, nýbrž problémem, který zasahuje přírodu a životy lidí na planetě jako jeden velký komplexní ekosystém. Lidstvo si postupně uvědomuje propojenost veškerých dílčích systémů a jejich vzájemně se podmiňující dynamiku. Lidský rozvoj a budoucnost Země mohou být napříště adekvátně promyšleny pouze v kontextu tří hledisek: sociálního, environmentálního a ekonomického. Jedná se tedy o interdisciplinární problematiku, ve které se integrálně propojují poznatky a reflexe věd společenských, humanitních a přírodovědných.

Předložené číslo *Caritas et veritas* je otevřeno rozhovorem s environmentálním antropologem Vojtěchem Pelikánem o udržitelnosti, rozvoji, spravedlnosti a také o environmentálním žalu. Tematická část obsahuje pět studií. V první z nich tři autoři (Olumuyiwa Aduralere Ajatomobi, Timothy Opeyemi Yayi, Tosin Success Abolaji) popisují a reflektují úlohu církve při využívání informační a komunikační technologie při podpoře regionálního míru a bezpečnosti v Nigérii. Lokálně situovaná problematika nastiňuje téma rozvoje sociální a politickou optikou celosvětové bezpečnosti, která je jednou ze základních podmínek jeho uskutečňování. Autorky druhé studie (Zdeňka Dohnalová, Iveta Zelenková) představují zajímavý koncept dobrovolnictví vysokoškolských studentů v České republice jako možnou cestu k udržitelnosti. Na něm se ukazuje důležitost jakékoli sociálně environmentální „iniciativy zdola“, která má – na rozdíl od legislativních směrnic – dynamický potenciál působit změnu smýšlení a konkrétních postojů většinové společnosti.

Třetí studie (Dana Jakšičová) zkoumá, zda a jak osoby žijící zasvěceným způsobem života berou vážně současné environmentální a sociální výzvy v kontextu křesťanské teologie a jaká je jejich připravenost přijmout s nimi spojené velké kulturní změny. Zajímavá sonda odráží rozdíly mezi „západní“ a „východní“ mentalitou a ukazuje obtížnost paradigmatického přerodu, jehož jsme všichni součástí. Poslední dva příspěvky jsou čistě teoretickými reflexemi. Ve studii zabývající se statusem přírody v takzvaném antropocénu (Lucie Kolářová) je reflektována otázka autonomie přírody a rovněž komplexita probíhající ekologické krize tváří v tvář limitům úzce odborného vědeckého diskurzu. Text chce inspirovat k rozlišující práci s environmentálními tématy, podobně jako to činí i poslední tematická studie. V ní autor (Michael Forest) představuje a analyzuje dva navrhované přístupy k environmentální krizi a ukazuje, že budoucnost nespočívá ani v idealizovaném návratu ke stavu primitivnosti bez technologií, ani v techno-futuristickém optimismu za nezměněného setrvačného fungování kapitalistické ekonomiky.

Varia nabízejí dva příspěvky od kolektivů autorů – jeden na téma transformace hodnot agapé lásky u studentů teologie (GP Harianto, Ester Widiyaningtyas, Urbanus Sukri, Desire Karo Karo, Victoria Woen, David Ming) a druhý na téma multidimenzionální škály zdrojů sociální opory v rámci dotazníku MSPSS (Katarína Šišanská, Magdaléna Hovanová, Lucia Tóthová). Nakonec jsou zařazeny dvě zajímavé recenze prof. Nakonečného.

Závěrem k našemu tématu připojuji malou aktualitu. Začátkem jara 2024 hlasovala Mezinárodní unie geologických věd (IUGS) o tom, zda se antropocén má stát formální epochou v geologickém záznamu Země. Nejkompetentnější z odborníků na stratigrafii se postavili proti. Předložené tematické číslo lze nicméně číst také jako jemné upozornění na to, že neuznáním formálního pojmu jsme se v žádném případě nezbavili obsahu, který tento nepřesný pojem označuje. A na závažnosti lidské odpovědnosti za stav planety to nemění už vůbec nic.

Přeji podnětné čtení!

Lucie Kolářová
koeditorka čísla

Editorial

Human Development and the Future of the Earth

This thematic issue on human development and the future of the Earth critically reflects on the concept of human development and human society, which has long been an unquestioned part of Western culture, but which has been showing serious cracks for several decades – especially in its most reckless form. In this concept, man is seen as the one who, on the basis of often problematic criteria, sovereignly and self-centredly determines what is or is not desirable in reality. He decides what is considered development, and sets and triggers processes. Development is supposed to mean several things: permanent growth; the accumulation of disposable knowledge, material goods and wealth; ever-increasing efficiency in all possible and hardly imaginable areas; and attainable happiness as an entitlement and an achievement. But it is precisely the self-evidence of these assumptions that is being shattered today. As a theoretical concept based on Enlightenment ideas, development was first massively challenged by some Western intellectuals – especially philosophers and artists – in response to two world wars fought within a civilisation espousing ideas of reason and progress. It was technological sophistication put at the service of ideological rampage and wanton destruction – a slap in the face of an idealised future for man on planet Earth. The next shock came with the ecological question, awakened by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962). Against the backdrop of the subsequently nascent and no longer unstoppable environmental movement, concepts such as growth, development, progress, or well-being are fundamentally relativised. The flip side of technological processes is perceived, and voices calling for a non-anthropocentric optic are growing. The ecological question is turning out not to be an isolated issue for a few specialists, but one that affects nature and the lives of people on the planet as one large complex ecosystem. Humanity is gradually becoming aware of the interconnectedness of all the sub-systems and their interdependent dynamics. Human development and the future of the Earth can henceforth only be adequately considered in the context of three aspects: social, environmental, and economic. It is therefore an interdisciplinary issue in which the knowledge and reflection of the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences are integrally linked. The present issue of *Caritas et veritas* opens with an interview with the environmental anthropologist Vojtěch Pelikán on sustainability, development, justice, and environmental grief. The thematic section contains five studies. In the first, three authors (Olumuyiwa Aduralere Ajetomobi, Timothy Opeyemi Yayi, Tosin Success Abolaji) describe and reflect on the role of the church in using information and communication technology in promoting regional peace and security in Nigeria. Locally situated issues outline the theme of development through the social and political lens of global security, which is one of the basic conditions for its realisation. The authors of the second study (Zdeňka Dohnalová, Iveta Zelenková) present an interesting concept of volunteering by university students in the Czech Republic as a possible path to sustainability. It shows the importance of any social and environmental 'grassroots initiative', which – unlike legislative directives – has a dynamic potential to change the mindset and specific attitudes of the majority society. The third study

(Dana Jakšičová) explores whether and how persons living a consecrated lifestyle take seriously contemporary environmental and social challenges in the context of Christian theology and what their readiness is to accept the major cultural changes associated with them. This interesting probe reflects the differences between 'Western' and 'Eastern' mentalities and shows the difficulty of the paradigmatic transition of which we are all part. The last two contributions are purely theoretical reflections. The study dealing with the status of nature in the so-called Anthropocene (Lucie Kolářová) reflects on the question of nature's autonomy as well as the complexity of the ongoing ecological crisis in the face of the limits of narrowly specialised scientific discourse. The text aims to inspire a discerning work with environmental issues, as does the latest thematic study. In it, the author (Michael Forest) presents and analyses two proposed approaches to the environmental crisis, showing that the future lies neither in an idealised return to a technology-free state of primitiveness nor in techno-futuristic optimism under the unchanged inertia of the capitalist economy. *Varia* offers two contributions from a collective of authors – one on the transformation of agape love values in theology students (G. P. Harianto, Ester Widiyaningtyas, Urbanus Sukri, Desire Karo Karo, Victoria Woen, David Ming) and the other on the multidimensional scales of sources of social support in the MSPSS questionnaire (Katarína Šiňanská, Magdaléna Hovanová, Lucia Tóthová). Two relevant reviews are also included at the end of the issue.

Finally, I add a small update to our topic. In early spring 2024, the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) voted on whether the Anthropocene should become a formal epoch in the geological record of the Earth. The most competent of stratigraphy experts opposed. However, the present thematic issue can also be read as a subtle reminder that by not recognising the formal concept we have by no means gotten rid of the content that this imprecise term denotes. And it does not change the seriousness of human responsibility for the state of the planet.

I wish you stimulating reading!

Lucie Kolářová
co-editor of the Issue

Témata dalších čísel

Pro další čísla CetV byla stanovena následující témata, ke kterým redakce uvítá příspěvky jak v podobě odborných studií, tak i popularizačních článků. O zařazení popularizačního článku rozhoduje redakce, odborná studie podléhá kromě redakčního posuzování i procesu dvojí anonymní recenze. Redakce může odmítnout texty taktéž z případných kapacitních důvodů či nesouladu s profilem časopisu a zaměřením tematického čísla.

2/2024 35 let druhých dějin české sociální práce

Uzávěrka: 30. 6. 2024

Sociální práce byla v bývalém Československu a v dnešním Česku dvakrát ve své historii zakázána. Československo po 1. světové válce rychle a úspěšně uplatňovalo severoamerický a britský model sociální práce, který vycházel ze zkušeností sociálních pracovníků v zahraničí. Její profesní směřování však změnila nacistická okupace dnešního Česka (1939–1945) a autoritářský komunistický režim v bývalém Československu (1948–1989), který v 50. letech prohlásil sociální práci za zbytečnou. Od roku 1990 dochází k obnově české sociální práce na různých úrovních – jak na akademické půdě, tak v praxi, na úrovni státu, krajů, obcí i v neziskovém sektoru, v prostředí národního systému sociálních služeb a jako advokacie a radikální akce pro klienty a s klienty.

Tato zkušenost české sociální práce ukazuje na ústřední spojení sociální práce a demokracie: sociální práce je možná pouze v demokratické společnosti a pro demokratickou společnost je sociální práce kritickou institucí.

V tomto čísle Caritas et veritas se zaměříme nejen na historii české (ale i slovenské) sociální práce. Kromě toho se budeme zabývat i tímto propojením sociální práce a demokracie a jejich budoucností v české společnosti a také sociálními a politickými podmínkami pro sociální práci v Česku.

Klíčová slova: dějiny sociální práce v Česku, dějiny sociální politiky v Česku, současný stav české sociální práce a demokracie, ohrožení demokracie a sociální práce

1/2025 ‚Naším hlasem‘ – Náročné situace a potřeby těch, kteří je žijí, a to z jejich úhlu pohledu

Uzávěrka: 1. 1. 2025

Když Carol Gilligan v roce 1982 publikovala *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, reagovala na situaci, kdy byl morální vývoj žen hodnocen na základě měřeného morálního vývoje mužů. Dala hlas skupině lidí, kteří byli přehlíženi a ignorováni.

Sociální pracovníci se také setkávají s těmi, jejichž hlasy nemusí být ve společnosti nebo komunitě slyšet nebo znát. Různorodost formy sociální práce jako disciplíny i jako praxe pak znamená, že se k této situaci přistupuje odlišně. Ať už je kladen důraz na změnu klienta, prostředí nebo interakci, jedním z východisek je pochopení subjektivního vnímání a prožívání náročné situace a z ní vyplývajících potřeb.

Pro toto číslo chceme získat příspěvky, které vycházejí konkrétně z pozice těch, kteří zažívají náročné situace, jež mohou být předmětem praxe sociální práce. Obecně platí, že texty by měly dát hlas těm, kteří se ocitli v obtížných situacích, to znamená dát hlas jejich popisu a vnímání jejich pozic a jejich artikulaci potřeb. Otázky mohou být například: Sdílejí lidé své náročné problémy jinak? Co říkají, že v těchto situacích potřebují? Od koho očekávají pomoc? Jak vnímají nabízené nebo v některých případech jim vnucené intervence?

Klíčová slova: klient, potřeby, participativní praxe, pohled klienta

2/2025

Humanita jako základní hodnota výchovy a vzdělávání (nejen) ve volném čase

Uzávěrka: 30. 6. 2025

Směr výchovy a vzdělávání se v posledních desetiletích odklání od důležitého cíle, jímž je výchova k lidskosti. Ve světle aktuálních výzev v souvislosti se společenskými krizemi (ekologickou, energetickou, ekonomickou, migrační), důsledky pandemie covidu-19 i probíhající války na Ukrajině a s aplikací moderních trendů ve školství (digitalizace, implementace umělé inteligence) je potřeba znovu se zaměřit na humanitu jako účel výchovy a vzdělávání a otevřít téma nové perspektivy pedagogické humanizace jako zlidšťování člověka ve 3. tisíciletí. Kultivace humanity jako základní hodnoty výchovy a vzdělávání nabízí možnost širokého interdisciplinárního pohledu na člověka 21. století jakožto bio-psycho-sociálně-transcendentního celku a na rozvoj směřující k naplnění jeho lidského, odpovědného života. Jak orientovat jedince v konstitutivních hodnotách lidství, rozvíjet jeho bytí ve smyslu „být člověkem“, spoluutvářet jeho směřování ke spravedlnosti, rozumu, dobrotě a pravdě a podporou humanity prostřednictvím výchovy a vzdělávání zajistit fungování lidské společnosti, jejímž základním kritériem bude lidskost a služba člověku? Je v moci současné výchovy a vzdělávání humanizovat člověka?

Téma je zaměřeno na rozšíření obzorů současného pohledu na pojem humanita a síla lidskosti užitím různorodé optiky (pedagogické, filozofické, psychologické, historické, teologické) a v rozličných kontextech.

Klíčovými momenty mohou být: mír jako nejvyšší hodnota lidství (výchova k míru), harmonizace lidskosti a moderní technologie, lidská integrace, konkrétní osobnosti jako poslové humanity a jejich lekce lidskosti, rozvoj autonomie a lidskosti ve výchovně vzdělávacím procesu, pojetí humanity ve vybraných edukačních koncepcích, historické kořeny humanity, základní principy výchovy k lidskosti v proměnách času, výchova jako dílna lidskosti apod.

Topics of future issues

The following topics have been specified for future CetV issues and the editorial board will welcome contributions on these topics, in the form of scholarly studies and popular articles. Popular articles will be published based on the editorial board's decision, while scholarly studies are subject to the editorial board's assessment and double anonymous reviewing. The editorial board can also reject texts for capacity reasons or because they are not in accord with the journal profile and the focus of a topical issue.

2/2024 35 Years of the Second History of Czech Social Work **Deadline: 30th June 2024**

Social work in former Czechoslovakia and today's Czechia was prohibited twice in their history. Czechoslovakia rapidly and successfully applied the North American and British social work models after World War I, derived from the experiences of social workers abroad. Nevertheless, its professional course was changed by the Nazi occupation of today's Czechia (1939-1945) and the authoritarian communist regime in former Czechoslovakia (1948-1989), which during the 1950s declared social work as unnecessary. Since 1990 there has been a restoring of Czech social work at different levels – both in academia and practice, at the level of state, regions, municipalities, and in the non-profit sector, in the environment of the national system of social services, and as advocacy and radical action for clients and with clients. This experience of Czech social work shows the intermediate connection between social work and democracy: social work is possible only in a democratic society and for a democratic society social work is a critical institution.

In this issue of Caritas et veritas, we will aim not only at the history of Czech (and also Slovak) social work. Moreover, we will also discuss this interconnection between social work and democracy and their future in Czech society as well as the social and political conditions for social work in Czechia.

Keywords: history of social work in Czechia, history of social policy in Czechia, current state of Czech social work and democracy, threats to democracy and social work

1/2025 'In Our Voice' – Challenging Situations and the Needs of Those Who Live Them Through Their Points of View **Deadline: 1st January 2025**

When Carol Gilligan published *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* in 1982, she was responding to a situation in which women's moral development was

being evaluated by the measured moral development of men. She gave a voice to a group of people who had been overlooked and ignored. Social workers also encounter those whose voices may not be heard or recognised in a society or community. The diversity of the form of social work as a discipline and as a practice then means that this situation is treated differently. Whether the emphasis is on changing the client, the environment, or the interaction, one of the starting points is understanding the subjective perception and experience of the challenging situation and the resulting needs.

For this issue, we appreciate contributions that come specifically from the position of those experiencing challenging situations that may be the subject of social work practice. In general, texts should give voice to those experiencing difficult situations, that is, to give voice to their descriptions and perceptions of their positions and their articulation of needs. Questions addressed can be, for example, how do people share their challenging problems differently? What do they say they need in these situations? From whom do they expect help? How do they perceive the interventions offered or, in some cases, imposed on them?

Keywords: client, needs, participative practice, clients' perspective

2/2025

Humanity as a Fundamental Value of Education (Not Only) In Leisure Time

Deadline: 30th June 2025

In recent years, the direction of education has departed from its important aim: education for humanity. In the light of the current challenges in connection with social crises (ecological, energy, economic, migration), the consequences of the covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine, and the application of modern trends in education (digitalisation, implementation of artificial intelligence), it is necessary to refocus on humanity as the purpose of education and to open the topic from a new perspective of pedagogical humanisation as the process of humanising man in the 3rd millennium. The cultivation of humanity as a core value of education offers the possibility of a broad interdisciplinary view of the 21st century's human being as a bio-psycho-social-transcendent unit including development towards fulfilling man's life as both a human and responsible one. How can man become well-informed in the constitutive values of humanity, developing oneself in the sense of 'becoming a human being', helping to create one's orientation towards justice, reason, goodness and truth, and how can we ensure by promoting humanity through education the functioning of a human society of which the basic criteria will be represented by humanity and service to man? Is it within the power of contemporary education to humanise man?

The theme is aimed at broadening the horizons of the contemporary view of the concept of humanity and the power of humanity through different lenses (pedagogical, philosophical, psychological, historical, theological) and in various contexts.

The following key moments can be considered: peace as the highest value of humanity (peace education), harmonisation of humanity and modern technology, human integration, selected personalities as messengers of humanity and their lessons of humanity, development of autonomy and humanity in the educational process, the concepts of humanity in selected educational concepts, historical roots of humanity, transformation of basic principles throughout history, education as a workshop of humanity, etc.).

Rozhovor

Rozhovor s Vojtěchem Pelikánem o udržitelnosti, rozvoji, spravedlnosti a žalu



Mgr. Vojtěch Pelikán, Ph.D. (* 1983) je environmentální antropolog působící na Katedře environmentálních studií Fakulty sociálních studií Masarykovy univerzity.

Zabývá se ekologicky příznivým životním způsobem, vnímáním environmentálních problémů nebo médií. V poslední době se podílel na výzkumech týkajících se takzvaných „pestrých“, environmentálních souvislostí res-titučního procesu či percepce sucha a klimatických změn.

Jak definujete udržitelný způsob života?

Přiznám se – termín „udržitelný“ používám jen nerad. Jednak proto, že je spojen s konceptem trvale udržitelného rozvoje, jenž vychází z některých předpokladů, které považuji za problematické. A jednak proto, že se z něj stalo další *buzzword*, módní slovo, jehož obsah se čím dál více rozměňuje – podobně jako v případě adjektiva „zelený“ či předpony „eko-“, kterými je veřejný prostor přesycen. Raději mám třeba životní způsob, jenž je „ekologicky příznivý“, nebo i ten kostrbatěji vyslovitelný „pro-environmentální“.

Ostatně, jak by takový „udržitelný“ způsob života měl vypadat? Snad by se dal definovat jako přístup, který se podřizuje potřebám našich lidských i mimolidských bližních a který nestaví současné potřeby nad potřeby těch, kdo přijdou po nás. Tomu se naše současná konzumní každodennost vskutku nepodobá. Skutečná udržitelnost by vyžadovala radikální změnu; takový požadavek má však v sobě obsažena velká očekávání a soustředí se na jen stěží dosažitelný výsledný stav.

V situaci enormních společenských a ekonomických tlaků mi přijde smysluplnější – a z hlediska omezených možností jednotlivce adekvátnější – přemýšlet o ekologicky příznivém způsobu života spíše jako o morální volbě, která se od efektu dílčího jednání do jisté míry oprošťuje. Kdyby si měl na sebe člověk brát zodpovědnost za zvrácení ekologické krize, tak se z toho zblázní. Erazim Kohák mluví v této souvislosti přílehlavě o postoji „V tomhle nejedu!“, jenž nerezignuje na systémovou změnu, ale ekologicky příznivé chování chápe spíše jako osobní ctnost či jako způsob, jak existovat důstojně v současné ekologické situaci.

Zmínil jste *udržitelný rozvoj*, který asi nejvíc ze všech konceptů vychází z ideálu pokroku a s tím spojeného vzrůstajícího blahobytu. Ten ideál není – historicky viděno – příliš starý, zato poněkud nemocný, mohu-li se takto vyjádřit. Lze (post)osvícenskou představu pokroku

skutečně přetransformovat na *trvale udržitelný rozvoj*? Nejedná se – v situaci, kdy někteří apelují dokonce na *nerůst* – spíš o chlácholivý eufemismus?

Myšlenka udržitelného rozvoje – dokonce udržitelného „trvale“ – je v principu optimistická. Naznačuje, že není třeba radikálně změnit kulturní a společenský model, který nás do ekologické krize přivedl. Rozvoj v takovém pojetí znamená především rozvoj v ekonomickém smyslu – jinými slovy jde o představu, že lze mít čím dál více, jen je při tom třeba brát v potaz určitá ekologická a sociální kritéria. Chybí mi tam to, co se objevuje u zmiňovaného nerůstu, ale třeba také v křesťanství – akcent na střídmost, úsilí o spravedlivější distribuci bohatství, jež máme na světě k dispozici, a hledání těžiště života jinde než v materiální rovině.

V konceptu proenvironmentálního života se propojuje pilíř environmentální, sociální a ekonomický. V kultuře pozdního kapitalismu fakticky dominuje pilíř ekonomický. Představa, že by se technokraticko-ekonomickými opatřeními dalo dosáhnout ekologicky příznivého života, který by byl *nota bene* sociálně příznivý, vyvolává slzavý úsměv. Jako jakési memento tu chápu encykliku *Laudato si'* papeže Františka. Co v tomto smyslu Vy považujete za její nejsilnější poselství?

Encyklika *Laudato si'* je pro mě pozoruhodná z mnoha úhlů pohledu – jak svým důrazem na environmentální situaci, jíž lidstvo čelí, kterou František považuje za klíčovou výzvu a které žádný z jeho předchůdců nevěnoval samostatnou pozornost, tak svým teologickým obsahem. Papež se například originálním způsobem vymezuje vůči pojetí člověka jako svědomitého správce stvoření, důraz namísto toho klade na vztahy založené na soucitu, vděčnosti nebo péči; o Zemi mluví například jako o matce či sestře. Neméně pozoruhodný je také přístupný jazyk, jímž je encyklika napsána, její nebývalá délka, přírodovědná poučenost či barvitý kolektiv, jenž se na její tvorbě podílel, a v neposlední řadě pak to, jaké reakce v církvi i mimo ni vyvolala.

Pro mě osobně je nicméně možná nejzajímavější poměrně přehlížený aspekt encykliky, totiž publikum, jemuž je určena. Ačkoliv se František obrací také k politikům – není například náhodou, že *Laudato si'* vyšlo pár měsíců před klíčovou klimatickou konferencí v Paříži –, jeho slova míří především ke každému člověku na planetě. A to doslova: nejen k té přibližně jedné miliardě katolíků, ale skutečně ke všem. Hodně se mluví o napětí mezi systémovými a individuálními řešeními environmentálních problémů, přičemž druhá varianta bývá často poněkud vulgarizovaně spojována s házením plastů do žlutých kontejnerů či zavíráním kohoutků při čištění zubů. Podle Františka systémová změna vyžaduje proměnu kulturní, proměnu způsobu, jak o svém místě ve světě přemýšlíme a jaké příběhy si o něm vyprávíme. Apeluje na změnu smýšlení, metanoiu. Tedy na proměnu, jež se má odehrát v srdci každého z nás. To mi přijde svým způsobem radikální postoj – ve smyslu takového postoje, jenž jde ke kořenům problémů.

Co si má čtenář představit pod pojmem *environmentální spravedlnost*?

V užším pojetí se mluví o environmentální spravedlnosti – či nespravedlnosti – zejména v souvislosti s tím, že někdo je zasažen ekologickou krizí více než jiný na základě své etnicity, věku či velikosti majetku, jinými slovy na základě nerovného přístupu k moci, respektive svého marginalizovaného postavení. V logice dnešního světa přitom environmentální problémy běžně dopadají tíživěji na ty, kdo se na jejich vzniku podílejí nejméně. Krom toho existují pojetí, jež na otázku spravedlnosti nahlíží širěji – například v mezigenerační perspektivě, která je zejména v případě

klimatické krize zásadní.

František v encyklice *Laudato si'* – a nejen v ní – klade na otázku environmentální spravedlnosti značný důraz. Snad i díky svému jihoamerickému původu dává do úzké souvislosti řešení sociálních problémů a těch environmentálních; píše například o potřebě naslouchat jak volání Země, tak volání chudých. I proto mě zaráží, že Františkovo poselství v církvi – přinejmenším té tuzemské – více nezarezovalo. Důvody tuším, ale přece jen mi přijde s podivem, že otázka spravedlnosti či solidarity více nezaznívá z kazatelen. Vždyť jde o výsostně křesťanské téma! Čteme-li Bibli pozorně, být spravedlivý je jedním z hlavních požadavků, jež na nás Bůh klade. Ostatně Noe byl před potopou zachráněn právě proto, že byl „jediným spravedlivým“.

Podle některých odborníků blokuji evolučně zakotvené psychologické obrany naši schopnost účinně jednat tváří v tvář environmentální krizi. Můžete uvést nějaké příklady?

Environmentální problémy v čele s klimatickou krizí jdou proti tomu, jak jsme jako *homo sapiens* evolučně disponováni, což velmi znesnadňuje jednak komunikaci těchto problémů a jednak jejich řešení. Jak se postavit k něčemu, co je stěží představitelné, globální, rozložené v čase a na co si nemůžeme pořádně sáhnout ani to vnímat dalšími smysly? Jak se obětovat pro někoho na druhém konci světa či někoho, kdo se ještě možná ani nenarodil? Naše přirozenost nás vede k tomu soustředit se na svůj „kmen“, ignorovat dlouhodobá a nejasně definovaná rizika a doufat, že to nakonec nějak dopadne – případně spoléhat na to, že to přece vždycky nějak dopadlo.

Někteří výzkumníci upozorňují, že problém není ani tak v tom, že bychom nebyli schopni povahu ekologických problémů a jejich závažnost pochopit. Nedostatečnou společenskou odezvu si vysvětlují spíše jako obrannou reakci naší psychiky na nekomfortní sdělení, před nímž je čím dál těžší uniknout. Než abychom přijali povahu toho, co se kolem nás děje, se všemi důsledky, jež z toho vyplývají, raději se uchýlíme k relativizování, vytěšňování či někdy třeba i k agresi.

Může náboženství přispět k překonání psychologických obran?

Nejsem sám, kdo si myslí, že ano. Křesťanství má tu výhodu, že nás nevede k tomu, abychom si lakovali věci narůžovo. Připouští, že jsme všichni hříšníci, kteří opakovaně páchají zlo, mnohdy i velmi závažné. Zároveň je v křesťanství přítomen silný motiv obrácení, toho, že nikdy není pozdě zpytovat svědomí a změnit své jednání. To přece není vůbec jednoduché přiznat si, že obraz, který si o sobě vytvářím, může být falešný. Že jsem se třeba v nějaký moment v životě vydal po úplně špatné cestě! Každý chceme být – před sebou i před druhými – dobrými lidmi, hledáme různá ospravedlnění, snažíme se vytvořit si identitu, která je co nejvíce koherentní. Dosavadní život a naše zajeté hodnoty a postoje je zkrátka těžké kriticky přehodnotit. Příběhy, jako ten o obrácení svatého Pavla či o dvojici zločinců ukřižovaných společně s Ježíšem, nám v tom mohou být inspirací a nadějí.

U naší veřejnosti má špatné jméno takzvaný zelený aktivismus. Na západ od nás tomu tak úplně není, tam se slušní ani nejslušnější občané aktivismu neštítí. Považujete aktivismus za potřebný?

Nejen na Západě – takováto otázka by zřejmě zněla nepatříčně ve většině světa. „Co tím myslíte, zda je aktivismus potřebný?! Je přece logické, že když se mi něco nelíbí, tak to dám veřejně najevo – to je princip politického jednání!“ by mohla znít typická reakce. Když se mi nelíbí těžba na území mého kmene, vyrazím utábořit se před parlament. Když jsem mladý člověk a trápí mě obavy

z budoucích dopadů klimatické krize, vyrazím demonstrovat nebo se zúčastním přímé akce na těžebním rypadle. Ostatně si nevybavuji významnější společenskou změnu – od zrušení otroctví přes boje za práva žen až po současná ekologická opatření –, která by se bez aktivismu obešla. Jak jinak dosáhnout změny, když stojíme proti přesile?

Česká společnost je v tomto ohledu zmrzačená čtyřmi desetiletími komunismu, kdy jsme byli formováni k tomu, abychom si veřejné postoje nechávali pro sebe, případně pro úzký kruh přátel. Tuzemský privatismus symbolizovaný hesly „ať se každý stará sám o sebe“, případně „ať to vyřeší ti nahoře“ má zřejmě ještě hlubší kulturní kořeny, snad i proto jej jako společnost překonáváme jen pomalu. Hodně v tomto ohledu sázím na mladou generaci, kterou mám příležitost poznávat v posluchárnách či při seminářích. Mám pocit, že jsou mnohem svobodnější a drzejší.

V rámci dvou výzkumných projektů (TA ČR a GA ČR) jste mezi lety 2019 až 2022 s kolegy sesbíral empirická data, která ledacos vypovídají o vztahu českých křesťanů k ochraně přírody. V rámci restitučního vyrovnání se u nás především římskokatolická církev ocitla v roli hospodáře na polích, lukách a v lesích. Není ale hned zřejmé, jakou cestou se vydala. Existovala možnost „třetí cesty“ mezi byznysem a charitou, cesta měkkého kapitalismu? Jaká je realita?

Kdybych měl realitu v katolické církvi – o té vím nejvíce – popsat jedním slovem, bylo by to asi hledání či dokonce tápání. Finanční a majetkové osamostatnění bylo schváleno před více než deseti lety. Církev se tak už v nové situaci nějak zorientovala, začíná si na ni zvykat, pomalu zjišťuje, kudy cesta nevede, avšak moc neví, jak by měla ke své nové roli přistoupit. Oproti častému veřejnému obrazu „hamizné církve“ jsme s kolegy a kolegyněmi při rozhovorech překvapivě často naráželi na upřímnou sebereflexi a skepsi vůči tomu, zda dlouholeté vyjednávání o majetku vůbec stálo za to. Svědčí církvi postrestituční situace? Není péče o majetek na úkor pastorační či jiné práce? Nepoškodily se zbytečně naše vztahy se sekulární společností?

Tedy spíše se takové pochybnosti objevovaly při rozhovorech ve farnostech anebo klášterech. Při- jde mi, že ve vyšších patrech katolické hierarchie vládne především obava, zda se osamostatněné církvi podaří stát ekonomicky na vlastních nohou. V restituovaném majetku zde vidí prostředek – někdy chápaný jako „nutné zlo“ – k zajištění církevního provozu. Jinými slovy, „charitu“ a „byznys“ vnímají jako dvě nesouvisející věci. No a pak jsou zde tací, kdo v poli či lese nevidí ani tak přítěž nebo zdroj příjmu, jako spíše kus stvoření, o nějž můžeme coby křesťané pečovat. Případně v nich vidí prostředek, jak vstupovat do kontaktu se světem za zdmi kostelů. Takových hlasů je menšina, ale přibývají. Jsem přesvědčen, že nakonec tento pečující přístup, propojující teologická, ekologická a sociální hlediska, převáží. Je však škoda jak pro přírodu, tak pro samotné katolíky a jejich vztahy se společností, že to bude zřejmě trvat zbytečně dlouho.

Roku 2016 vyšla kniha prof. Hany Librové *Věrní a rozumní: kapitoly o ekologické zpozdilosti, třetí a poslední z řady, která je výsledkem longitudinálního terénního výzkumu a hluboké reflexe nad problémem. Vy jste patřil k blízkým spolupracovníkům dnes již emeritní paní profesorky a spolu se dvěma dalšími jejími žáky jste vypracoval kapitolu o mezigeneračním přenosu environmentálních ctností. Ctnost ale nelze na nikoho přenést, nejde to bez vlastní- ho svobodného úsilí. K čemu jste tedy došli?*

Předpoklad, se kterým jsme do výzkumu vstupovali, byl velmi podobný tomu, co naznačujete – že nekonsumní způsob života se dalším generacím předává nesnadno. Utrzovala nás v tom

odborná literatura i epizodické poznatky z našeho okolí. O to více nás potěšilo, když jsme během rozhovorů s dětmi z rodin, které se v minulosti rozhodly jít proti proudu a vydaly se cestou omezené spotřeby, narazili v zásadě na sympatie vůči rodičovským hodnotám. Přitom dětství – a snad ještě více dospívání – představuje velmi citlivé období, kdy se každý snaží uspět v kolektivu vrstevníků. A situace, kdy jsme se zrovna přistěhovali z města, nenosíme značkové oblečení a jsme všelijak jinak „divní“, může tuto potřebu přijetí vystavit těžké zkoušce. Vysvětlení, proč se děti z dobrovolně skromných rodin v zásadě „pomamily“ a „potatily“, je, jak už to bývá, komplikované. Každopádně nezanedbatelnou roli v tom hrála Vámi zmíněná svoboda – dnes už dospělé děti, s nimiž jsme mluvili, si nepřipadaly, že by je rodiče do něčeho nutili. Dávali jim velikou volnost vybrat si životní cestu a důvěřovali jim, že se samy dokážou zodpovědně rozhodnout.

Trpíte environmentálním žalem?

Jak bych mohl netrpět! Tak jako na každého, kdo se dlouhodobě ekologickou situací zabývá, i na mne vědomí hloubky problémů, složitosti jejich řešení a nepříznivých prognóz emocionálně doléhá. Do toho mám doma tři malé děti, u nichž se ptám, jaká budoucnost na ně ve světě asi čeká a jak je na těžko předvídatelné výzvy co nejlépe připravit. Mohu však čerpat naději z toho, že třeba i díky mému – profesnímu – úsilí bude svět, ve kterém se za několik let ocitneme, přece jen lepším z těch možných. A také mám velké štěstí v tom, že se pohybuji ve skupině lidí – studentů, kolegů, přátel i své rodiny – s nimiž mohu své obavy i naděje sdílet.

Děkuji za rozhovor!

Lucie Kolářová
koeditorka *Caritas et veritas*

Studie Tématické Studies Topical

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Promotion of Regional Peace and Security in Nigeria: the Role of the Church

Olumuyiwa Aduralere Ajetomobi, Timothy Opeyemi Yayi,
Tosin Success Abolaji

DOI: 10.32725/cetv.2024.004

Abstract

The technological advancement in the 21st century has paved way for national growth and development in Nigerian society. The church is not aloof to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to foster peace and security locally and globally. The paper examines the role of the church in the use of ICT in the promotion of regional peace and security in Nigeria. The study adopted the historical, descriptive and participatory observation methods. Findings show that ICT has helped to reshape church ideology and practices to further contribute to the peace and security in Nigeria. Hence, the study recommends that the church should judiciously make use of ICT in the promotion of regional peace and security in Nigeria.

Keywords: church, Nigeria, regional peace, security, technology

Introduction

One of the menaces facing the world today is the inability to maintain peace and order within and beyond the territorial boundaries. The unique characteristic of a society is the presence of peace in daily interactions among the inhabitants, and the existence of peace among the international relations. Chaos and insecurity are two indispensable occurrences in the global world and particularly in Nigerian society where kidnapping has become the means of livelihood for some particular group of people who are dressed with either their faces veiled or unveiled but with highly sophisticated armed equipment that are disastrous to man's existence.

The church from time immemorial has been in the forefront of preaching the essence of peace to the society in which it exists. Jesus Christ, the founder of the Christian faith was seen on several occasions to be an advocate of peace. He preaches peace in the Beatitudes sermon (Mt 5:9 NKJV),

farewell speeches (Jn 14:27; 16:33 ESV)¹ and in his daily living he lived a peaceful life devoid of chaos with the earthly rulers and the society to which he belonged. Peace theology was also alluded to by Jesus Christ (2Thess 3:16; Col 3:15; Phil 4:7 ESV)² and several other biblical passages. They all attested to the true nature and beauty of Christian faith and the obligation of the church to be a peace promoter in theology and pragmatic ways within the socio-political and religious milieus.

In the light of promoting peace and security, the church has been a leading figure that is being looked upon as an agent of peace. Church engagement of peace has received new shape due to the emergence of technology. In times past, the church has been confined to limiting its activities within a particular locality, area, or nation due to its traditional methods such as in-gathering, physical gathering, and use of traditional means of communication such as beating a gong and sending a middle man to deliver messages, amongst others. However, the annexation of technology in the activities of the church to further propagate the gospel has made the church have national and regional reflection, thus, contributing to the peace and security discourses in the global world.

ICT became a point of contact to the world through which the church function has a mediator, facilitator, and originator of peace and security with the socio-political compasses in the world. It is pertinent to say here that peace can be internal and external, nationalised and internationalised, localised and regionalised depending on the scope of operation. However, the extension of peace and security within the regional compass emanated from its availability from within. This implies that both peace and security are a national phenomenon which cut across all regions in the society that requires a holistic approach from the church. The church cannot function universally without influencing peace within the society of its existence.

The scope of the study is to examine the role of the church in the promotion of regional peace and security through its teachings and endeavours (evangelistic acts, crusades, and retreats) with particular reference to the Pentecostal denominations in Nigerian society. The study is situated in the Nigerian society where several church leaders, especially Pentecostal ministers, deemed-it-fit to discuss several existential issues such as killing, banditry, cybercrimes, ritual, moral decadence, and bad governance with the society through its evangelistic campaigns, visitations, and sermons in different regions in Nigeria. Therefore, the paper is divided into a clarification of terms, research methodology, the Nigerian society, and peace and security in the 21st century, technology and the church: an innovative approach, the role of the church, and conclusion.

1. Definition of Terms

1.1 Information and Communication Technology

Technology is a broad concept that deals with a species' usage and knowledge of tools and crafts, and how it affects a species' ability to control and adapt to its environment. In human society, it is a consequence of science and engineering, although several technological advances predate the two concepts.³ The word technology comes from two Greek words, transliterated *techne* and *logos*. *Techne* means art, skill, craft, or the way, manner, or means by which a thing

1 John 14:27; 16:33 English Standard Version (ESV).

2 2 Thess 3:16; Col 3:15; Phil 4:7 ESV.

3 New World Encyclopedia, 'Technology', accessed 17th January 2024, https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Technology#cite_note-1.

is gained. *Logos* means word, the utterance by which inward thought is expressed, a saying, or an expression.⁴ Therefore, the word ‘technology’ can be defined as the systematic way of doing things. The concept of technology is not limited to scientific components. George Harrison further writes:

Technology is not only limited to the scientific or material components of using scientific materials and human resources in order to meet human need or purpose, but can also include its providence in the Information and Communication Technology which has contributed to the dissemination of information, aid teaching and learning process and brings positive development to the Nigerian education.⁵

Information is power and a very important drive to development in a society. It gives the impetus for growth and development through the appropriate use of relevant skills to convert the available information into a concrete idea. Technology in this study is domicile in the domain of Information and Communication Technology to further enhance peace and security within and outside the society. ICT in this includes the internet, computers, printed materials, visual and audio-visual mechanisms, and social media.

1.2 Peace

Peace is often seen as the state of tranquillity, prosperity, progress, and conflict-free society. Friday Ogbuehi cited Ike that peace is a serene state of existence which characterises happiness and contentment.⁶ In the view of Church-Hill Amadi-Nche and Ibiene Opuine peace is mainly concerned with the creation and maintenance of a just order in society and the resolution of conflict by non-violent means. Peace also entails the eradication of violence, oppression, greed, and environmental destruction by positive intervention of conflict.⁷ Peace can be both voluntary and involuntary. Peace is voluntary when an individual, group, or nation put in place appropriate measures to enhance peace (Heb 12:14; Rom 12:18 ESV).⁸ It can also be involuntary when an individual, groups, and/or nation enjoys a certain level of comfort, progress, tranquillity as a result of the blessing from the divine (Ps 29:11; 85:8; Jn 14:27; 16:33 ESV).⁹ Literally, the word peace is derived from the original Latin word *pax*, which means a pact, a control, or an agreement to end war or any dispute and conflict between two people, two nations, or two antagonistic groups of people.¹⁰ It can also be internal and external, positive and negative.

1.3 Regional

The word ‘regional’ as used in this study includes the Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Western regions of Nigeria.

4 College of Engineering, Oregon State University, ‘Technology’, accessed 17th January 2024, <https://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Technology/technology.html#:~:text=Etymology,a%20saying%2C%20or%20an%20expression>.

5 George Harrison, *Managing Technological Change: Strategies for University and College Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2006), 10.

6 Friday Ogbuehi, ‘The Role of Women in Fostering Peace and Justice in Nigeria’, *Nigerian Journal of Christian Studies*, vol. 3, number 1, 2019, 46–66.

7 Church-Hill Amadi-Nche and Ibiene Opuine, ‘Women as Agents of Peace and Social Development in the South Eastern Nigeria’, *International Journal of African and Asian Studies*, Vol. 69, 2020, 38.

8 Heb 12:14; Rom 12:18 ESV.

9 Ps 29:11; 85:8; Jn 14:27; 16:33 ESV.

10 Ven. B. Khemanando, ‘Bloomsbury, Dictionary of Word Origins’, in *Buddhism and Peace* (Calcutta: Lazo Print, 1995), 387.

1.4 Security

Security is the state of safety in a society where lives and properties are protected from harm, destruction and or theft. In the religious domain, security may be viewed as the spiritual safety of life from evil machinations and eternal damnation. According to *The Economic Times*, the term ‘security’ basically can be considered as a tool, a fungible and negotiable one that offers a monetary value.¹¹ From the preceding definitions, it is right to say that security as a general parlance has a different meaning in the socio-politico-economic and religious milieus. However, the centre of equilibrium to these diverse definitions of security is the idea of safety. Safety of lives and properties enables other aspects of the society to function. Jonathan Bonk corroborates the essence of security as the sine qua non of every society, since it is a determinant to progress and growth and development that exist in it.¹²

1.5 Church

The word ‘church’ is derived from the Greek word *ecclesia*. Tosin Abolaji cited Terfa Anjov that the word ‘church’ has different interpretations that include the literal meaning *Ekklesia*, which is ‘called-out,’ yet to what extent this sense applied in its general usage is unclear. It was a political term which applied to an assembly of citizens ‘called-out’ for a particular purpose.¹³ Traditionally, the word church is seen as the building where Christians gathered to worship. The first set of Christians were named in Antioch (Acts 11:26 ESV)¹⁴ as a result of their behaviour, teachings, and attitudes to life that is a replicate of Jesus’ pattern and theology. The church is believed to be the gathering of Christ’s representatives who are to take ‘Christ’ to the entire world. It is pertinent to say that the word church as used in this study refers to the Pentecostal Churches which includes the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Deeper Life Bible Church, Living Faith Church, Christ Apostolic Church, Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries, Christ Embassy Church, and Mount Zion Mission, Akwa Ibom.

1.6 Research Methodology

The paper adopts the historical, descriptive and the participatory observation research methods. The historical data was derived from books, journals, and online materials which were adequately engaged within the scope of the paper. The paper adequately references the areas gotten from historical method as earlier mentioned. To further engage the discussion, the authors who were active participants in the study observed the flow of peace measured within the identified churches to curb social vices in Nigerian society. The authors describe the observed data to further corroborate the historical antecedents of ICT, peace and security in Nigeria, thereby leading to the authors’ submissions on the use of ICT to promote regional peace and security in Nigeria. The study focused on the leading Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria because they are denominations with great numerical strength, national influence, and leading frontiers in the use of ICT

11 The Economic Times, ‘What is Security’, 17th January 2024. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition /security>.

12 Jonathan Bonk, ‘Religion and Security in Africa: a Christian Perspective’, in *Religion and Security Issues*, Proceedings of 2013 Biennial International Religious Studies Conference, ed. Jacob K. Ayantayo and Samson A. Fatokun (Ibadan: John Archer for Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, 2015), 102.

13 Tosin Abolaji, ‘The Role of Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship to the Growth of CAC in Ilorin Metropolis’ (B.A. diss., University of Ilorin, 2022), 12.

14 Acts 11:26 ESV.

among different Nigerian church denominations in the promotion of regional peace and security in Nigerian society.

2. Nigerian Society and Peace and Security Issues in the 21st Century

The concept of 'peace and security' in Nigerian society has been jeopardised due to various atrocities happening in the society. These atrocities have undermined the concept of peace and security, thus leaving the society in a state of emergency. One of the features of peace is security and one of the insights into security is peace, thus, peace explains security and vice versa. The predominant Nigerian society is badly affected with kidnapping for money, killing for various rituals, and cyber larceny amongst others, which are increasing day after day, thus, giving the country an image of 'insecurity and societal unrest'. Ezekiel Akano decries the day-to-day crisis, kidnapping, killing, and political brouhaha in all nooks and crannies of the world, making one feel that the words peace and security are delusional in our present dispensation.¹⁵

James Okolie-Osemene notes that security is an essential requirement in the sustenance of every modern state in the international political system. This position is based on the need for sovereign nations to ensure that their territorial integrity is maintained, and without the control of their territories by other states. Thus, the maintenance of national security has remained a primary duty of the state.¹⁶ It must be established that the matter of national security is not the role of the state alone; rather it also involves the active participation of the church through its peace theology to navigating the societal complexity in 21st century Nigeria.

The state of peace and security in Nigerian society has been degraded since it embraces conflict, unrest, and, above all, insecurity. Akiti Alamu rightly observes that insecurity brings a concatenation of appalling circumstances that make it difficult for people to live in peace and safety, and as well overcome their developmental challenges.¹⁷ Joshua highlights that between 2011 and 2015, the Federal Government of Nigeria expended a huge sum of 4.6 trillion naira, defending the territorial integrity and internal security of the country.¹⁸ Despite this measure in combating against insecurity, Alamu affirmed that there is an upsurge in abduction, a crime wave, kidnapping, assassination, religious crises, senseless killings, and other vices.¹⁹ Traditionally, security issues mainly centre on the physical danger to a state which manifests in imbalances in military power. In actual sense, however, security matters transcend military power.²⁰ Akpuru-Aja Aja corroborates this view that security is not all about the use of arms such as guns as there is also security in food consumption, social relations, health, and the political order.²¹

The causes of insecurity and the absence of peace in Nigeria range through political, social, economic, religious, and natural factors. In the 2013 Proclamation issued by the Federal Government, the preamble to this Proclamation reads:

15 Ezekiel Akano, 'Religion, Peace and Security in Nigeria: A Christian view', in *A Century of Nigeria's Amalgamation 1914-2014: Challenges of Integration*, ed. A. Gbade et al. (Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Limited, 2015), 194.

16 James Okolie-Osemene, 'A Historical Perspective of Nigeria's Internal Security Since 1999', in *Internal Security Management in Nigeria*, ed. O.O. Oshita, I.M. Alumona, and F.C. Onuoha, (Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-8215-4_4.

17 Akiti Alamu, *Religion and Public Affairs in Nigeria* (Ilorin: K-Success Media, 2021), 208.

18 Olufemi Joshua, 'Nigeria Spends N4.62 trillion on National Security in 5 years, yet widespread insecurity remains', 17th January 2024, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/185285-nigeria-spends-n4-62-trillion-on-national-security-in-5-years-yet-widespread-insecurity-remains.html?tztc=1>.

19 Alamu, *Religion and Public Affairs in Nigeria*, 208.

20 G. C. Nwizu and Alozie Cyprian, 'Africa and the Challenges Of Security Governance In The 21st Century', *African Journal of Politics and Administrative Studies*, Vol. 11, December, 2018, 1.

21 Aja Akpuru-Aja, 'Policy and strategic studies, uncharted waters of war & peace in international relations', revised edition, (Abakaliki: Willy Rose & Appleseed Publishers, 2009), 35.

Nigeria has been experiencing serious crises, internal tension and civil disturbances which presently constitute grave threats to peace, order, good governance, security and safety of life and property, and that these crises and disturbances transcend religious, political, and ethnic divide with the perpetrators of the crises utilizing terrorist tactics, thereby occasioning serious breakdown of law and order.²²

In the present, the Nigerian situation is constantly threatened by security challenges in different parts of the country. It is therefore germane to put in place required conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve these conflicts and avoid protraction. There is an enormous consideration before adopting any form of resolution approach.²³ Natural factors can also be a cause of unrest and insecurity in the state. These include natural hazards such as flood, famine, illness, pestilence, and/or disease outbreak such as the Ebola scenario, Lassa fever, and the Covid-19 pandemic. All of these pose threats to the socio-politico-economic and religious milieus.

The implications of this can be seen in the increase in crime rate and persistent insecurity issues within the Nigerian landscape. Ndubuisi-Okolo Purity and Theresa Anigbuogu write:

Nigeria which is perceived as the giant of Africa has witnessed an unprecedented incidences of insecurity ranging from the activities of Fulani Herdsmen; Boko Haram insurgencies, armed robber attacks, kidnapping, political/religious crisis, murder, destruction of oil facilities by Niger delta militants, child abduction/trafficking.²⁴

There is no place that is a danger-free zone in Nigeria. Garam, where 14 people were abducted, is located along the Sabon-Wuse-Bwari road, while Zhibi, where three others were also kidnapped, is a community sharing boundaries with Dei-Dei town, which is under the Bwari Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, FCT.²⁵ The Boko Haram sects, bandits, and kidnappers are now gallivanting through society with little or no fear, and thus perpetuating evil at the expense of peace and security of the nation. These recent incidents among many others have shown that Nigerian society is unsafe and there is a need for the state to wake up to its challenges in order to provide a safe and friendly environment for the growth and development of the nation.

3. ICT and the Church: an Innovative Approach

The Nigerian mega Pentecostal churches are the leading figures in the use of technology to further promote peace and security discourses among the various people of different regions in Nigeria. The regions which include the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western regions house these mega churches such as Redeemed Christian Church of God, Deeper Life Bible Church, Living Faith Church, Christ Apostolic Church, Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries, and Christ Embassy Church amongst several others and are leading the populace in the different regions in Nigeria.

22 The Federal Government Official Gazette, 'State of Emergency (Certain States of the Federation) Proclamation, 2013', 17th January, 2024, <https://archive.gazettes.africa/archive/ng/2013/ng-government-gazette-dated-2013-05-20-no-27.pdf>.

23 Yisa Jonah and Yemisi Olawale, 'Conflict Peace and Security: The Nigeria Experience', *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.9, No.1, 2019, 48–57.

24 Ndubuisi-Okolo Purity and Theresa Anigbuogu, 'Insecurity in Nigeria: the Implications for Industrialization and Sustainable Development', *International Journal of Research in Business Studies and Management* Volume 6, Issue 5, 2019, 7–16.

25 Daily Trust, 'Insecurity: Bandits Abduct 17 in Niger State', 18th January 2024, <https://dailytrust.com/insecu- rity-bandits-abduct-17-in-niger/>.

The adoption of technology, particularly Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by the church is an innovative approach that brings about the holistic intervention to the continuous growth and development, and through it peace discourse in the society. Regarding (ICT) according to David Imhonopi and Ugochukwu Urim as cited by Gemande:

Technology has made positive impact on information generation, storage, retrieval, transmission and communication. It encompasses all those technologies that enables the handling of information and facilitates the different forms of communication amongst human actors between human beings and electronic systems and among electronic systems.²⁶

From the foregoing, ICT has aided a transformation in the way information is retrieved, saved, and transmitted as other than the traditional methods of handling it. It highlights the past, enlightens the present, and gives an insight to the future. This is because information saved in the past can be brought into the present to shed more light on situations and in turn helps to plan for the future.

These mega Pentecostal Churches are growing fast in Nigerian society and control a larger percentage of the Nigerian population. Babatunde Adedibu noted earlier that the proclivity of Nigerian megachurches is not only in terms of their grandiose edifices, but also their religious innovations, creativity, and development initiatives in the various communities where they are situated.²⁷ The three important terms used by Adedibu, 'religious innovations, creativity and development initiatives', can also find expression in the adoption of technology in the church and the diversification of the gospel through ICT.

The church in the early 1900s showed little concern regarding the adoption of technology in its services. In fact, some churches were selective in the kind technology to be adopted for services, such as the Deeper Life Bible Church and even still today, it does not allow the use of certain technological instruments such as drums in its services. Similarly, some Pentecostal churches such as Christ Apostolic Church has guidelines on how technology can be used in its service. However, it is pertinent to say that Deeper Life Bible Church is one of the leading Pentecostal churches in Nigeria that largely embrace the use of ICT in the propagation of the gospel. Oladutun Kolawole notes:

The truth cannot be denied; advancement in technology has given Christianity a right to be heard and to reach the world extensively. As times goes by, there have been advances in Christianity when there are advances in technology. In many cases, the Church has been one of the first bodies to benefit from technological advancements; for example as projectors place the words on a screen this ensures everyone can sing along. Technology allows people to interact with the gospel in a profounder way. This has impact just as Gutenberg's printing press did.²⁸

The foregoing assertion of Kowale is an undeniable fact that the advancement in technology has wider publicity to the Christian faith. Churches now use sophisticated technologies to enhance

26 David Imhonopi and Ugochukwu M. Urim, 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Governance in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects', *Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Creative Art*, 2011, 6(2), 1–14.

27 Babatunde A. Adedibu, 'Nigerian Pentecostal Megachurches and Development: A Diaconal Analysis of the Redeemed Christian Church of God', *Religions* 2023, 14, 70, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010070>.

28 Oladutun P. Kolawole, 'An Evaluation of the Use of Technology in the 21st Century Nigerian Church', *Pharos Journal of Theology*, ISSN 2414-3324 online Volume 100 (2019), 4, https://www.pharosjot.com/uploads/7/1/6/3/7163688/article_3_vol_100_2019_nigeria.pdf.

worship sessions and the service entirely. In fact, e-church services such as e-worship or e-sermon have now paved the way for the continuous use of technology by churches since it avails them the opportunity to communicate to millions of people at a time. To corroborate this assertion, Akiti Alamu opines that religion is global, and information technology has played a great part in bringing religious services to the doorstep of the people through the internet, newspapers, publishing houses, television stations, and websites and so on.²⁹

The use of ICT in the church is a transformative and innovative approach put in place in order to foster unity, peace, and harmony among hundreds of millions of people in a heterogeneous society like the Nigerian community. The persistent use of traditional means of communication would bring about little or no productive records in reaching out to the world. For instance, in 21st century Nigerian society, the Nigerian population is over 230 million³⁰ which makes it difficult for the church to operate as it were in the 1900s. The advancement of technology in communication, transport, and records amongst others has paved way for easy access of the church to unreached society. Marc Prensky opines that Christian education that does not incorporate ICT into the teaching and delivery of the gospel or theology cannot be relevant to the present crop of youth.³¹ Similarly, Tan also argues that social networking has to become part of Christian education or the church will find itself increasingly marginalised in the lives of digital natives.³²

4. The Role of the Church

Several challenges have beleaguered Nigerian society ranging through the economic, social, political, and religious. The increase in killing has taken different dimensions such as manslaughter, suicide, 'abunculicide' (killing of an uncle), murder, 'androcide' (systematic killing of men), 'familicidal in commutatione eiusposiosio' (the act of killing a family member for property and/or possessions), amongst others.³³ Kidnapping and banditry are another form of killing in Nigerian society. They are lucrative businesses in the Nigerian society and have thrived more than several other businesses due to much money being acquired within a short span. It is pertinent to say that failure to pay the ransom demanded leads to the killing of the victims.

The role of the church cannot be undermined in the holistic navigation of the Nigerian complexities to further ameliorate causes of unrest, instability, and insecurity within the socio-politico-economic and religious ventures. The church has harnessed into its structures, services, and guides the use of technology to ensure the safety of members and Nigerian society at large in the various regions in Nigeria.

4.1 Planting of Technological Equipment on Church Buildings

The church is not unaware of the various malicious activities taking place in the socio-political spaces and also occurrences that have happened over time in the Nigerian churches such as thievery, kidnapping, banditry, and the so called 'unknown gunmen' who have made the churches a den of thieves and a graveyard for worshippers and Nigerian society in general. Therefore, among

29 Akiti Alamu, 'Globalization and its Effect on Christianity' *CENTREPOINT: A Journal of Intellectual, Scientific and Cultural Interest*, Vol. 11–12, No. 1, 2004, 59.

30 The World Factbook, 'Nigeria', accessed 8th November 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/>.

31 Marc Prensky, 'Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, Part II: Do They Really Think Differently?', *Horizon*, 9 (6), 2001, 1–6.

32 Jonathan Tan, 'Ministry Meets Social Networking Connecting with the Digital Natives', *New Theology Review*, November 2009, 37–44.

33 Academic Accelerator, 'List of types of Killing', accessed 18th January 2024, <https://academic-accelerator.com/encyclopedia/list-of-types-of-killing>.

the Pentecostal mega churches, the planting of technological equipment for security purposes, such as Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), being high-definition cameras strategically placed throughout the premises enable comprehensive coverage, helping security teams monitor key areas in real-time. These systems act as a deterrent, enhance situational awareness, and provide valuable evidence in the event of an incident.³⁴ For instance, a woman stole a bag after a service at a Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) somewhere in Lagos. The CCTV footage clearly recorded the moment she acted but then she was apprehended and unable to escape.³⁵ According to Gbonegun in *The Guardian*, the 30,000-seat capacity of the Deeper Life Church at Gbagada, Lagos State has CCTV placed in it.³⁶ Ologbonyo as cited by Popoola Yaqoub corroborates that the use of security gadgets like drones, CCTV, and others will help in tackling insecurity if employed.³⁷

4.2 The Church Intervention on Social Vices

It is pertinent to note that social vices within the Nigeria context include but are not limited to cultism, cybercrimes, kidnapping, banditry, indecency, sexual immorality, among several others which have posed threats to peace and security within Nigerian society. The intervention of the church to curb these social maladies through the use of ICT cannot be underestimated as the church is seen at the forefront of maintaining peace and orderliness in Nigerian society. The church discouraged youth and members' involvement into the cybercrime business usually called 'Yahoo-Yahoo' and encouraging the growth of entrepreneurial spirit among its members. In fact, these churches engage their members to learn technological skills and consider different avenues of exploring and inculcating these skills into living a godly life. In a recent post by *Gong News* three cult members repented upon hearing the sermon during the 77th convention of the Mount Zion Mission. It states:

Three members of two different cult groups of the Black Ax and Iceland, Emmanuel Atangakak aged 32, Mfon Bassey aged 30 and Godwin Asukwo aged 29 have renounced membership of their cult groups. The three repentant cultists took their decisions at the Mount Zion Mission Incorporated 2023 International Annual Convention, held at Oron in Akwa Ibom State. The 77th convention of the church is themed; 'The later glory of this house shall be greater than the former', taken from the book of Haggai chapter 2:9. According to them, they took such decisions as they were touched by the messages they have heard at the convention ground as the spirit of God has ministered to them to repent.³⁸

It must be categorically stated that the church adoption of information and communication technology in its services has changed the landscape of the church worship with remarkable experience of repentance. Through ICT, this profound story has been able to reach millions of people over the internet without being restricted to those in the church space.

34 High Edge Media, 'The Role of Technology in Enhancing Church Security: A Holistic Approach', Medium.com, 22nd December 2023, <https://medium.com/@highedgemedia/the-role-of-technology-in-enhancing-church-security-a-holistic-approach-9290c07234ed>.

35 Linda Ikeji, 'Photos/Video: Woman paraded after CCTV caught her stealing a handbag in a Redeemed Christian church of God branch in Lagos', 20th September 2017, <https://www.lindaikojisblog.com/2017/9/photosvideo-woman-paraded-after-cctv-caught-her-stealing-a-handbag-in-a-redeemed-christian-church-of-god-branch-in-lagos.html>.

36 Victor Gbonegun, 'How Deeper Life's 30,000 capacity hqtrs was built, by officials', 23rd April 2018, <https://guardian.ng/property/how-deeper-lifes-30000-capacity-hqtrs-was-built-by-officials/>.

37 Popoola Yaqoub, 'Nigeria is God's Own Project: Won't Disintegrate –CAC General Evangelist', 14th June 2021, <https://independent.ng/nigeria-is-gods-own-project-wont-disintegrate-cac-general-evangelist/>.

38 Editor 1, 'Akwa Ibom: 3 cultists confess, renounce membership at Church convention ground', Gong News, 13th December 2023, <https://gongnews.net/akwa-ibom-3-cultists-confess-renounce-membership-at-church-convention-ground/>.

4.3 Peace Theology in Written, Video, and Audio-Visual Formats

The church has engaged in several peace discourses using different biblical passages when sermonising its congregants-on-site and online congregants. The theology of peace encompasses two facets which depicts man's dual relationship (God and man, man and man). The church admonishes the worshippers through its written peace theology which can be found in written format such as on tracts, webpages, video, and audio-visual formats such as the use of television channels, YouTube channels, radio stations, and several social media channels to promote peace in Nigerian society. There are several biblical passages that make allusion to peaceful coexistence such as the Beatitudes (Mt 5:9 ESV),³⁹ the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37 ESV),⁴⁰ moral suggestion (Rom 12:18 ESV),⁴¹ moral inclination (Heb 12:14 ESV),⁴² conflict resolution (1Cor 1:12-23 ESV)⁴³ amongst others show the intent of preachers in the 21st century churches as promoters of peace in Nigerian society. According to Jacob Osaji:

Religious institutions and leaders should have some defined roles to play in the maintenance of peace and security in Nigeria. Religion, no doubt, is a force to reckon with in the lives of individuals and the nation at large, because it is a tool that provides inspiration to Nigerians to unite and fight social upheavals, moral decadence, and political stability and promote economic development through hard work.⁴⁴

The extract above from Osaji identifies the essence of religious institutions and leaders in the maintenance of peace and security in Nigeria. It is pertinent to say that Nigerians are religiously inclined especially during turbulent times and, as such, obey religious leaders with large crowds, prophetic utterances, and manifestations. In the light of peace theology, prayers are also raised for the nation which receives wide coverage from different news agencies and websites managers about the restoration of peace and its progress within and abroad. It is the duty of church leaders to be involved in activities that would bring peace, progress, and tranquillity to the nation where they serve.⁴⁵

4.4 Creation of ICT Job Opportunities in the Church

The church is a leading figure in the use of ICT, and technological advancement seems to be a complex practice to the older generation, that is, those born in the early 1960s to 1980 find it unbearable to cope with the intricacy in the use of ICT. Therefore, the churches have put in place media teams which cut across youths from different ethics background to provide smooth usage of ICT in sermon delivery and propagation of peace. In fact, this innovation of ICT employees in the churches has led to the designation of church ICT officer or media manager to be a fast-growing phenomenon in the Nigerian churches. These ICT officers helped the church to manage its social media handles, websites, recording, storing, and transmission of sermons

39 Mt 5:9 ESV.

40 Lk 10:25-37 ESV.

41 Rom 12:18 ESV.

42 Heb 12:14 ESV.

43 1 Cor 1:12-23 ESV.

44 Jacob Osaji, 'Religion, Peace and Security in Nigeria', in *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, (IJOURS)*, Vol.6 No.2, 2016, 50.

45 Peter Awojobi, 'The Role of Church Leaders in National Security in Nigeria Context', 18th January 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359159823_The_Role_of_Church_Leaders_in_National_Security_in_Nigeria_Context.

amongst several others. Apart from church buildings and church schools, the church has also put in place security measures through the employment of ICT officers in a church owned guesthouse in Nigeria. Some other interventions of the church include establishments of pure water and bread factories, drivers, cleaners, gardeners, and security guards who are employed with the criteria of being computer literate and this has further tightened the security measures in the society. Most important is the interest of the church in employing high skilled technicians, computer experts, and data analysts to further use their skills in a right dimension by helping the church and the society, thus leading to low crime rate.

4.5 Transmission of Sermons through Information and Communication Technologies

The world is vast, and it will continue to grow in numbers and size as long as the act of procreation is not stopped. Therefore, the use of some Information and Communication Technologies such as the internet, web pages, social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram among others are necessary for the promotion of peace and security discourses in the society. Most of these Pentecostal mega churches use diverse mediums to reach out to the society and, thus, lead to the establishment of online services. Upcoming denominations, who are yet to have a web page, still maintain the use of social media to propagate the gospel, which is also a message of peace for the society. It must also be stated that due to the advancement in technology, Pentecostal ministers like Pastor E.A. Adeboye, Pastor Williams Kumuyi, and Prophet Hezekiah Oladeji have been able to sermonise the entire nation without leaving a particular spot or location. This, however, owes to the provision and utilisation of technologies. The radio and television electronic media will be useful tools in communicating religious messages to people. Osaji suggested that their attitude may change positively and they could have moral and spiritual rebirth.⁴⁶

4.6 The Adoption of ICT has Enhanced Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogues

The church has held several meetings through the use of ICT aided facilities such as media stations like the DOVE station of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria and the YouTube space. Ben Onu and Johnwealthy Wobodo opined that ICT has enhanced the relationship of Christian denominations in Nigeria for better and mutual understanding.⁴⁷ Johnwealthy further cited Greenfield and Droogers who maintain that proliferation of the church sites has categorised church founders especially among the Pentecostals as religious entrepreneurs, conducting church relationships in a manner akin to the interactive framework of a marketplace.⁴⁸ These engagements have on local, regional, and national levels fostered peace within Nigerian society. Also, ICT has helped in the promotion of interfaith dialogue in Nigerian society. Muritala Bidmos writes:

The interaction between the Muslims and Christians at interpersonal level in some regions in Nigeria is harmonious and pleasant. For instance Muslim and Christians belong to the same political party with common aspiration to win election. In the South - West region of Nigeria, maturity, tolerance, love and group solidarity are evidently displayed by members of the same family who

46 Jacob Osaji, 'Religion, Peace and Security in Nigeria', 51.

47 Ben Onu and Johnwealthy Wobodo, 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Ecumenical Movements in Nigeria', *Niger Delta Journal of Gender, Peace & Conflict Studies* Vol. 2 No. 3rd September 2022, 105–118.

48 Johnwealthy Wobodo, *Contemporary church & information & communication technology: a study of Diocese of Ikwerre (Anglican Communion) Rivers State (2007-2017)* (Dissertation, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, 2020).

are Muslims and Christians. They are co-workers and business associates. They meet in banks and markets. There is always sense of mutual trust and respect through exchange of pleasantries and gifts during festivals.⁴⁹

The above submission of Bidmus highlighted various areas of interaction between people of different faiths in Nigerian society which has been further expanded through the use of ICT applications.

4.7 Discouraging Tribalism Using ICT

The issue of tribalism is not alien to the church. Tribalism among the Early Church first has its way in the Acts 6 account that pictured the dissension between the Hellenistic Jews and the Jews over the distribution of relief materials. The position of the Early Church concerning tribalism was evidence in this regard. Likewise, the Nigerian church leaders have delved much into tribal related issues.

The church has engaged different media platforms such as news outlets, social media, television and radio stations to warn members and Nigerians in general to shun the act of tribalism. Daniella Ogbeche writes:

The General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, RCCG, Pastor E. A. Adeboye, on Sunday warned his members in the habit of introducing tribalism into the RCCG, especially concerning unions to desist from such. Adeboye warned that anyone who introduces ethnicity into the fabrics of the mission will die a sudden and premature death.⁵⁰

It is of note to say that the popular Pentecostal minister Adebooye, as indicated above, being aware of the danger of the prevalence of tribalism, thus warns his congregation to desist from such acts. The church through the use of information and communication technology has been able to tackle this ethical vice.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Information and Communication Technology has contributed to the socio-politico-economic and religious milieus of the society through its promotion of peace and security which is incorporated in its teachings, actions, and several other endeavours. The advancement in technology should be conceived of as a blessing rather than a curse to the human race. The church in the early 1900s did not fully embrace the use and adoption of technology in its whole services. However, as the world continues to progress, the church cannot remain static in the moving world. Hence, the church becomes one of the pioneers and leading persona in the use of technology in Nigerian society. The state of peace and security in Nigerian society is deteriorating day by day. Kidnapping, killing, stealing, bribery and corruption, tribal clashes, insurgences, economic imbalances, political brouhaha, and religious intolerance among others have undermined the growth, development, and lives and properties of the average Nigerian.

The state of peace and security has led to the mass exodus of great potentials in search for greener

49 Muritala A. Bidmos, *Inter-Religious Dialogue: The Nigerian Experience* (Abuja: Panaf Publishing, Inc. 2006), 161.

50 Daniella Ogbeche, 'Keep your tribalism out of church or die mysteriously – Pastor Adeboye warns', Daily Post, 1st August 2016, <https://dailypost.ng/2016/08/01/keep-tribalism-church-die-mysteriously-pastor-adeboye-warns/>.

pastures, thus leaving the society unattended and growing worse day after day. The church stands in the middle of it all, with a great potential to influence, correct, and reposition the society in its physical and spiritual states. However, in order to actualise this, the church has made effective use of technology in its acts of planting security gadgets, peace theology, job creation, transmission using the internet and social media to further ameliorate the causes of insecurity in Nigeria.

The study recommends that:

1. The church should judiciously make use of technology in the promotion of regional peace and security rather than using it to promote conflict and misunderstanding in Nigeria;
2. The church should endeavour to translate sermons into readable texts such as into other native languages (Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa) on a regular basis;
3. The church should avoid any instigating speeches online such as in radio and television transmissions and others to curb the tendency of religious violence;
4. The church should engage in training those in rural societies on the use of technology such as computers in order for them to be able to utilise technologies for peace promotion;
5. The church should organise security symposiums, lectures, and webinars for youth and the church enlighten them about security tips;
6. The church should advise the government on the importance of good governance and national integration in order to enjoy a peaceful society.

Contact:

Olumuyiwa Aduralere Ajetomobi, PhD

Department of Religions,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin,
Kwara State, Nigeria.
ajetomobi.aa@unilorin.edu.ng

Timothy Opeyemi Yayi, PhD

Department of Social Sciences Education,
Faculty of Education,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin,
Kwara State, Nigeria.
yayi.to@unilorin.edu.ng

Tosin Success Abolaji

Department of Religions,
Faculty of Arts
University of Ilorin, Ilorin,
Kwara State, Nigeria.
successabolaji@gmail.com

Volunteerism of University Students in the Czech Republic as a Path to Sustainability

Zdeňka Dohnalová, Iveta Zelenková

DOI: 10.32725/cetv.2024.005

Abstract

In the context of sustainable development, volunteering among university students plays a key role in shaping the future of society. This study uses a focus group method with students to analyse how involvement in volunteering activities enhances individuals' competencies and contributes to sustainable development. The analytical section provides the reader with data on student volunteers' personal and career development, their social interactions and networking, social responsibility and sustainability, and global thinking. The authors also discuss the role of the university in student volunteering. Volunteering effectively promotes social responsibility and sustainability, fostering students to become advocates for sustainable social change and active participants in community decision-making.

Keywords: volunteerism, students, sustainability, development education, just transition, degrowth, personal development, competencies, employability.

Introduction

This article is based on a research report entitled 'Benefits and challenges of volunteering for university students in the context of their future employability', prepared by Zdeňka Dohnalová, Magdalena Tichavská and Iveta Zelenková.¹ The research aimed to support the development of the system of recognition of non-formal education at universities in the context of implementing volunteering activities. The research included 13 focus groups and involved students and graduates of a selected university.

Part of the original authoring team decided to analyse the research data secondarily, as there were recurring statements in the research participants' statements related to ecology, sustainability, and responsible and active citizenship. However, these topics were not a key focus of the original research. Sustainability was only one of the sub-themes (or only one of the interview questions); statements with these themes emerged spontaneously throughout all parts of the focus groups. This fact stimulated the research interest of the authors of this article, as issues related to the future

¹ Zdeňka Dohnalová, Magdalena Tichavská, and Iveta Zelenková, *Přínosy a výzvy dobrovolnictví studentů vysokých škol v kontextu jejich budoucí zaměstnatelnosti* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2023), 1-55.

of the Earth proved to be of particular urgency for the Generation Z research participants. In today's rapidly changing world, volunteering among university students plays a crucial role in shaping the future of society. The original research on which we draw was conducted with students and graduates of a selected university and explored the importance of student volunteering in the context of their future employment. In this paper, however, we focus on volunteering through the prism of sustainability. With the growing awareness of the need for sustainable lifestyles, understanding how students can contribute to environmental, social and economic sustainability through volunteering and adopting degrowth principles becomes crucial. Our secondary analysis of the data collected aimed to explore how volunteering shapes individual competencies and creates links between students' personal development and the sustainable goals of society. In this paper, we seek to answer the main research question: How do volunteering activities influence the personal development of university students and contribute to the sustainable goals of society?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework revolves around university student volunteerism. Volunteering is a conscious, freely chosen activity for the benefit of others, provided by citizens without charge. A volunteer consciously dedicates a portion of their time, energy, and abilities to activities that are both temporally and thematically defined.² Volunteerism can be distinguished based on the nature of the activity and the organisation of volunteers. It may encompass informal, ad hoc volunteerism involving spontaneous and unorganised assistance to neighbours or friends. On the other hand, there is organised volunteerism, conducted within a structured framework and often forming part of organised community services.³ Organised volunteering encompasses volunteer activities coordinated by specialised institutions, including volunteer centres within higher education institutions.⁴ Volunteering organised by academic institutions may or may not be closely linked to higher education studies. It constitutes a significant component of informal education and has the potential to enhance the quality of education at universities. This study focuses on volunteers – students and graduates of higher education institutions. However, within formal volunteering, including that organised by academic institutions, volunteers consist of diverse groups (various age categories, diverse educational backgrounds, etc.) actively contributing their time and skills to various social and humanitarian initiatives. This diversity brings substantial benefits not only to the volunteers themselves but also to educational institutions. These institutions actively contribute to strengthening the quality of education at universities by connecting academic learning with practical experiences and activities in society.

Smith, Stebbins, and Grotz⁵ define specific types of volunteerism. Firstly, there is informal, unorganised volunteerism characterised by spontaneous and unstructured assistance to neighbours or friends outside the formal organisational framework. Secondly, there is scholarship volunteering, involving volunteers who receive financial rewards for their volunteer activities and operate in an international context, or at the national level. Other types include volunteer tourism (participating

2 Jiří Tošner and Olga Sozanská, *Dobrovolníci a metodika práce s nimi v organizacích* (Praha: Portál, 2006), 36-38.

3 Elaine Suk Ching Liu, Constance W. L. Ching, and Joseph Wu, 'Who is a volunteer? A cultural and temporal exploration of volunteerism,' *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, no. 6 (2017): 531-532, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2017.1295715>.

4 Adela Bradea, 'Volunteering as a Component of Non-Formal Education,' in *Education Facing Contemporary World Issues – Edu World 2022: Proceedings of the 9th International Conference Edu World 2022*, eds. Emanuel Soare and Claudiu Langa, no. 5 (2022): 572-583, <https://doi.org/10.15405/epes.23045.59>.

5 David Horton Smith, Robert A. Stebbins, and Jurgen Grotz, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Volunteering, Civic Participation, and Nonprofit Associations*, vol. 1-2, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 308-365. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-26317-9>.

in volunteer activities within travel and tourism), online and virtual volunteering (contributing time and skills online without physical presence), spontaneous volunteering in crisis situations (volunteers spontaneously offering assistance in extraordinary situations and disasters), and formal volunteer service programmes (referring to organised programmes offering structured volunteer services with defined goals and rules).

Moreover, volunteerism can be categorised according to the organisations in which activities are carried out, differentiating into areas such as culture and recreation, education and research, health, social services, the environment, development and housing, law, advocacy and politics, philanthropy, religion, and international sectors. Alternatively, it can be categorised according to the purpose of volunteer activities: a) service volunteering, focusing on alleviating suffering or improving the quality of life for needy groups; b) self-help volunteering, targeting shared goals among those with common interests, perspectives, or life experiences; c) grassroots volunteering, seeking to specify and support citizens' interests at the local level of socio-political organisation.⁶ In the context of university student volunteerism, it is important to mention 'pro bono' activities. These activities also focus on providing volunteer services but are mostly associated with providing professional or specialised skills and services. This activity often pertains to legal, advisory, or professional fields, where volunteers contribute their professional knowledge or skills to the public interest or to support organisations and individuals who lack the financial means for such assistance.⁷ In the Czech Republic, this includes civil advisory centres.

Student involvement in volunteer activities at universities offers diverse opportunities depending on the types of students and host organisations. Facilitated student volunteers are connected with host organisations through the university or other intermediaries, involving both regular engagement and short-term projects. Independent student volunteers organise their volunteer activities either connected to or independent of their studies. Host organisations offering specific programmes for students provide volunteer activities tailored to their university studies. Organisations integrating student volunteers expect students to fit into existing programmes. Student-led host organisations, where students lead community or student activities, are also essential. University volunteer activities may include organising volunteer activities, including orientation and open days with some universities offering accredited courses associated with volunteer projects. Volunteer centres play a key role in connecting students with projects, providing information, and facilitating the coordination of volunteer activities. Overall, these opportunities not only strengthen the personal development and experiences of students but also bring a positive impact on society, aligning with the university's third role in creating an environment for enriching student life and societal contributions.⁸

An academic student volunteer may earn credits for related courses, though it sparks debate. Volunteering's essence is selflessness and altruism, with students dedicating time and skills without expecting material rewards. The principle of volunteering is rooted in voluntary engagement and willingness to help others, rather than seeking credits or other benefits. This selflessness reinforces the significance of volunteer activities and creates an environment where a student's motivation is intrinsic, arising from internal conviction and an interest in supporting societal needs. Awarding

6 Susan M. Arai, 'Typology Of Volunteers For A Changing Sociopolitical Context: The Impact On Social Capital, Citizenship And Civil Society', *Society and Leisure* 23, no. 2 (2000): 328, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07053436.2000.10707534>.

7 Richard Abel, 'The Paradoxes of Pro Bono', *Fordham Law Review* 8, no. 5 (2010): 2443-2445. <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/flr/vol78/iss5/10>.

8 Megan Paull et al., 'Matching expectations for successful university student volunteering', *Education + Training* 59, no. 2 (2017): 127-128, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-03-2016-0052>.

credits for volunteer activities could alter the dynamics of volunteering, as it may appear that external rewards motivate students. On the other hand, there are associated costs with performing volunteer work, and credit recognition could serve as a form of compensation for these expenses. A discussion on this topic could lead to finding a balanced approach that supports students in volunteer activities without compromising the original altruistic nature of volunteering.

Volunteering by university students is a significant factor not only for the personal development of individuals but also for the overall contribution to the sustainable development of society. This form of engagement provides students with a unique opportunity to develop key skills for understanding and addressing complex issues related to sustainability.⁹ Sustainability encompasses economic, social, and environmental balance essential for long-term stability and prosperity. In the context of higher education, sustainability refers to a responsible approach to education where students are supported in developing knowledge and skills to address complex sustainability-related challenges, such as through volunteering. The goal is a development education.¹⁰

Development education aims to foster learning that contributes to personal, societal, and global development. It goes beyond knowledge transfer, focusing on shaping skills, attitudes, and values for sustainable development and improved quality of life. Key elements include sustainable development, ecological responsibility, social justice, human rights, and cross-cultural understanding. It cultivates critical thinking, economic awareness, empathy, and solidarity. Development education encourages public engagement in local and global issues, supports innovative thinking, and addresses societal challenges. Often linked to global education, it prepares individuals for active and responsible roles, promoting a global perspective and the ability to find sustainable solutions. Volunteers, in particular, gain a global understanding and develop skills to contribute to global well-being.¹¹

Volunteering contributes to the idea of fair transition and degrowth. It promotes fair transition by providing assistance and support to needy groups, regardless of their socioeconomic status.¹² Volunteers can operate at the local level, where they can identify specific community needs and contribute to the development of social justice. Furthermore, it supports the principles of degrowth. Degrowth is an economic and environmental concept that emphasises the need to limit economic growth to maintain environmental and social stability.¹³ Volunteering can align with this concept by supporting local communities, sustainable practices, and resource sharing, leading to diversification and improvement of the quality of life without uncontrolled growth.

Student volunteering significantly boosts employability by developing a diverse skill set crucial for adapting to dynamic work environments and showcasing social and ethical responsibility.¹⁴ These skills not only contribute to achieving sustainable goals but also enhance competitiveness and adaptability in the modern job market.¹⁵ Emphasising competencies 4.0, essential in the

9 Angela Ellis Paine et al., 'Volunteering and Sustainable Development Goals: The opportunity to move beyond boundaries', *Voluntary Sector Review* 11, no. 2 (2020): 252, <https://doi.org/10.1332/204080520X1588425988018>.

10 Ann Dale and Lenore Newman, 'Sustainable development, education and literacy', *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 6, no. 4 (2005), 351-362, <https://doi.org/10.1108/14676370510623847>.

11 Annette Scheunpflug and Barbara Asbrand, 'Global education and education for sustainability', *Environmental Education Research* 12, no. 1 (2006): 34-39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504620500526446>.

12 Irina Velicu and Stefania Barca, 'The Just Transition and its work of inequality', *Sustainability: Science, Practice, Policy* 16, no. 1 (2020): 264, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2020.1814585>.

13 Jason Hickel et al., 'DeGrowth can work – here's how science can help', *Nature* 612 (2022): 401, <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-022-04412-x>.

14 Jim Hillage and Emma Pollard, *Employability: Developing a Framework for Policy Analysis* (London: Department for Education and Employment, 1998). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225083565_Employability_Developing_a_framework_for_policy_analysis_London_DfEE.

15 Emma Barton, Elizabeth A. Bates, and Rachel O'Donovan, 'That extra sparkle: student's experiences of volunteering and the impact

digital era, including working with new technologies, digital literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration,¹⁶ students become key contributors to sustainable development.¹⁷ Graduates with a broad skill spectrum and global critical thinking can play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable practices, encompassing ecological impact reduction, support for social initiatives, and engagement in sustainable business practices.

Volunteer activities can promote a sustainable lifestyle among students who become responsible citizens. Volunteering represents a concrete way for students to actively participate in the positive transformation of society in the Anthropocene, a period where human activity significantly influences the planet. By working in collaboration with universities and non-profit organisations, students create triangular partnerships with a synergistic impact on all parties involved.¹⁸

Methodology

Our study examines the multifaceted impact of volunteering on students' personal growth, career advancement, social interactions, and global mindset. We followed the transformational journey of volunteers and examined how their involvement shapes them personally and professionally – from cultivating enriching personal experiences to strengthening global perspectives. We have also uncovered the diverse dimensions of volunteering, highlighting its key role in promoting a holistic approach to education and social contribution.

We were looking for an answer to the question: How do volunteering activities influence the personal development of university students and contribute to the sustainable goals of society? In the original research,¹⁹ of which the data was subjected to secondary analysis, we took a qualitative approach and conducted 13 focus groups with university students and alumni with different volunteering experiences. A total of 91 participants participated in the focus groups, each lasting an average of two hours. Focus groups were held between August and December 2023 in one of the cities in the Czech Republic, where the selected university is located.

The main criteria for inclusion in the focus groups were being a student or alumni of a selected university and having experience with volunteering. In the first phase, we utilised direct outreach to the coordinators of the volunteer centre, complemented by recruiting through social media and the university's information system in the second phase, where students voluntarily enrolled in the study. The aim was to include male and female participants, representation from students and alumni from all university faculties, representation volunteers with experience through the university volunteer centre, and those volunteering through other organisations. We ensured diversity in terms of the nature and duration of volunteering activities and included students with volunteering experience in various fields.

on satisfaction and employability in higher education', *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 43, no. 4 (2019): 461-462, <https://doi.org/10.1080/039877X.2017.1365827>.

16 Liona Prifti et al., 'A Competency Model for "Industrie 4.0" Employees,' in *Proceedings der 13. Internationalen Tagung Wirtschaftsinformatik (WI 2017)*, ed. J. M. Leimeister and W. Brenner (St. Gallen, 2017), 49-50. <https://aisel.aisnet.org/wi2017/track01/paper/4/>.

17 Julia Peric, 'Student Volunteering: A New Path to Personal Growth and Sustainable Community Development,' presented at the European University for Voluntary Service (EUV), 1st-3rd September 2011, Basel, Switzerland, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Julia-Peric/publication/310599340_Student_volunteering_a_new_path_to_personal_growth_and_sustainable_community_development_Case_of_Volunteering_Program_of_the_Graduate_Program_in_Entrepreneurship_at_the_JJ_Strossmayer_University_in_Os/links/5832c86c08aef19cb81acb6a/Student-volunteering-a-new-path-to-personal-growth-and-sustainable-community-development-Case-of-Volunteering-Program-of-the-Graduate-Program-in-Entrepreneurship-at-the-JJ-Strossmayer-University-in-Os.pdf.

18 Rowena H. Scott, and Eddie J. Van Etten, 'University Student Volunteering Alignment with Sustainability Principles,' in *Proceedings of the 13th International Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS) Conference (Sydney, Australia: Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS), 2017)*, 3-4, <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworks2013/254/>.

19 Dohnalová, Tichavská, Zelenková, *Přínosy a výzvy dobrovolnictví studentů vysokých škol v kontextu jejich budoucí zaměstnatelnosti*, 11-14.

The resulting research sample was representative, consisting of 73 women and 18 men, aligning proportionally with the gender distribution of registered volunteers within the university's volunteer centre. The sample included 15 graduates and 76 students from all faculties of the selected university, with specific faculty names omitted for anonymity. Of the participants, 65% were from humanities, social, and educational sciences, 15% from law, economics, and technical fields, and 20% from medical and natural sciences – mirroring the faculty distribution of registered volunteers. In the quotes from the interviews, we deliberately do not mention the speaker's specific faculty or field of study because some faculties were minority represented. Research participants could – among other participants – be easily identified.

The focus group programme encompassed three main topics: 1) motivation for volunteering; 2) benefits of volunteering, particularly concerning future employability; and 3) challenges of volunteering, including coping mechanisms and recommendations for higher education institutions. In line with the philosophy of qualitative research, we are interested in the subjective perspectives of the participants and their experiences.

During the secondary analysis, we focused primarily on the second topic, examining how volunteer activities impact students' personal development. This included identifying competencies gained or developed through volunteering and examining how volunteering shaped their values, attitudes, and traits. Subsequently, we explored how, through enhancing personal development, volunteer activities contribute to achieving society's sustainable goals.

Focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis, a useful method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data without being restricted by theory.²⁰ The initial analysis involved repeated readings of transcripts and noting initial thoughts on themes. Data were coded at a semantic level without delving into deeper interpretations of hidden meanings or motivations. The coding aimed to provide an overview of the data's coded content, refining and naming themes to represent the encoded data within each topic best, ensuring no overlap. Coded excerpts from transcripts are used here to support and illustrate the results.

Results

In this paper section, we present the categories we identified in the secondary data analysis.

These categories are as follows: personal development, career development, social interaction and networking, social responsibility and sustainability, global thinking, and the university's role in student volunteering.

So, what are the sustainability benefits of volunteering for university students? We formulated our main research question: How do volunteering activities influence the personal development of university students and contribute to the sustainability goals of society?

Personal development

Our research has shown that volunteering contributes to students' personal development. It allows them to better understand themselves, broaden their perspectives, gain new perspectives, and develop social and environmental awareness.

20 Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 79, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

Some emphasised that they had been put in unexpected situations, which had a positive impact on their abilities and worldview: 'It was very formative for me, I think, both growing up and now, that you have the opportunity to work on things that you wouldn't have gotten to if you weren't willing to do those things for free, so like I've always had a really big shift, and I've got like because of these things that I'm actually willing to do, I've got like the opportunity to talk to really interesting people or find interesting opportunities, and it's shifted me like value-wise, so I think as a person in general.'

Volunteers who engage in activities outside their main field of study stress that volunteering offers them a temporary break from their normal work or study routine and contributes to their overall personal development: 'So, I have to say that I've always seen volunteering or those activities outside of school as something that I want to be rewarding and something that sort of maybe doesn't intersect with what I'm studying at all.'

Moving to a different work environment and field often brings new perspectives and enrichment. Changing the environment and nature of volunteer work is seen as a positive challenge that can bring new experiences and open up new areas of interest. Volunteers open themselves up to new experiences which leads to personal development, improved problem-solving skills, and adaptation to new situations: 'Just the amount of people I've met, the different backgrounds, and their stories have been so enriching in that I've gotten, I'm very much out of that college bubble where just everyone around me is like a college student or just a graduate, and you just get such an insight into that slightly different world then.'

The research mentioned several times that volunteering opened new horizons for the participant in different areas (partnership, friendship, career, etc.): 'Like the first good thing that I did in those non-governmental organisations, which like opened up a whole new world that I was like out of touch with before, (...) all of a sudden (...) this world of human rights and democracy came up, and that defined me for the next 10 years like just working. (...) so actually, my whole career opened up because of going into that volunteering and actually living it a lot. I have an activist husband and activist friends. That it was like fundamentally completely for me again.' In this interview snippet, the participant recounts how their initial involvement in non-governmental organisations introduced them to the world of human rights and democracy. This experience significantly shaped her career over the next decade, leading to a fundamental shift in their focus and values. 'The impact extended to her personal life, with the participant developing an activist network, including an activist husband and friends. The narrative underscores the profound and lasting influence of volunteering on both professional and personal dimensions.

Participants in our research reported that without their involvement in volunteer activities, they would not have had any other opportunity in their lives to meet the beneficiaries of their help - often from marginalised groups: 'It is just that I get, for example, contact with groups that interest me that I don't have access to otherwise. Who don't get along or are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. That's what I was interested in. What they live like, what they're like, or the Ukrainian kids that are here now, for example. So, it's more like enriching me with some insights.' Another participant added a similar opinion: 'I totally agree with that, that it actually breaks through a kind of social bubble, and you get into completely different circles and groups.'

It is worth mentioning that the field of volunteering is not only related to health, social, and pedagogical issues but also volunteers active in the cultural, sporting, or spiritual fields took part in our research. In these areas, too, the selected participants of our research broadened their horizons and made new social contacts. All of the participants in our research had experience volunteering

in the Czech Republic, and some of them also shared their experiences abroad (e.g., in North America, Africa, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand).

Volunteering, according to some research participants, is a way of understanding different perspectives, traditions, and values, which can foster mutual understanding and tolerance: 'It changed my worldview, and it was really like a totally striking experience that I started to appreciate, I don't know, the warmth, some food that I have, and just having somewhere to go to the toilet and ... this was really one of the things for me that changed just a little bit those values, what to appreciate more.'

Social motivation also includes a desire to actively participate in the community and contribute to its well-being. This form of motivation is associated with an internal drive to participate in collective efforts that can lead to positive change. Motivated by a desire to get involved, volunteers may engage in various projects, organise events, or participate in local issues: 'Because I started out caring about the neighbourhood and trying to develop myself and the neighbourhood in elementary school in Parliament, I've kind of continued to do that.'

Career development

Volunteering is proving to be a key way to develop a variety of skills that are not only relevant in different areas of life but also essential for career progression and success. The skills acquired range from soft skills such as teamwork, organisational skills, communication, active listening, and presentation skills to cultural competence and the ability to work effectively with different people. In addition, volunteers will learn transferable professional skills such as basic first aid, outdoor survival skills, basic computer skills, and an understanding of basic legal principles.

This hands-on experience not only reinforces these skills, but shapes volunteers into capable individuals equipped with a versatile repertoire of skills, which greatly enhances their future employability. Many volunteers recognise the value of this experience and strategically include it on their CVs, demonstrating not only their competence but also their commitment, dedication, and ethical values – qualities that are increasingly valued in today's professional environment. This proactive approach allows candidates to tell compelling stories and give concrete examples during interviews.

The overwhelmingly positive response from employers underlines the impact of volunteering on candidates' employability. Employers often rate this engagement favourably and consider it a key factor in selecting candidates for jobs: 'Every time I come to an interview, the person just has the CV printed there. I always see that they're putting something on there, and they usually have volunteering underlined, for example, or they have something on there.'

Moreover, volunteering offers pertinent professional exposure and cultivates specialised skills aligned with the field of study, such as pedagogy, medicine, psychology, and more. This diverse skill set equips volunteers with hands-on experience, enhancing their comprehension of specific sectors and facilitating growth in areas they find personally enriching and significant. Engaging in volunteer work provides opportunities to interact with professionals, receive constructive feedback, and foster self-knowledge and self-reflection: 'I'm still wondering, like self-reflection actually, in the style of, yeah, there's always some feedback coming in and stuff, if you kind of like work and just decide on the basis of that how to go on, what to go into, what not to go into.' This multifaceted engagement contributes not only to skill acquisition but also to the holistic development of individuals in their chosen professional domains.

Social interaction and networking

Volunteering proves highly efficacious for cultivating social bonds and broadening personal and professional networks. Those involved in volunteer activities emphasise that this type of commitment not only leads to new acquaintances but also fosters enduring friendships grounded in a shared commitment to altruism.

One of the key elements of social interaction in a volunteer setting is the opportunity to meet people from different age groups and life experiences: ‘Whenever you’re in a company and you have just, you know, a plethora of different people, there’s always someone special.’

This allows volunteer participants to gain a varied perspective on the world and build relationships with individuals who bring diverse perspectives and values: ‘I’m just realising now that I still mention that maybe when I’m talking to those, whether it’s with those people or with the staff, that and like that educates me so much like that.’

The variety of interpersonal relationships fosters openness, tolerance, and a heightened understanding of diverse life situations. Furthermore, active participation in volunteer work is instrumental in broadening professional networks. Participants not only establish connections amongst themselves but also forge relationships with individuals associated with organisations that endorse volunteer activities. Such networking can substantially impact career advancement and job prospects: ‘It just so happened that where I was volunteering, then maybe they called me up and said they had a vacancy for a tutor, and just like, I would have it as a paid position, so I wouldn’t have to volunteer there anymore.’

The contacts made can serve as valuable sources of information, support in professional growth, and create opportunities for further volunteering or work projects: ‘The contacts that one gets through that, which, whether they then either focus on the topic that the person is also focusing on, or they just create like a network of people that they can contact in some way when they need something, or when they are then maybe looking for that job or something like that.’

Volunteering transcends altruism: it involves establishing connections with individuals engaged in analogous subjects, sharing akin interests and values. These newly cultivated networks subsequently offer support and expert guidance.

Social responsibility and sustainability

Volunteering plays a key role in promoting social responsibility and sustainability by encouraging civic participation and building strong community links. Involving students in volunteering activities acts as a catalyst for their transformation into advocates for sustainable social change: ‘Volunteers do things that either nobody wants to do, or there are few people who can do them, so whether it’s caring for the elderly and so on, there’s a definite benefit to society, and also when someone volunteers, they develop themselves and are more valuable to society.’

In addition to providing practical help, volunteering also provides a platform for discussion and awareness of current social issues. Students who engage in volunteer projects not only help make decisions about specific actions but also become active members of the community who are aware of the needs of their surroundings and willing to contribute to the positive transformation of their neighbourhood: ‘For me, sustainability has always been a lot like on that social level, and from that point of view, I’ve always tried to develop the society around me in some way and to look for solutions to different things, and I think that by developing, by doing it out of goodwill, it can contribute a lot to making the system more sustainable.’

Participation and decision-making are thus intrinsically linked to volunteering. Participants in volunteer activities are actively involved in decision-making in the projects they are part of. Through a democratic process, they decide on the priorities and goals of their volunteer efforts. This participation not only fosters a sense of ownership but also shapes volunteer activities to be as relevant as possible to the needs of the community. Overall, volunteering creates a space not only for community empowerment and sustainability but also for active participation and decision-making; making individuals not only witnesses but also creators of positive social change. At the same time, some perceive that volunteering is a bigger part of the world than it seems: 'And yet actually nowadays, if you just look at the news or whatever, everything is so pessimistic, and it depends on which parts of the world, but just that people maybe like look at themselves and they don't want to help themselves like that and stuff like that. But at the same time, there are actually a lot of volunteers, but you don't know because if they don't have a volunteer card, you can't tell if it's like a paid position or just standing there, or where it came from, so I guess it opened up like a perspective that there are actually a lot of volunteers and that maybe the world is not as bad as it looks at first glance.'

Global thinking

Volunteering is instrumental in cultivating a global mindset, serving as a potent catalyst for societal change. Participants often emphasise its transformative power, highlighting how volunteering influences opinions and contributes to positive social shifts. This experience not only alters participants' worldviews but also impacts their value systems and perceptions of the world, fostering open-mindedness: 'I don't know like it opened my eyes, and it opened my eyes that I am more like so open, that an awful lot of people I find in the Czech Republic have such like closed minds maybe to certain just minorities and even the majority let's say.'

Crucial to this transformation is the promotion of intercultural understanding and diversity within volunteer projects. Exposure to different cultures enhances understanding and appreciation for diversity. Volunteering exposes students to global challenges, prompting critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This hands-on experience broadens horizons, encouraging reflection on personal actions' potential global impact.

Volunteering serves as a vehicle for developing critical thinking skills, challenging participants to reflect on their actions' broader societal context: 'That it just gave me a lot of critical thinking as well.' This acquired ability to critically examine information becomes an invaluable tool applicable in personal and professional life. Beyond an act of solidarity, volunteering emerges as a strategic approach to open new perspectives and cultivate global thinking.

The university's role in student volunteering

According to the research participants, universities should strive to raise awareness of volunteering and its benefits as part of their third role, setting an example themselves through a proactive approach, for example, in the community. At the same time, they should work to increase the societal recognition of volunteering. Volunteering can be perceived as a way to cultivate not only the learners but the whole society: '(...) the university should awaken in those people that it's not just like when a person comes in as an empty vessel, I pour something into it, then he gets out and he's going to do something, so somehow cultivate it in those people somehow like in a clever subliminal way, ideally with his education (...)' The statement points to universities as centres

of education, whose aim is not 'only' to prepare students for their future careers, which is in line with the concept of lifelong learning.

Discussion

Volunteering serves as a catalyst for personal development, exposing learners to diverse experiences and unforeseen challenges. This exposure cultivates resilience, adaptability, and a broader worldview, positively impacting self-awareness, values, and social responsibility. However, it is crucial to acknowledge potential risks associated with volunteering, especially among university students. Strain on mental and physical health, the delicate balance between volunteer commitments and academic/personal life, and the risk of burnout are significant considerations. Notably, volunteering may not be universally suitable, given varying attitudes, skills, and life situations.

The study emphasises volunteering as a substantial contributor to career development, offering a spectrum of skills, from soft to professional, enhancing employability. Hands-on experiences strategically included on a CV or resume positively influences employers. Nevertheless, caution is warranted against overemphasising volunteering, risking burnout, or neglecting other dimensions of personal and professional growth. Moreover, not all volunteer experiences may align seamlessly with career goals.

Volunteering emerges as a powerful force in cultivating social bonds and expanding personal and professional networks, fostering openness, tolerance, and a nuanced worldview. Networking opportunities can lead to valuable connections and support in various aspects of life. Yet, there is a cautionary note about individuals engaging solely for networking purposes, potentially diluting the altruistic essence of volunteering. Overreliance on networks for career advancement may lead to unfulfilled expectations.

The research underscores volunteering as a cornerstone for promoting social responsibility and sustainability, empowering individuals to contribute to positive social change. The democratic decision-making approach within volunteer projects aligns initiatives with community needs. Nevertheless, risks such as 'voluntourism' or superficial engagement may arise, where personal growth might overshadow genuine community impact, leading to conflicts within volunteer groups.

Volunteering plays a pivotal role in fostering a global mindset, exposing participants to diverse cultures and global challenges, enhancing critical thinking skills. However, a potential risk lies in volunteers adopting a 'saviour complex' or oversimplifying global issues. Ensuring that volunteering leads to informed perspectives, rather than reinforcing stereotypes, becomes a critical challenge.

The study emphasises the essential role of universities in fostering awareness and recognition of volunteering. Universities setting an example through proactive community engagement aligns with the concept of lifelong learning. However, potential drawbacks, such as undue pressure on students to volunteer, may lead to superficial or insincere participation. Challenges in measuring and standardising the impact of volunteering on academic and personal growth also need consideration.

In conclusion, while volunteering offers multifaceted benefits, it is essential to navigate potential pitfalls. Universities can play a pivotal role in striking a balance, encouraging thoughtful and meaningful engagement. Recognising the nuanced interplay of pros and cons ensures that volunteering remains a powerful tool for holistic student development, social impact, and global awareness.

The research paper by R. H. Scott and E. van Etten explores the alignment of sustainability principles with tertiary sciences students' environmental volunteering. This aligns with our acknowledgment

of volunteering as vital for promoting social responsibility and sustainability. Both studies recognise the potential drawbacks, such as voluntourism or superficial engagement, and the need for careful evaluation of the impact of volunteering on academic and personal growth. While our study emphasises the role of universities in fostering awareness and recognition of volunteering, their research paper specifically addresses the need for evaluating environmental volunteering as part of an integrated programme of Work-Integrated Learning. This aligns with our emphasis on universities playing a pivotal role in encouraging thoughtful and meaningful engagement, while also acknowledging the potential drawbacks, such as undue pressure on students and challenges in measuring impact.

Julia Peric's²¹ study specifically focuses on the Volunteering Programme of the Graduate Programme in Entrepreneurship. The study emphasises the role of socially conscious students in effecting positive change in their environment through active participation in community development. This aligns with our acknowledgment of volunteering as a tool for fostering social responsibility and sustainability. Both studies underscore the importance of universities in cultivating a sense of responsibility and promoting societal interests through value systems.

Conclusion

Volunteering catalyses social responsibility and sustainability, engaging students in community decision-making and positive social change. This experience broadens global perspectives and develops cross-cultural understanding and critical thinking skills. In essence, volunteering proves to be a transformational journey that shapes individuals and society at various levels.

Research reveals that volunteering contributes significantly to students' personal development and promotes their adaptability, problem-solving skills, and broader worldview. It transcends academic boundaries and provides enriching insights into relationships, friendships, and career paths. Meeting beneficiaries from marginalised groups breaks down social barriers and fosters a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives.

The multifaceted benefits of volunteering include health, social, cultural, sporting, environmental, and spiritual activities, contributing to personal growth and opening new horizons across geographical boundaries.

Volunteering is an effective means of promoting social responsibility and sustainability, making students advocates for sustainable social change and active participants in community decision-making.

In the professional field, volunteering provides students with a versatile set of skills and enhances their employability. It serves as an opportunity to make formal and informal contacts, fostering lasting friendships and professional links beyond the immediate volunteering environment.

Our research highlights the key role of universities in promoting and recognising the value of volunteering. It highlights the need for universities to actively raise awareness and set an example as traditional centres of wisdom operating beyond traditional career preparation.

Our study highlights the profound impact of volunteering by university students, showing it not only as an activity but as a pathway that shapes socially responsible and globally aware active people.

21 Julia Peric, *Student volunteering*, citation: 3-14.

Contact:***Zdeňka Dohnalová, Ph.D.***

Masaryk University
Faculty of Social Studies
Department of Social Policy and Social Work
Joštova 218/10
Brno
dohnalova@fss.muni.cz

Iveta Zelenková, Ph.D.

Masaryk University
Faculty of Social Studies
Department of Social Policy and Social Work
Joštova 218/10
Brno
143806@mail.muni.cz

Readiness of Religious Communities to Live Today and Tomorrow. Do Consecrated Persons Take Seriously Contemporary Theological, Social and Environmental Challenges?

Dana Jakšičová, Alice Košárková, Vít Hušek

DOI: 10.32725/cetv.2024.006

Abstract

Consecrated life is an ongoing phenomenon within the Catholic Church that changes over time and tries to respond to actual spiritual and social needs of the society. This study deals with the contemporary religious order communities facing the rapid development of society and changed theological emphases. The aim is to assess whether consecrated persons are ready to accept socio-cultural changes and respond to actual spiritual, theological, social, and environmental challenges. This readiness is an essential prerequisite if religious orders are to remain an integral part of the Church and society in the future, as they have been since the beginning of the development of Christianised Europe. After a brief outlining of historical context, using the basic statistical analysis, two groups of consecrated persons with different cultural-political backgrounds are compared, in order to find out to what extent they subjectively feel to fit in with the contemporary world and how familiar they are with the current magisterial documents. In the last section, the latest magisterial documents addressed to consecrated persons are analysed to determine whether religious order members are sufficiently theoretically equipped to integrate the current social changes theologically and practically. The results show a higher degree of integrity with contemporary society among Western religious order members compared to those from the former Czechoslovakia, as well as a varying degree of familiarity with individual documents. The theoretical basis provided by Magisterial documents for renewal of consecrated life was found sufficient, while the practical implications, the ability of individual institutes to undergo a balanced reform, as well as the overall attractiveness of consecrated life for the younger generations remain an open question.

Keywords: consecrated life, magisterial documents, social challenges, environmental issues, renewal, theological accents

Methodological Introduction

This study deals with the phenomenon of the contemporary consecrated life raising the question whether religious orders, that, for sixteen centuries, in many regards have influenced the development of European civilisation and stood at the beginning of many socio-cultural changes, still have a place in the present and future generations of the highly secularised Euro-American society. The paper outlines the situation of religious order communities in connection with the changing character of society and the changing theological accents of the Magisterium from three different points of view. Therefore, several methodological approaches are combined in the text.

In the first chapter, the theme is anchored historically. After a brief outline of the contribution of religious orders to European society over the centuries, the impact of Vatican II on consecrated life is described, followed by a short introduction of the development of religious institutes in the post-conciliar era in view of the differing conditions and situations in a world divided by the Iron Curtain. The second and third chapters deal with 'mental presence' of consecrated persons (CPs) in today's world. First, it is examined to what extent CPs feel they fit in with the contemporary world, meant in the general sense of a globalised, pluralised, accelerated, and advanced secularised world. Then, the study investigates CPs' orientation in the current teaching of the Church, both in general and specifically with regard to the mission and role of consecrated life within the Church. In these chapters, we work with partial results of an international religious-communities survey carried out under the auspices of the Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology of the Palacky University in Olomouc in the period 2020-2021. In the interpretation, the quantitative data and results of the basic statistical analysis are supplemented with observations of the author, who knows well the milieu of religious institutes. Despite the use of statistical data, this is not a quantitative study and the discussion is not separated from the description of the results, but the two are intertwined. The fourth chapter is based on direct work with Magisterial documents addressed to CPs during the pontificate of Pope Francis. Methodologically, a descriptive analysis of text parts is used, anchoring them in a broader context. We draw attention to specific texts and examine the emphasis on the engagement of CPs in social and environmental issues, in particular in dealing with various forms of poverty. However, we do not work systematically with the reflection of these documents in the literature because they have not yet found much resonance amongst academics and it would exceed both the objectives and the scope of this study.

The main aim of the paper is to assess whether consecrated persons are ready to accept socio-cultural changes, to respond to actual spiritual, theological, social, and environmental challenges, and to adapt in order to continue in future generations. We also set sub-objectives in the form of answers to four research questions: 1. Does the perception of belonging to the contemporary world differ between the CPs in the two countries of the former Czechoslovakia and the CPs from the Western Euro-American world? 2. Is it possible to trace parallels between which Magisterial documents CPs in both groups preferentially read and how they perceive their belonging to the outside world? 3. To what extent are social and environmental issues doctrinally anchored in contemporary Church documents addressed to CPs? 4. Does the current Church's teaching on consecrated life provide a sufficient and complex basis to enable religious communities to adapt to a rapidly changing socio-cultural context of an advanced secularised society and to continue in future generations? Further, our secondary aim is to outline the possibilities of an interdisciplinary approach to a topic that has so far been treated by Czech experts mainly historically.

1. Easterly and Westerly from the Iron Curtain: a Brief look at the Development of Religious Communities in Recent Decades

Consecrated life has played an important civilisational role in the Christian culture since its inception at the end of antiquity. It was not only the significant participation of the monks in the Christianisation of Europe, but also their contribution to the cultivation of the countryside and the development of agriculture. Moreover, medieval monasteries were practically the only centres of education and artistic creation until the establishment of universities and town schools.¹ In the 13th century, the mendicant orders laid the foundations for social-charitable work, folk preaching, and systematic theological-philosophical reflection at universities.² In the 16th century, the Jesuits revolutionised not only the experiencing of Christian spirituality, but also the educational system and missionary work.³ Since the end of the same century, the first more loosely organised congregations appeared, responding to the pressing problems in society, especially poverty and lack of education among lower social classes. The strict post-Tridentine development slowed down this spontaneous growth of 'pious associations' by imposing a monastic way of life and a strict cloister on many of them, which has caused deformative processes that are still evident in many religious institutes today.⁴ After the decline and efforts partially or completely to liquidate religious life during the Enlightenment reforms and revolutionary events at the end of the 18th century, a renaissance of consecrated life started a few decades later in the form of religious congregations, mostly women's, which sprang up in dozens in Europe and overseas. In the 19th century, the social commitment of consecrated persons was fully manifested as these nuns opened, on a large scale, educational, social, and health facilities that other institutions were not able to implement at that time. As in previous centuries, but to a much greater extent, consecrated life once again became popular and attractive to young Christians.⁵ This era of the 'golden age' of religious congregations culminated in the middle of the 20th century and was definitively ended by the paradigmatic changes of the 1960s, which included also the convocation of Vatican II. This council marked a new milestone in the sixteen-century-old history of religious life and started the transformation which is still in progress. The result remains open and evokes questions of whether consecrated life still has a place in a changed society, whether it can be attractive to younger generations and what new social roles it should play. In order to assess the current situation and future perspectives, it is necessary to understand the development of religious order communities over the last few decades, which, moreover, has not been the same everywhere but influenced by various socio-political conditions of particular countries and regions. In the last century, the world has undergone the most dramatic changes in human history, and the pace of development is constantly accelerating. It is becoming increasingly difficult to be familiar not only with new technologies and communication media, but also with the thinking and experiences of younger generations. Although the Catholic Church officially gave the green light to openness, adaptability to the socio-cultural environment and aggiornamento sixty years ago at Vatican II, the implementation of the Council's teaching is a very gradual and complex matter. In essence, this teaching represents a radical 'Copernican turn' in the Catholic Christian's view of the world. After centuries, this turning point restores authority to the Gospel proclamation of a loving incarnated

1 Leonard Holtz, *Geschichte des christlichen Ordenslebens* (Zürich: Benziger, 1991), 68-78.

2 Ibid., 121-138.

3 Ines G. Županov (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

4 Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity. From the Reformation to the 21st Century* (Dublin: Orbis Books, 2003), 94-103.

5 Tomáš Petráček, *Sekularizace a katolicismus v českých zemích. Specifické rysy české cesty od lidové církve k nejateističtější zemi světa* (Ostrava: Moravapress, 2013), 49-58.

God who came 'not to judge the world, but to save it' (John 12:47). Understanding the nature of this turn requires a change of mentality in several ways: from exclusivity to identification (cf. Phil 2:6-8), from isolation to going out involvement (cf. Matt 28:19), and from rule-bound to inner freedom (cf. Gal 5:18). In this spirit, for six decades, Magisterial documents have appealed to today's disciples to recall both the universality of God's love for all people and the mission of Christians to show the world what Jesus meant with the words he used to define himself against heartless moralism and legalism: 'I want mercy not sacrifice' (Matt 9:13). The mission of Jesus' disciples to be the salt of the earth we walk on and the light of the world of which we are a part (cf. Matt 5:13-14) is a fundamental element of contemporary theology.

The process of *aggiornamento* and change of mentality takes place within the universal Church at different paces and in various modifications, with the socio-cultural and political context playing a significant role. The Council specifically ordered renewal for religious institutes.⁶ The hierarchically governed communities, which arose at a certain stage of the historical development of the Church and humanity, were strongly marked by theological deformations of the 'Forgotten Trinity Period'. The practice resulting from this theology developed the form of an authoritarian and pyramidally ordered society.⁷ Right here, the three characteristics mentioned above could be observed to a particularly concentrated extent: the feeling of exclusivity, closure from the outside world, and being bound by rules.⁸ For CPs, the conciliar turn meant a revolution that shook the existing order holding these institutions and relativised an interpretation of values they held sacred and inviolable. Changing the collective mentality of a closed community is always a complex process that rarely follows a unified line. Therefore, the post-conciliar renewal of religious institutes is a very complicated and long-term process with a still unclear outcome.

It is known that events in religious communities in the first decades after the end of Vatican II were very turbulent, at least in the free world west of the Iron Curtain. Many institutes have undergone radical changes that have entailed a departure from established traditions, rethinking the role of superiors, new styles of dressing (from simplifying the religious habit to discarding it altogether), opening the communities to greater participation in work among people.⁹ However, there were also some negative factors: departure of a significant number of members, grouping in values and questions about the meaning and mission of consecrated life in the 'new' world.¹⁰ Another phenomenon of the change in the social and ecclesiastical paradigm was the fact that religious life ceased to be attractive for young Christians. From the 1970s onwards, most communities in the Western Euro-American civilisation began to suffer from a lack of new vocations.¹¹ Religious institutes began to age and some even die out, while others focused on establishing provinces in Third World countries where it was easy to recruit new members.¹²

6 *Perfectae Caritatis. The Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life* (28th October 1965).

7 Cf. Ctirad Václav Pospíšil, *Jako v nebi, tak i na zemi. Náčrt trinitární teologie* (Praha: Krystal OP – Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2007), 53-81.

8 Dana Jakšičová and Miroslav Novotný, *Služebníci pod zákonem. Zlatý věk řeholních kongregací v českobudějovické diecézi* (České Budějovice: Jihočeské muzeum, 2021), 233-352.

9 Judith Harford and Tom O'Donoghue, 'Continuity and change in the perspectives of women religious in Ireland on themselves both as religious and as teachers in the years immediately prior to, and following, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)', *Paedagogica Historica* 47 (2011): 399-413; Susan O. Michelman, 'Changing old habits: Dress of women religious and its relationship to personal and social identity', *Sociological inquiry* 67 (1997): 350-363.

10 Veronica Garcia-Martin, 'Crossroads of Identities in Women Religious in Spain. Catholicism, Society and Second Vatican Council (1953-69)', *Journal of Religious History* 47, no. 3 (September 2023): 469-485.

11 Helen Rose Ebaugh et al., 'The growth and decline of the population of Catholic nuns cross-nationally, 1960-1990: A case of secularization as social structural change', *Journal for the scientific study of religion* (1996): 171-183.

12 Gertrud Huwelmeier, 'Our future will be in India: Travelling Nuns between Europe and South Asia', *Migration and Religion in Europe: Comparative Perspectives on South Asian Experiences* (2014): 45-57; Isabelle Jonveaux, 'Future of Catholic Monasteries on New Monastic

The situation of religious communities in Czechoslovakia and other countries of the Soviet bloc differed considerably from that of the Western world. The Council's 'news' was delayed and censored. Their implementation was greatly hindered or even prevented by the communist regime, which kept CPs under strict control and did not allow them to develop freely and accept new young members.¹³ Women's communities especially lived detached from the majority society in the spirit of traditions and legalistic concept of religious life. In many communities, post-conciliar required change has been put into practice only partially. The outlived structures became even more rigid during the persecution and a change of mentality in the spirit of free development was not possible under these circumstances, even from a psychological point of view. The exceptions were individuals from different religious institutes, more often men than women, who, as secret CPs or priests, sometimes connected to the underground church,¹⁴ managed to join the majority society. Daily interaction with the outside world at least partially saved them from adopting unhealthy attitudes of the inhabitants of centralising monasteries and asylums, in which CPs worked under the supervision of state authorities.¹⁵

Today, the differences in the mentality and situation of religious communities in the countries of the East and the West are therefore not only predictable, but also noticeable without much examination. Western institutes prevalently appear to be older in age, as the crisis of vocation began there as early as in the mid-1960s.¹⁶ Religious communities in Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, experienced a brief period of influx of new members in the 1990s after the fall of communism, as the long-suppressed and forbidden way of life became attractive once again. However, around the year 2000, this trend began to wane, probably not only due to a general change in the social paradigm, but also with the declining popularity of the Catholic Church, which failed to use the potential and broad support it enjoyed in the first years after the fall of the totalitarian regime.¹⁷ Vatican II, with its call for openness and going out to people, was and is reflected here only slowly and in a certain way, selectively. Therefore, ecclesiastical institutions, including religious communities, rather tended to return to traditional structures and an attitude of exclusivity. It is evident that this tension still exists and concerns the whole universal Church, but it takes on different dynamics in different countries and socio-cultural contexts.¹⁸

The post-conciliar renewal of consecrated life is not a finished process. On the contrary, it is a topical one. Since the end of the Council, the Magisterium of the Catholic Church has continuously commented on the role of consecrated life and has called CPs to live an authentic life in a personal relationship with God, fraternal community and personal freedom, and to come out of isolation into the 'streets of today's world'.¹⁹ In particular, the pontificate of Pope Francis, who is himself a religious, is characterised by his appeal to CPs, both in a series of documents and in personal meetings. A very important text of the recent period is the *New Wine in New Wineskins* by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) which openly names issues that have persisted in the communities for more than half a century since the

Continents: The Case of Africa', *Religions* 10/9 (2019): 513.

13 Jiří Hanuš and Stanislav Balík, *Letnice dvacátého století: druhý vatikánský koncil a české země* (Brno: CDK, 2012), 7-24.

14 Cf. Petr Fiala and Jiří Hanuš, *Skrytá církev: Felix M. Davidek a společenství Koinótés* (Brno: CDK, 2022).

15 Vojtěch Vlček (ed.), *Ženské řehole za komunismu 1948-1989* (Olomouc: Matice Cyrilometodějská, 2003).

16 H. R. Ebaugh, 'The growth and decline,' 174.

17 J. O'Mahony, 'The Catholic Church and civil society: Democratic options in the post-Communist Czech Republic,' *West European Politics* 26 (2003): 183; Tomáš Petráček, *Sekularizace a katolicismus*, 105-106.

18 For a recent analysis of contemporary consecrated life and religious vocations across continents, including challenges for the future, cf. Patricia Wittberg et al., *God's Call Is Everywhere. A Global Analysis of Contemporary Religious Vocations for Women* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2023).

19 Cf. below.

conclusion of the Council.²⁰ This document confirms that both the individual communities and the institutionalised consecrated life as a whole are going through a period of crisis and transformation.

2. Consecrated Persons – a Part of Today’s Society?

The actual situation of religious communities and its connectedness to a broader socio-cultural context was the impetus for a research project called ‘Consecrated Life Today’ which focused on the interconnection of the physical, mental, and spiritual health of CPs and some aspects of community life. The questionnaire was first spread among CPs in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (CZ/SK) with 401 respondents, and then translated into four languages and sent to religious communities in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, USA, UK, Spain, and Italy. Spanish communities did not participate. From the other countries, 338 answers were returned (157 in English, 109 in German, 72 in Italian). Thus, there are two similarly large samples of respondents that can be compared with each other: CPs from CZ/SK and CPs from selected Western countries (SWC) that did not go through a totalitarian regime and persecution of the Catholic Church in the second half of the 20th century. Given the nature of the sample, it is necessary to take into account its unrepresentativeness and expected biases caused by several factors, especially the significant age difference and the predominance of respondents with higher education (see Table 1). Moreover, it is necessary to consider the fact of general distrust and reticence towards research questionnaires, since many institutes refused to participate. It can be assumed that the overall more open communities participated because the superiors passed the questionnaire on to the other members to complete. On the contrary, the participation of rather conservative institutes with authoritarian leadership is very unlikely. Further, the nature of the sample may have been influenced by similar responses from members of the same communities. The data therefore requires careful interpretation, but it is still very valuable. Especially in the case of data from CZ/SK communities, the sample is quite numerous and to a large extent represents the younger and middle generation of CPs in CZ/SK.

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of the samples

	Sample 1 (CZ/SK)		Sample 2 (SWC)	
Characteristic	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Male	85	21.2	50	14.8
Female	316	78.8	288	85.2
Age				
18-30	16	4.0	2	0.6
31-40	60	15.0	17	5.0
41-50	188	46.9	34	10.1
51-60	98	24.4	59	17.5
61-70	37	9.2	58	17.2
71-92	2	0.5	168	49.7

20 CICLSAL, *New Wine in New Wineskins. The Consecrated Life and its Ongoing Challenges since Vatican II*, Guidelines (6. 7. 2017).

Education				
Elementary	1	0.2	0	0.0
Secondary vocational	13	3.2	14	4.2
Secondary with graduation	48	12.0	17	5.0
Higher + bachelor	45	11.2	93	27.5
University (Mag., Ing., Dr.)	294	73.4	214	63.3
Total	401		338	

One of the aspects targeted by the research is the ‘mental presence’ of CPs in today’s world. First, it is examined to what extent CPs subjectively identify with the contemporary world, in the broad and unspecified sense of this term. Then, their orientation in the current teaching of the Church is investigated, both in general and with regard to the specific mission and role of consecrated life within the Church. We suppose that an internal reform of a Church institution and its adaptation to the changed paradigm is not possible without knowledge of current theology and a re-evaluation of older theological interpretations on which the institution was based at the time of its founding.

One survey question was: ‘To what extent do you as a consecrated person fit in with the contemporary world?’ The respondents chose from four possible answers: ‘totally, rather yes, rather not, not at all’. The resulting responses of the two examined samples show obvious deviations. The p-value represents a comparison of CPs groups from CZ/SK and SWC using the chi-square test. It was found that there is a statistically significant correlation between the country of origin of CPs and how much they feel to be part of today’s world. More than a third of Western CPs said they fully fit into the contemporary world, and more than half of them perceive that they ‘rather fit in’. Negative responses were rare in this sample. From the CZ/SK sample, only 12 % feel to fit in fully while more than half of the respondents decided for a more neutral ‘rather yes’. More than a quarter of respondents chose negative answers.

Table 2: Answers to the question: To what extent do you as a consecrated person fit in with the contemporary world?

	totally		rather yes		rather not		not at all		p-value
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	P<0.001***
CZ/SK	43	12.0	221	61.9	82	23.0	11	3.1	
SWC	112	35.0	180	56.3	26	8.1	2	0.6	

The answers more or less correspond to what has been said above about the development of religious institutes in the two compared areas in the last six decades. It is not very surprising that among CPs in SWC, the perceived sense of belonging to the world outside their institute is higher than in the case of CPs in CZ/SK. Certainly, this result may not apply universally, for there are different currents in consecrated life in the Western world, and the responses of closed, more conservative communities are not available. However, with reference to a certain ‘religious mainstream’ represented by the International Union Superiors General (UISG) and its activities

including the published *UISG Bulletin*,²¹ it can be argued that CPs in SWC systematically seek to reflect on current social and theological themes and to draw from them impulses for consecrated life. This effort to keep up with current events can foster a sense of belonging of CPs to the majority society.

Another factor, which can influence how CPs subjectively perceive the degree of their 'fitting in' to the society, is the religious habit. A large number of CPs in Western countries do not currently wear religious habits and are not immediately distinguishable as a 'special group'. On the contrary, in CZ/SK, the habit is a characteristic feature of most religious sisters (less so of religious brothers), so they are destined to be automatically considered a 'special group'. It is probable that a religious habit in any form plays an important role in the formation of the identity of CPs and their integration into the majority society.²²

Moreover, a lower sense of belonging to contemporary society among CPs in CZ/SK may be partly caused by the awareness of the differences between the outside world and the microcosm of the religious community which often uses its own language and represents attitudes still bearing traces of the pre-conciliar exclusivity of the religious state.²³ However, in the fact that more than 60% of CZ/SK respondents stated that they 'rather fit' into the contemporary world, it is also possible to see their effort and desire for change. Even a negative assessment of the degree of fitting into contemporary society, at least for some respondents, can be interpreted more like a call for change and a criticism of the current state of religious communities than a rejection of the outside world. Nevertheless, this possible interpretation of the results is only a hypothesis based on experience of the community environment and informal discussions among CPs.²⁴

3. Consecrated Persons and Knowledge of Magisterial Documents

As mentioned above, the internal reform of a Church institution and its adaptation to a changed paradigm is not possible without knowledge of current theology and a rethinking of older theological interpretations. Vatican II gave special attention to the reform of consecrated life in the decree *Perfectae Caritatis*. Since then, the popes and CICLSAL have issued various types of documents addressed to CPs. In particular, the pontificate of the Jesuit Pope Francis is characterised by this. Today, there are a number of magisterial texts anchoring the theology of consecrated life in the Gospel foundation, in following the personal example of Jesus in relation to God and people, in living fraternal communion, and in missionary openness. However, the question remains to what extent these documents are accessible to members of religious communities and what the motivation and willingness is among CPs to read and take seriously these texts.

For the purpose of the questionnaire, ten texts were selected. Six of these are magisterial documents on consecrated life: the above mentioned *Perfectae Caritatis* (1965), the extensive post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II *Vita Consecrata* (1996), the Instruction *Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium* (2002), two letters published by CICLSAL in preparation for the Year of Consecrated Life *Rejoice* (2014) and *Scrutinize*

21 *UISG Bulletin* is published three times a year in the digital format and is available in seven languages: <https://www.uisg.org/en/bulletin/>. The journal is intended for general superiors and other UISG members and offers various reflections on religious life in an effort to contribute to a better knowledge of consecrated life and its development worldwide.

22 Michelman, 'Changing old habits'.

23 Jakšičová and Novotný, *Služebníci*, 371.

24 A great desire for change was expressed by Czech religious sisters at the seminar 'Living Religious Vows and Synodality in the Context of the Challenges of Contemporary Society' in October 2023. Kateřina Štašná, 'Řeholnice z celého Česka se setkaly v Praze pod Petřínem', *Katolické noviny* 25th October 2023, <http://katolickenoviny.cz/2023/10/reholnice-z-celeho-ceska-se-setkaly-v-praze-pod-petrinem>.

(2014), and finally the guidelines *New Wine in New Wineskins* (2017). Further, three major encyclicals of Pope Francis were included in which he raises important evangelisation, social, and environmental issues: *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), *Laudato Si'* (2015) and *Fratelli Tutti* (2020). The last title, *The Strength of Vocation. Consecrated Life Today* (2019), is not an official Church document, but an interview between Pope Francis and Fernando Prado CMF on the topic of contemporary consecrated life. The respondents answered two questions: 1. Have you heard of the title? 2. Have you read it? Table 3 shows the 'popularity' of the selected documents among CPs in both compared samples. In Table 4, the Western CPs are divided into separate language groups.

Table 3: Knowledge of Church Documents – Comparison CZ/SK vs. SWC

	CZ/SK		SWC		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Heard about the document					
Perfectae Caritatis	334	92.5	270	82.1	<0.001***
Vita Consecrata	349	96.7	244	74.2	<0.001***
Starting Afresh from Christ	274	75.9	106	32.2	<0.001***
Rejoice	230	63.7	137	41.6	<0.001***
Scrutinize	139	38.5	69	21.0	<0.001***
New Wine in New Wineskins	237	65.7	205	62.3	n.s.
The Strength of a Vocation	122	33.8	109	33.1	n.s.
Evangelii Gaudium	311	86.1	277	84.2	n.s.
Laudato Si'	307	85.0	321	97.6	<0.001***
Fratelli Tutti	272	75.3	300	91.2	<0.001***
Read the document					
Perfectae Caritatis	286	79.2	210	63.8	<0.001***
Vita Consecrata	330	91.4	201	61.1	<0.001***
Starting Afresh from Christ	233	64.5	88	27.6	<0.001***
Rejoice	156	43.2	97	29.5	<0.001***
Scrutinize	102	28.3	53	16.1	<0.001***
New Wine in New Wineskins	172	47.6	148	45.0	n.s.
The Strength of a Vocation	81	22.4	61	18.5	n.s.
Evangelii Gaudium	215	59.6	224	68.1	0.020*
Laudato Si'	159	44.0	295	89.7	<0.001***
Fratelli Tutti	93	25.8	249	75.7	<0.001***

Comparing the two samples, using a chi-square test, it was found that for some items there was a statistically significant difference between the country of origin of CPs and the responders' knowledge of particular documents. Except for *New Wine in New Wineskins*, *The Strength of a Vocation* and *Evangelii Gaudium*, where no statistically significant difference was shown, for all

other titles a highly significant statistical difference was found between the country of origin and whether they know about and read the documents.

Table 4: Knowledge of Church Documents – Comparison of Answers in English, German and Italian

	ENG		GE		IT		p-value
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Heard about the document							
Perfectae Caritatis	120	76.4	81	74.3	69	95.8	<0.001***
Vita Consecrata	91	58.0	82	75.2	71	98.6	<0.001***
Starting Afresh from Christ	22	14.0	24	22.0	60	83.3	<0.001***
Rejoice	42	26.8	34	31.2	61	84.7	<0.001***
Scrutinize	3	1.9	16	14.7	50	69.4	<0.001***
New Wine in New Wineskins	95	60.5	48	44.0	62	86.1	<0.001***
The Strength of a Vocation	46	29.3	33	30.3	30	41.7	n.s.
Evangelii Gaudium	113	72.0	93	85.3	71	98.6	<0.001***
Laudato Si'	150	95.5	99	90.8	72	100.0	<0.020*
Fratelli Tutti	141	89.8	90	82.6	69	95.8	<0.019*
Read the document							
Perfectae Caritatis	91	58.0	67	61.5	53	72.2	n.s.
Vita Consecrata	71	45.2	67	61.5	63	87.5	<0.001***
Starting Afresh from Christ	21	13.4	16	14.7	51	70.8	<0.001***
Rejoice	27	17.2	18	16.5	52	72.2	<0.001***
Scrutinize	3	1.9	13	11.9	37	51.4	<0.001***
New Wine in New Wineskins	65	41.4	27	24.8	56	77.8	<0.001***
The Strength of a Vocation	25	15.9	18	16.5	18	25.0	n.s.
Evangelii Gaudium	89	56.7	69	63.3	66	91.7	<0.001***
Laudato Si'	143	91.1	86	78.9	66	91.7	<0.006**
Fratelli Tutti	123	78.3	58	53.2	68	94.4	<0.001***

Furthermore, the comparison of individual language groups of the 'Western' sample in Table 4 also showed noticeable differences. Using a chi-square test, it was found that except for *The Strength of a Vocation* in hearing about and *Perfectae Caritatis* and *The Strength of a Vocation* in reading, there was a statistically significant difference between the language groups.

Tables 3 and 4 show several interesting findings. Striking is the clear dominance of the popularity of *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti* among CPs in SWC, of which knowledge of them is higher than that of *Perfectae Caritatis* and *Vita Consecrata*, which are key but older texts of the post-conciliar renewal of consecrated life. In CZ/SK, on the contrary, these latter two documents dominate. *Vita Consecrata* was commonly used in religious formation here at the turn of the millennium, and the responses, representing mostly the middle generation of CPs in CZ/SK, testify that most

of them have read this somewhat lengthy and rather abstract text, unlike many CPs in the West. In the US in particular, this document has apparently become much less widespread. Even more forgotten here was the Instruction *Starting Afresh from Christ*, which was widely spread in CZ/SK in its time. Awareness of *Perfectae Caritatis* as a conciliar text is generally high. Of the texts for the Year of Consecrated Life, the first letter *Rejoice* is much better known, while *Scrutinize* has rather remained unnoticed, maybe because of its length, but perhaps especially because more texts were published at the same time. Overall, materials for the Year of Consecrated Life became more popular in CZ/SK than in the English and German-speaking countries. Further, it is striking that Italian CPs are more familiar with the documents than all other groups studied. In addition to being 'at home at the source', there is also some bias in the available data to take into account, as the sample is quite small and most of the responses come from one large community. It is probable that not all Italian communities reach this level. The knowledge of *New Wine in New Wineskins* is overall between 40-50%, while it remained less widespread in the German-speaking environment. Since it clearly names the problems faced by religious institutes across continents and calls for change in specific outdated and unhealthy practices, its distribution among CPs seems to be insufficient. The book of interviews *The Strength of a Vocation* has not become very popular. Further, it is interesting that among the great encyclicals of Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* is the best known in the CZ/SK environment, while in SWC it is only in third place after *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*. The low readership of *Fratelli Tutti* in CZ/SK may be partly caused by a small time-gap between the publication of this encyclical and the data collection because data in SWC was collected a few months later. However, the reception of *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti* among CPs in CZ/SK is significantly lower than among CPs in SWC.

The results correspond to the author's own experience, according to which slightly different theological accents in the two groups of CPs can be observed; however, they have not as yet received scientific confirmation. Western CPs seem to be strongly influenced by the integral theology of Pope Francis and are accustomed to thinking in terms of eco-spirituality²⁵ or eco-theology of religious vows.²⁶ On the contrary, in CZ/SK, the focus on the interpretation of religious vows and the role of consecrated life through speculative Trinitology and Christology (represented, for example, in *Vita Consecrata*) is more prevalent. These theological speculations also have their practical implications and challenges for CPs, but they are more difficult to understand and lack the clarity and simplicity of the Gospel message to which Pope Francis' encyclicals seek to return. As a result, consecrated life can appear as a complicated theological construct, which weakens its flexibility and adaptability. We venture to state that this complexity of theological interpretations, accompanied by strict regulations and a label of a special group within the universal Church, has largely 'tied the hands' of CPs and predefined their point of view, which is not always easy to reconsider. Religious institutes in CZ/SK clearly lack a quarter of a century of free development after Vatican II. For this period, a spontaneity of searching and questioning was typical, accompanied by making mistakes and learning lessons from them.²⁷ Further, new theological approaches were developed at that time, which influenced the concept of consecrated life. While these approaches such as integral theology or eco-theology were prevalently accepted by communities west of the Iron Curtain already several decades ago,²⁸ eastern communities are still learning about them.

25 For example, Robert E. Shore-Goss, *God Is Green: An Eco-Spirituality of Incarnate Compassion* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2016).

26 This approach is currently being discussed and expertly theologically processed by Gemma Simmonds CJ. Some sub-topics appear in UISG Bulletin and are reflected at gatherings of some religious institutes, however, without available outputs yet.

27 Veronica Garcia-Martin, 'Crossroads of Identities'.

28 For example, Joan Chittister, *The Fire in these Ashes. A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995).

Therefore, Pope Francis' calls to go out into the streets of today's world and the concept of integral theology seem to be accepted by the majority of CPs in CZ/SK with approval and willingness, yet with a certain reticence and less radicalism, mostly due to previous firmly established schemes and ideas about religious life. This is even more apparent in attempts to apply eco-theology to consecrated life, for prejudice and mistrust are encountered caused by ignorance of the actual content of the terminology.²⁹

4. The Social and Environmental Challenges from Magisterium to Consecrated Persons

The social dimension of the CP's mission has been present in the post-conciliar teaching of the Church from the beginning. Over six decades, there has been a growing emphasis on this, culminating so far in the pontificate of Pope Francis.³⁰ The environmental aspect has only emerged in recent years in connection with the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Consecrated life has become one of the central emphases of the Jesuit Pope Bergoglio. CPs are confronted with the challenges that the Pope imposes on the universal Church, and are reminded of their specific mission resulting from these general challenges. In addition to his social encyclicals, which have found a considerable response among CPs,³¹ an unprecedented number of texts have been addressed to CPs in recent years, both by Pope Francis and by CICLSAL. On the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life (30/11/2014 – 2/2/2016), which was guided by the Pope's motto 'Wake up the World',³² four important documents were published. Each of them, in a slightly different way, called for a courageous search for new paths for consecrated life, especially for going out to life's peripheries of all kinds, for an authentic witness of joy and for a radical expression of compassion for the poor.³³ As part of this search and reassessment, religious institutes were given the following task by the Pope: to look to the past with gratitude, to live the present with passion, and to embrace the future with hope.³⁴ The central and easy-to-read theological starting point of Francis' view of consecrated life is the authentic witness of an encounter with God and a life of close personal relationship with him, which manifests itself in an unpretentious

29 Many Czech sisters heard about the eco-theology of religious vows for the first time at the seminar 'Living Religious Vows and Synodality in the Context of the Challenges of Contemporary Society' by Gemma Simmonds CJ in October 2023. Cf. Georgina Clarson, *A Synod within the Synod* (6. 11. 2023): <https://www.infantjesussisters.org/post/a-synod-within-the-synod>.

30 Cf. Paul VI, "Evangelica Testificatio. On the Renewal of the Religious Life, Apostolic exhortation from 29. 6. 1971," In *Zasvěcený život ve světle reformy II. Vatikánského koncilu* (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská, 1997), 17-18; CICLSAL, "Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life from 31. 5. 1983," In *Zasvěcený život ve světle reformy II. Vatikánského koncilu* (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská, 1997), 36-37; CICLSAL, "Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor", 2. 2. 1994, In *Zasvěcený život ve světle reformy II. Vatikánského koncilu* (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská, 1997), 63; John Paul II, "Vita Consecrata, Apostolic exhortation from 25. 3. 1996," In *Zasvěcený život ve světle reformy II. Vatikánského koncilu* (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská, 1997), 51, 75, 82; CICLSAL, *Znovu začít od Krista. Obnovené úsilí zasvěceného života v třetím tisíciletí* (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská, 2003), 36.

31 *UISG Bulletin* published many articles dealing with the consequences of these encyclicals for consecrated life. For example, Sheila Kinsey, 'UISG Campaign for the Planet: "Laudato Si" and the Way Forward. Presentation of a Commitment of the Environment', *UISG Bulletin* 169 (2019): 41-48; Fabio Baggio, 'Current Challenges for Ecclesial Communities in Light of 'Fratelli Tutti'', *UISG Bulletin* 175 (2021): 11-16.

32 Cf. *Rejoice*, 10.

33 Pope Francis, *Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis to All Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life from 21. 11. 2014*, Archived November 9, 2023, at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20141121_lettera-consacrat.htm; CICLSAL, *Rejoice. To consecrated men and women from the teachings of Pope Francis* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014); CICLSAL, *Scrutate. Ai consacrati e alle consacrate in cammino sui segni di Dio* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014); CICLSAL, *Guidelines for the Administration of the Assets in Institutes of Consecrated Life and in Societies of Apostolic Life* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2014).

34 Cf. Francis, *Apostolic Letter*, I.1 – I.3. For a brief summary of the letter and reflections on the contents, see for example Marry Kenny, 'The Year of Consecrated Life', *The Furrow* 66, no. 5 (2015): 262–266; Donal Murray, 'Glorious and Unfinished – the Year of Consecrated Life', *The Furrow* 66, no. 6 (2015): 311–319.

inner joy and availability for dedicated service. Then, consecrated life becomes attractive and has the potential to wake up the world.³⁵ The letter *Scrutinize* explains the reasons for the renewal of consecrated life, referring to its prophetic dimension and the great social encyclicals of recent decades.³⁶ Further, various tensions and the risk of ideologising the social commitment of CPs are mentioned, which Paul VI warned against at a time when these tensions were very much alive:³⁷

Consecrated life has gone to the outskirts of the cities, making a true 'exodus' to the poor, addressing itself to the world of the abandoned. We must acknowledge exemplary generosity here, but also note that there has been no lack of tensions and risk of lapsing into ideology, above all in the first years after the Council.³⁸

Besides the usual references to poverty and social injustice, this document lists for the first time the new pressing issues of humanity, including environmental and gender issues and globalisation:

The experience of the poor, interreligious and intercultural dialogue, the complementarity of man and woman, environmentalism in a sick world, eugenics without scruples, a globalized economy, planetary communication, symbolic language [...] These are epoch-making avenues of exploration that call into question values, languages, priorities, anthropologies. Millions of people are on a journey through worlds and civilizations, destabilizing age-old identities and fostering mixtures of cultures and religions.³⁹

Facing these realities, CPs are challenged 'to become a welcoming dialogue partner in the search for God which has always stirred the human heart' and are confronted with the question of whether they are able 'to recognize anew the value of otherness and the ethical question of how difference may peacefully coexist'.⁴⁰ Then, another challenging appeal follows: not only to witness to the good, but also to be able 'to point it out, especially where it is not usually seen, amongst "non-citizens", "half-citizens", "urban remnants", those without dignity. We must move from words of solidarity to actions that welcome and heal: consecrated life is called to this truth'.⁴¹

The guideline *New Wine in New Wineskins* (2017) was largely a response to inputs that CICLSAL obtained from CPs gathered at events during the Year of Consecrated Life.⁴² This document does not deny the great and noble challenges cited above; many of them are repeated here, but somehow brought 'back to earth' by openly naming some of the pressing issues that have long persisted in many religious institutes. These problems often make it very difficult or even impossible to live an authentically joyful witness of consecrated life. In particular, it points to the harmfulness of outdated structures, the misuse of authority, the lack of co-responsibility and dialogue, and the misconceived formation of young members.⁴³ This document reveals the apparent disparity

35 *Rejoice*, 10.

36 *Scrutinize*, 5. Ana Begić, Evanoeoskom radikalnošću živjeti poziv na svetost [To Live a Call to Holiness with an Evangelic Radicality], *Crkva u Svijetu / Church in the World* 50, no. 4 (2015): 613–631.

37 *Evangelica Testificatio*, 17.

38 *Scrutinize*, 13.

39 *Ibid.*, 15.

40 *Ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*, 16.

42 In the Year of Consecrated Life, two large international gatherings took place in Rome, one for young CPs, one for major superiors. From both meetings, inputs from workshops were handed over to CICLSAL.

43 *New Wine*, 8–10; 14–16; 19–26.

between the declared ideal and the reality of many religious communities.⁴⁴ Three years later, the instruction *The Gift of Fidelity and the Joy of Perseverance* tried to respond to a large number of departures from religious communities.⁴⁵

In an interview with Fernando Prado, Pope Francis explained the relationship of CPs to ecology, which has not yet been explicitly addressed in official documents.

If we, as consecrated persons, lose this dimension of fraternity with all creation, we become gen-
trified in the socio-political sense of the word. We can end up being an aristocracy detached from
universal brotherhood. For this reason, in *Laudato Si*, the poor are very important. *Laudato Si* is
viewed as a green encyclical, but I would say that, first of all, it is a social encyclical. A real option
for the poor is to also opt for creation. We are called to become more aware that the defense of
creation is, in the end, awareness that everything is going to be done new.⁴⁶

The above passage offers a clear appeal to CPs to be present in contemporary society as witnesses to an authentic Christian message. CPs are called not to shrink from reality, but to respond to it with concrete actions. Moreover, the fact that consecrated life seeks to respond to current social challenges is evidenced by the recent synodal responses of religious institutes⁴⁷ and by choosing the theme of the Jubilee of Consecrated Life 2025. The Jubilee motto 'Pilgrims of Hope' focuses on three concepts: 1. Listening to the cry of the poor, 2. The care and custody of creation, 3. In solidarity with all brothers and sisters.⁴⁸ The motto was chosen by Pope Francis, and Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, prefect of CICLSAL, who admitted in his letter announcing the Jubilee, that these three concepts were proposed 'wanting to respond to the Pope's desiderata'.⁴⁹ The personality of Pope Francis seems to have a significant impact on religious communities and their practical and spiritual direction. The Pope has invited CPs 'to make the preparatory year 2024 a great symphony of prayer'⁵⁰ and often repeats the need to fight the spiritual worldliness which is 'dangerous because it is a way of life that reduces spirituality to an appearance'⁵¹ while disconnecting it from the Gospel. Francis' practical challenges remain well anchored theologically, which is a characteristic feature of his integral theology. It can be concluded that, from the point of view of the official doctrine of the Church, CPs, their mission, and future direction are better taken care of than ever before. Nevertheless, it cannot be supposed that this doctrine is and will be fully embodied in the daily practice of numerous religious communities facing a serious shortage of young members who could be able to carry the renewed mission of consecrated life. Moreover, there is a great demand on CPs to develop this mission in a community environment that promotes inner freedom, personal spirituality, and fraternal relationships in order to become attractive enough for current and future young Christians. Therefore, it is

44 Wittberg, *God's Call*, Foreword.

45 CICLSAL, *The Gift of Fidelity and the Joy of Perseverance*, Instructions (2. 2. 2020). Using the experiences of individuals, various motives for departing religious institutes are analysed in Wittberg et al., *God's Call*.

46 Pope Francis and Fernando Prado, *The Strength of a Vocation: Consecrated Life Today* (US Bishops Conference, 2018), 99-100.

47 With reference to the lecture given by Gemma Simmonds CJ at the seminar 'Living Religious Vows and Synodality in the Context of the Challenges of Contemporary Society' in Prague, October 20th 2023. Cf. Clarson, *A Synod within the Synod*.

48 The Jubilee of Consecrated Life will take place in Rome 8-12th October 2025. The preparatory stage has been in progress since July 2023 led by the motto 'Thirst for Reconciliation'. Cf. Joao Braz Card. de Aviz, *Letter to all members of consecrated life from 29th June 2023*. Archived October 15, 2023 at <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/letters/2022/documents/20220211-fisichella-giubileo2025.html>.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Francis, *Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Priests of the Diocese of Rome* (5. 8. 2023), <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2023/documents/20230805-lettera-sacerdoti.html>.

predictable that the number of religious order communities will continue to decrease in the future and only those will remain that manage to reach out to the younger generation.⁵²

Conclusion

This study examines the relationship of contemporary religious communities to society and the current challenges facing humanity, and tries to assess whether consecrated life has a potential to adapt and to continue for generations to come. Institutes of consecrated life, to some extent, form closed communities within the universal Church and have undergone a long period of development in a completely different historical paradigm. Therefore, it is supposed that it is not easy for them to adapt to rapidly changing socio-cultural conditions, especially the advancing secularisation and pluralism of views and values, and to rethink theological approaches so that they can be attractive to young people once again. After a brief outline of the historical development, we focused on two groups of CPs from geographically different milieu to determine whether the cultural-political setting of the state influenced the self-conception of CPs in relation to the majority society. Further, this text deals with the magisterial documents addressed to CPs, and their distribution in religious communities. Finally, based on a cursory analysis of documents, it is examined to what extent the current Pope and the Magisterium support the social and environmental commitment of CPs and what role in the today's and future society is required of them.

Our research confirmed what was already assumed based on the historical context, namely that CPs from selected countries of Western Europe and from the USA subjectively perceive more that they are part of today's world than CPs from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The impact of the unfree development of the Church in communist Czechoslovakia in the first decades after Vatican II is evident. Religious institutes here were able to make only a fraction of the post-conciliar changes compared to what was moving the communities in the West at that time. With a little simplification, it can be said that many of these changes are coming to CZ/SK with a delay of that 'missed quarter of a century'. Despite the difficulties of abandoning and reevaluating the outdated structures, a large number of CPs in these two countries are open to changes and eager to live their mission better grounded both in the Gospel and in understanding of today's mentality.

This corresponds with the subsequent results. It was detected that more CPs in SWC read the great encyclicals of Pope Francis than CPs in CZ/SK, who, on the contrary, have a greater awareness of documents regarding the consecrated life. Hence, there is a greater emphasis of Western CPs on social and environmental issues, especially various forms of poverty and inequality among people. These issues are also approached openly by CPs in CZ/SK, but with less radicalism and some caution. Especially the concept of ecology is associated with various prejudices and misinterpretations in these countries.

Magisterial texts addressed to CPs from the end of Vatican II to the present days contain social themes and call for engagement in social issues. Along with the encouragement for active service among the needy, there is also a warning against the ideologisation and politicisation of social issues. The call for CPs to witness Christ's love through concrete service among the poorest has grown significantly during the pontificate of Pope Francis. At the same time, environmental challenges were added, along with a strong appeal to CPs to come out of their closed communities to social peripheries. From these accents, the theme of the upcoming Jubilee of Consecrated Life 2025 has recently emerged. In recent years, CICLSAL has also published several texts pointing to

52 Cf. Tomáš Petráček, *Sekularizace a katolicismus*, 58.

the persistent negative phenomena in religious institutes and the lack of conciliar reform. These documents call for change and set out the direction of this change, so that CPs can live their vocation truly and fully and become more inspiring for present and future generations. Thus, it can be concluded that in terms of theoretical background, CPs are well equipped to 'live today and tomorrow' and to take seriously contemporary theological, social, and environmental challenges. However, it remains open to what extent individual institutes and communities will take these challenges seriously, succeed in undergoing a healthy and balanced reform, and will be attractive enough to young Christians to compete with the many other options available to them.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Prof. Peter Tavel, Ph.D. and Mgr. Klára Maliňáková, Ph.D. who participated in the preparation and implementation of the research project Consecrated Life Today.

Contact:

Dana Jakšičová, Ph.D.

Palacký University Olomouc
Faculty of Theology
Univerzitní 22
779 00 Olomouc
dana.jaksicova@oushi.upol.cz

Alice Košárková, Ph.D.

Palacký University Olomouc
Faculty of Theology
Univerzitní 22
779 00 Olomouc
alice.kosarkova@upol.cz

Assoc. Prof. Vít Hušek, Th.D.

Palacký University Olomouc
Faculty of Theology
Univerzitní 22
779 00 Olomouc
vit.husek@upol.cz

Připravenost řeholních komunit žít dnešek i zítřek. Berou zasvěcené osoby vážně současné teologické, společenské a environmentální výzvy?

Dana Jakšičová, Alice Košárková, Vít Hušek

DOI: 10.32725/cetv.2024.007

Abstrakt

Zasvěcený život je fenomén, který je v církvi trvale přítomen, v průběhu času se proměňuje a snaží se odpovídat na aktuální duchovní a sociální potřeby společnosti. Tato studie se zaměřuje na současné řeholní komunity, jež jsou konfrontovány jak s velmi rychlým vývojem společnosti, tak s měnícími se teologickými akcenty. Jejím cílem je zhodnotit, zda jsou zasvěcené osoby připraveny přijmout sociokulturní změny a reagovat na aktuální duchovní, teologické, sociální a environmentální výzvy. Tato připravenost je nezbytným předpokladem pro to, aby řeholní řády zůstaly i v budoucnu nedílnou součástí církve a společnosti, jako tomu bylo od počátku vývoje christianizované Evropy. Po stručném nastínění historického kontextu jsou za využití základní statistické analýzy porovnány dvě skupiny zasvěcených osob z různého kulturně-politického prostředí, a to za účelem zjištění, do jaké míry subjektivně vnímají, že zapadají do současného světa, a jak jsou obeznámeny s aktuálními magisteriálními dokumenty. V poslední části jsou analyzovány nejnovější církevní dokumenty adresované zasvěceným osobám s cílem odpovědět na otázku, zda jsou členové řeholních řádů dostatečně teoreticky vybaveni pro teologickou a praktickou integraci současných společenských změn. Při srovnání řeholníků ze západních zemí a členů řeholních komunit v zemích bývalého Československa ukázaly výsledky vyšší míru sounáležitosti se současnou společností u západních řeholníků. Dále byla u těchto skupin zjištěna rozdílná míra obeznámenosti s jednotlivými církevními dokumenty. Teoretický základ, který poskytují magisteriální dokumenty pro obnovu zasvěceného života, byl shledán dostatečným, zatímco praktické důsledky, schopnost jednotlivých institutů podstoupit vyváženou reformu, stejně jako celková přitažlivost zasvěceného života pro mladé generace zůstávají otevřenou otázkou.

Klíčová slova: zasvěcený život, magisteriální dokumenty, sociální výzvy, environmentální problematika, obnova, teologické důrazy

Metodologický úvod

Tato studie se zabývá fenoménem současného zasvěceného života a nastoluje otázku, zda řeholní řády, které po šestnáct století v mnoha ohledech ovlivňovaly vývoj evropské civilizace a stály na

počátku mnoha sociokulturních změn, mají stále své místo v současné i budoucích generacích vysoce sekularizované euroamerické společnosti. Tato studie se snaží nastínit situaci řeholních komunit v souvislosti s měnícím se charakterem společnosti i proměňujícími se teologickými akcenty Magisteria ze tří různých úhlů pohledu, a proto kombinuje několik odlišných metodologických přístupů.

V první kapitole je téma stručně ukotveno historicky. Po krátkém nastínění přínosu řeholních řádů evropské společnosti v průběhu staletí je zde přiblížena role II. vatikánského koncilu pro zasvěcený život a v hrubých rysech představen vývoj řeholních institutů v pokoncilním období, a to s ohledem na nestejné podmínky a situaci ve světě rozděleném železnou oponou. Druhá a třetí kapitola se zabývají „mentální přítomností“ zasvěcených osob v dnešním světě. Nejprve je zkoumáno, do jaké míry řeholníci/řeholnice subjektivně cítí, že zapadají do současného světa, míněno v širokém smyslu světa globalizovaného, pluralizovaného, zrychleného a pokročile sekularizovaného. Poté se výzkum zaměřuje na orientaci řeholníků v současném učení církve obecně i vzhledem ke specifickému poslání a roli zasvěceného života v církvi. Zde je pracováno s dílčími výsledky mezinárodního dotazníkového šetření v řeholních komunitách v rámci výzkumného projektu „Zasvěcený život dnes“, který proběhl pod záštitou Cyrilometodějské teologické fakulty Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci v období 2020–2021. Kvantitativní data a výsledky základní statistické analýzy jsou v interpretaci doplněny o postřehy autorky, která se v prostředí řeholních institutů dlouhodobě pohybuje. I přes využití statistických údajů se nejedná o kvantitativní studii a diskuse není oddělena od popisu výsledků, obojí se naopak prolíná. Čtvrtá kapitola je postavena na přímé práci s magisteriálními dokumenty z doby pontifikátu papeže Františka adresovanými zasvěceným osobám. Metodologicky se jedná o deskriptivní analýzu částí textu, které jsou zasazovány do širších souvislostí. Je zde upozorněno na konkrétní texty a zkoumáno, jaký důraz je kladen na angažovanost zasvěcených osob v sociálních a environmentálních otázkách, zejména v souvislosti s problematikou různých druhů chudoby. S reflexí těchto dokumentů v literatuře však systematicky nepracujeme, protože v odborné veřejnosti zatím nenašly větší odezvu a přesahovalo by to cíle i rozsah této studie.

Hlavním cílem článku je zhodnotit, zda jsou zasvěcené osoby připraveny přijmout sociokulturní změny, reagovat na aktuální duchovní, teologické, sociální a environmentální výzvy a přizpůsobit se novým podmínkám tak, aby řeholní instituty mohly pokračovat i v budoucích generacích. Stanovili jsme též dílčí cíle v podobě odpovědí na čtyři výzkumné otázky: 1. Liší se vnímání sounáležitosti se současnou společností mezi řeholníky v obou zemích bývalého Československa a řeholníky ze západního euroamerického světa? 2. Lze vystopovat paralely mezi tím, které dokumenty řeholníci v obou skupinách preferenčně čtou, a tím, jak vnímají svou sounáležitost s vnějším světem? 3. Do jaké míry je sociální a environmentální tematika věroučně ukotvena v církevních dokumentech určených zasvěceným osobám? 4. Poskytuje současná nauka církve o zasvěceném životě dostatečný a komplexní základ pro umožnění adaptace řeholních společenství na rychle se měnící sociokulturní kontext pokročile sekularizované společnosti a jeho přežití do dalších generací? Naším sekundárním cílem je nastínit možnosti interdisciplinárního přístupu k tématu, které bylo českými odborníky dosud zpracováváno převážně z historického úhlu pohledu.

1. Na východ a na západ od železné opony, aneb stručný pohled na vývoj řeholních komunit během posledních desetiletí

Zasvěcený život hrál v křesťanské kultuře důležitou civilizační roli již od svého vzniku na konci starověku. Nebyla to jen výrazná participace mnichů na christianizaci Evropy, ale také jejich

podíl na kultivaci venkova a rozvoji zemědělství. Středověké kláštery byly navíc prakticky jedinými centry vzdělanosti a umělecké tvorby, a to až do vzniku univerzit a městských škol.¹ Ve 13. století položily žebravé řády základy sociálně-charitativní práce, lidového kazatelství a systematického teologicko-filozofického bádání na univerzitách.² V 16. století provedli jezuité revoluci nejen v nazírání na křesťanskou spiritualitu, ale též ve způsobu vzdělávání a misionářské práce.³ Na konci stejného století se objevily první volněji organizované kongregace, které se snažily odpovídat na naléhavé problémy ve společnosti, zejména chudobu a nevzdělanost nižších sociálních vrstev. Přísná potridentská opatření zbrzdila spontánní rozvoj těchto „zbožných bratrstev“ tím, že řadě z nich nařídila monastický způsob života a klauzuru, což způsobilo deformativní procesy, jež jsou v mnoha řeholních institutech zjevné dodnes.⁴ Po úpadku řeholního života a snahách o jeho částečnou nebo úplnou likvidaci během osvícenských reforem a revolučních událostí na konci 18. století přišla o několik desetiletí později renesance zasvěceného života v podobě řeholních kongregací, většinou ženských, které vznikaly po desítkách v Evropě i v zámoří. V 19. století se naplno projevila sociální angažovanost zasvěcených osob, které ve velkém měřítku otevíraly vzdělávací, sociální a zdravotnická zařízení, jež jiné instituce té doby nebyly schopny realizovat. Obdobně jako v předchozích stoletích, avšak v mnohem větší míře, se zasvěcený život opět stal populárním a přitažlivým pro mladé křesťany.⁵ Tato éra „zlatého věku“ řeholních kongregací vyvrcholila v polovině 20. století a definitivně ji ukončily paradigmatické změny let šedesátých, mezi něž patřilo i svolání II. vatikánského koncilu. Tento koncil znamenal nový mezník v šestnáct století trvající historii řeholního života a zahájil jeho dodnes probíhající transformaci. Výsledek zůstává otevřený a vyvolává otázky, zda má zasvěcený život ve změněné společnosti stále své místo, zda může být přitažlivý pro mladší generace a jaké nové společenské role by měl plnit. Pro posouzení současné situace a výhledů do budoucna je nutné pochopit vývoj řeholních komunit v posledních desetiletích, který navíc nebyl všude stejný, protože jej ovlivňovaly rozdílné společensko-politické podmínky jednotlivých zemí a regionů.

Svět prošel za poslední století doposud nejdramatičtějšími změnami v dějinách lidstva a tempo vývoje neustále zrychluje. Je stále náročnější orientovat se nejen v nových technologiích a komunikačních médiích, ale i ve způsobu uvažování a prožívání mladších generací. Přestože katolická církev dala oficiálně zelenou otevřenosti, adaptabilitě na sociokulturní prostředí a aggiornamentu již před šedesáti lety na II. vatikánském koncilu, uvádění koncilního učení do praxe je záležitostí velmi pozvolnou a složitou. Toto učení je ve své podstatě radikálním koperníkovským obratem v pohledu katolického křesťana na svět a vztahování se k němu, obratem, který vrací autoritu stáletými nánosy zastřené evangelní zvěsti o milujícím vtěleném Bohu, který nepřišel svět soudit, ale spasit (J 12,47). Pochopení podstaty tohoto obratu vyžaduje změnu mentality v několika směrech: od výlučnosti po ztotožnění (F 2,6–8), od uzavírání se po vycházení (Mt 28,19), od svázanosti pravidly po vnitřní svobodu (Ga 5,18). V tomto duchu již šest desetiletí apelují církevní dokumenty připomínající univerzálnost Boží lásky ke všem lidem a poslání křesťanů ukazovat světu, co znamená Ježíšovo „*milosrdenství chci a ne obět*“ (Mt 9,13), kterým se vymezoval vůči bezcitnému moralismu a zákonictví. Poslání Ježíšových učedníků být solí země, po které chodíme, a světlem světa, jehož jsme součástí (Mt 5,13–14), je nosným prvkem současné teologie.

1 Leonard Holtz, *Geschichte des christlichen Ordenslebens* (Zürich: Benziger, 1991), 68–78.

2 Holtz, *Geschichte des christlichen Ordenslebens*, 121–138.

3 Ines G. Županov, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

4 Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity. From the Reformation to the 21st Century* (Dublin: Orbis Books, 2003), 94–103.

5 Tomáš Petráček, *Sekularizace a katolicismus v českých zemích. Specifické rysy české cesty od lidové církve k nejateističtější zemi světa* (Ostrava: Moravapress, 2013), 49–58.

Procesaggiornamenta a změny mentality probíhá v rámci univerzální církve různým tempem a v různých modifikacích, přičemž zde nezanedbatelnou roli hraje sociokulturní a politický kontext. Specifickou skupinu, jíž koncil obnovu přímo uložil, představují řeholní instituty.⁶ Hierarchicky vystavěná a pevnou normou reglementovaná společenství, vzniklá v určité etapě dějinného vývoje církve a lidstva, byla silně poznamenána deformacemi teologie období zapomenuté Trojice a z toho vyplývající praxe, kopírující do značné míry podobu autoritářsky řízené a pyramidálně uspořádané společnosti.⁷ Právě zde bylo možné ve zvlášť koncentrované míře pozorovat tři výše zmíněné charakteristiky: pocit výlučnosti, uzavírání se před vnějším světem a svázanost pravidly.⁸ Koncilní obrat znamenal pro zasvěcené osoby revoluci, která otřásla dosavadním řádem, jenž tyto instituty držel, a relativizovala výklad hodnot, který považovaly za posvátný a nedotknutelný. Změna kolektivní mentality uzavřeného společenství je vždy složitým procesem, který málokdy sleduje jednotnou linii, proto i pokoncilní obnova řeholních institutů je velmi komplikovanou a dlouhodobou záležitostí s dosud nejasným výsledkem.

Je známo, že dění v řeholních komunitách v prvních desetiletích po skončení II. vatikánského koncilu bylo velmi bouřlivé, přinejmenším ve svobodném světě západně od železné opony. Mnoho institutů prošlo radikálními změnami, které s sebou nesly odklon od zaběhnutých tradic, přehodnocení role představených, nový styl oblékání (od zjednodušení řeholního hábitu po jeho úplné odložení), otevření komunit a větší zapojení do práce mezi lidmi,⁹ ale též odchod nezanedbatelného počtu členů, hodnotové tápání a otázky po smyslu a poslání zasvěceného života v „novém“ světě.¹⁰ Dalším průvodním jevem změny společenského i církevního paradigmatu se stal fakt, že řeholní život přestal být pro mladé křesťany přitažlivý a většina společenství v západní euroamerické civilizaci začala od sedmdesátých let trpět nedostatkem nových povolání.¹¹ Instituty začaly stárnout a některé i vymírat, jiné se zaměřily na zakládání provincií v zemích třetího světa, kde nebylo těžké získat nové členy.¹²

Situace řeholních komunit v Československu a dalších zemích sovětského bloku se od západního světa značně lišila. Koncilní „novinky“ docházely se zpožděním a cenzurované a jejich uvádění do praxe bylo silně ztíženo až znemožněno komunistickým režimem, který držel řeholníky pod přísnou kontrolou a neumožňoval jim svobodný vývoj ani přijímání nového dorostu.¹³ Komunity, zejména ženské, tak žily odtržené od většinové společnosti v duchu tradic a legalistického pojetí řeholního života. Změna stanov, kterou musel každý institut provést v rámci pokoncilní obnovy, byla v mnohých komunitách uvedena do praxe jen částečně, neboť přežitá struktury v době perzekuce ještě více strnuly a změna mentality v duchu svobodného vývoje nebyla za těchto okolností

6 „Perfectae Caritatis. Dekret o přizpůsobení a obnově řeholního života z 28. října 1965,” In *Zasvěcený život ve světle reformy II. Vatikánského koncilu* (Olomouc: Matice cyrilometodějská, 1997), 21–32.

7 Blíže k tomu srov. Ctirad Václav Pospíšil, *Jako v nebi, tak i na zemi. Náčrt trinitární teologie* (Praha: Krystal OP – Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2007), 53–81.

8 Dana Jakšičová and Miroslav Novotný, *Služebníci pod zákonem. Zlatý věk řeholních kongregací v českobudějovické diecézi* (České Budějovice: Jihočeské muzeum, 2021), 233–352.

9 Judith Harford and Tom O’Donoghue, ‘Continuity and change in the perspectives of women religious in Ireland on themselves both as religious and as teachers in the years immediately prior to, and following, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965),’ *Paedagogica Historica* 47 (2011): 399–413; Susan O. Michelman, ‘Changing old habits: Dress of women religious and its relationship to personal and social identity,’ *Sociological inquiry* 67 (1997): 350–363.

10 Veronica Garcia-Martin, ‘Crossroads of Identities in Women Religious in Spain. Catholicism, Society and Second Vatican Council (1953–69),’ *Journal of Religious History* 47, č. 3 (September 2023): 469–485.

11 Helen Rose Ebaugh et al., ‘The growth and decline of the population of Catholic nuns cross-nationally, 1960–1990: A case of secularization as social structural change,’ *Journal for the scientific study of religion* (1996): 171–183.

12 Gertrud Huwelmeyer, ‘Our future will be in India: Travelling Nuns between Europe and South Asia,’ in *Migration and Religion in Europe: Comparative Perspectives on South Asian Experiences*, ed. Ester Gallo (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 45–57; Isabelle Jonveaux, ‘Future of Catholic Monasteries on New Monastic Continents: The Case of Africa,’ *Religions* 10, č. 9 (2019): 513.

13 Jiří Hanuš and Stanislav Balík, *Letnice dvacátého století: druhý vatikánský koncil a česká země* (Brno: CDK, 2012), 7–24.

možná ani z psychologického hlediska. Výjimku představovali jednotlivci z různých společenství, častěji muži než ženy, kteří se jako tajní řeholníci či kněží, leckdy napojeni na podzemní církev,¹⁴ dokázali zařadit mezi většinovou společnost a každodenní interakce s vnějším světem je alespoň částečně uchránila před přijetím ne zcela zdravých a zralých postojů velkých komunit centralizačních klášterů a ústavů, v nichž řeholnice pracovaly pod dohledem státních úřadů.¹⁵

Rozdíly v mentalitě a situaci řeholních komunit v zemích Východu a Západu jsou dnes proto nejen předvídatelné, ale i zjevné bez většího zkoumání. Západní instituty se většinově jeví jako věkově starší, neboť krize povolání zde nastoupila již v polovině šedesátých let.¹⁶ Komunity v Československu naopak po pádu komunismu zažily krátké období přílivu nových členů v devadesátých letech, neboť dlouho potlačovaný a zakazovaný způsob života nyní přitahoval. Kolem roku 2000 začal tento trend ustávat, pravděpodobně nejen kvůli všeobecné změně společenského paradigmatu, ale též s klesající popularitou katolické církve, která nedokázala využít potenciál a širokou podporu, jíž se těšila v prvních letech po pádu totalitního režimu.¹⁷ II. vatikánský koncil se svou výzvou k otevřenosti a vyjití k lidem zde byl a stále je reflektován pozvolna a určitým způsobem selektivně, proto církevní instituce, řeholní komunity nevyjímaje, spíše inklinovaly k návratu k tradičním strukturám a postoji exkluzivity. Je evidentní, že toto napětí existuje stále a týká se celé univerzální církve, pouze v různých zemích a sociokulturních kontextech nabývá různé dynamiky.¹⁸

Pokoncilní obnova zasvěceného života není ukončeným procesem, naopak představuje stále aktuální téma. Magisterium katolické církve se od ukončení koncilu průběžně vyjadřuje k roli zasvěceného života a vyzývá řeholníky k autentickému životu v osobním vztahu k Bohu, v bratrském společenství a v osobní svobodě, a k vyjití z uzavřenosti „do ulic dnešního světa“.¹⁹ Zvláště pontifikát papeže Františka, který je sám řeholníkem, je charakteristický apelem na zasvěcené osoby, a to jak v celé řadě dokumentů, tak v osobních setkáních. Velmi významným textem nedávného období je směrnice Kongregace pro instituty zasvěceného života a společnosti apoštolského života (CICLSAL) *Nové víno do nových měchů*, která otevřeně pojmenovává problematické jevy přetrvávající v řeholních komunitách více než půlstoletí od uzavření koncilu.²⁰ Tento dokument potvrzuje, že jak jednotlivá společenství, tak institucionalizovaný zasvěcený život celkově procházejí obdobím krize a přerodu.

2. Zasvěcené osoby – součást dnešní společnosti?

Aktuální situace řeholních komunit i její podmíněnost širším sociokulturním kontextem byla impulzem pro výzkumný projekt s názvem „Zasvěcený život dnes“, který se zaměřil na propojenost fyzického, duševního a duchovního zdraví a na některé aspekty komunitního života. Dotazník byl rozšířen nejprve mezi řeholní komunity v České republice a na Slovensku (401 respondentů), a poté přeložen do čtyř světových jazyků a rozeslán do řeholních komunit v Německu, Rakousku, Švýcarsku, USA, Velké Británii, Španělsku a Itálii. Španělská společenství se výzkumu nezúčastnila, z ostatních zemí přišlo celkem 338 odpovědí (157 anglicky mluvících, 109 německy mluvících,

14 Srov. Petr Fiala a Jiří Hanuš, *Skrytá církev: Felix M. Davídek a společenství Koinótés* (Brno: CDK, 2022).

15 Vojtěch Vlček, ed., *Ženské řehole za komunismu 1948–1989* (Olomouc: Malice Cyrilometodějská, 2003).

16 HEbaugh, „The growth and decline“, 174.

17 Joan O' Mahony, „The Catholic Church and civil society: Democratic options in the post-Communist Czech Republic“, *West European Politics* 26, č. 1 (2003): 183; Petráček, *Sekularizace a katolicismus*, 105–106.

18 Nedávná analýza současného zasvěceného života a řeholních povolání napříč kontinenty, včetně výzev do budoucnosti srov. Patricia Wittberg et al., *God's Call Is Everywhere. A Global Analysis of Contemporary Religious Vocations for Women* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2023).

19 O jednotlivých dokumentech je pojednáno níže.

20 CICLSAL, *Nové víno do nových měchů. Zasvěcený život po Druhém vatikánském koncilu a dosud otevřená výzva*, Směrnice (6. 7. 2017).

72 italsky mluvících respondentů). K dispozici jsou tedy dva podobně velké vzorky respondentů, jež je možné mezi sebou porovnávat: zasvěcené osoby ze zemí bývalého Československa (CZ/SK) a zasvěcené osoby ze západních demokratických zemí (ZZ), které si neprošly v druhé polovině 20. století totalitním režimem a perzekucí katolické církve. Vzhledem k charakteru vzorku je potřeba brát v úvahu jeho nereprezentativnost a předpokládaná zkreslení způsobená několika faktory, zejména výrazným věkovým rozdílem a převahou respondentů s vyšším vzděláním (viz Tabulka 1). V úvahu je nutno zahrnout i skutečnost obecné nedůvěry a zdrženlivosti vůči výzkumným dotazníkům, kdy mnohé instituty účast odmítly. Dá se předpokládat, že se zúčastnila spíše společenství celkově otevřenější, kde představení dali dotazník k dispozici i „řadovým“ členům komunit, zatímco participace konzervativnějších institutů s autoritativním vedením je velmi málo pravděpodobná. S tím souvisí i to, že charakter vzorku mohly ovlivnit podobné odpovědi členů stejných komunit. Data proto vyžadují opatrnou interpretaci, ovšem i tak jsou velmi cenná. Zejména v případě dat z česko-slovenských komunit se jedná o vzorek dost početný a do značné míry zastupující mladší a střední generaci českých a slovenských řeholníků.

Tabulka 1: Sociodemografická charakteristika vzorků

	Vzorek 1 (CZ/SK)		Vzorek 2 (ZZ)	
Charakteristika	n	%	n	%
Pohlaví				
Muž	85	21.2	50	14.8
Žena	316	78.8	288	85.2
Věk				
18–30	16	4.0	2	0.6
31–40	60	15.0	17	5.0
41–50	188	46.9	34	10.1
51–60	98	24.4	59	17.5
61–70	37	9.2	58	17.2
71–92	2	0.5	168	49.7
Vzdělání				
Základní	1	0.2	0	0.0
Učiliště	13	3.2	14	4.2
Středoškolské s maturitou	48	12.0	17	5.0
Vyšší odborné + bakalář	45	11.2	93	27.5
Univerzitní (Mgr., Ing., Dr.)	294	73.4	214	63.3
Celkem	401		338	

Jedním z aspektů, na něž výzkum cílil, je „mentální přítomnost“ zasvěcených osob v dnešním světě. Nejprve je zjišťováno, do jaké míry se řeholníci subjektivně ztotožňují se současným světem v širším a blíže nespecifikovaném smyslu tohoto pojmu. Dále je zkoumána jejich orientace v sou-

časném učení církve, a to jak obecně, tak s ohledem na specifické poslání a roli zasvěceného života v církvi. Vycházíme přitom z předpokladu, že vnitřní reforma církevní instituce a její adaptace na změněné paradigma není možná bez znalosti aktuální teologie a přehodnocení starších teologických výkladů, o něž se opírala v době svého vzniku.

Jedna z otázek v dotazníku zněla: *Nakolik se jako řeholník/řeholnice cítíš být součástí dnešního světa?* Respondenti vybírali ze čtyř možných odpovědí: *úplně, spíše ano, spíše ne* a *vůbec ne*. Výsledné odpovědi obou zkoumaných vzorků vykazují zjevné odchylky. Hodnota p-value vyjadřuje porovnání skupin řeholníků CZ/SK a ZZ pomocí chi-square testu. Bylo zjištěno, že je zde statisticky významná souvislost mezi zemí původu řeholníků a tím, nakolik se cítí být součástí dnešního světa. Více než třetina „západních“ řeholníků udala, že do současného světa plně zapadá, a více než polovina vnímá, že „spíše zapadají“. Negativní odpovědi jsou v tomto vzorku spíše ojedinělé. Z česko-slovenského vzorku se cítí „plně zapadat“ pouze 12 %, zatímco nadpoloviční většina zvolila neutrálnější *spíše ano*. Pro negativní odpovědi se zde rozhodla více než čtvrtina respondentů.

Tabulka 2: Odpovědi na otázku: *Nakolik se jako řeholník/řeholnice cítíš být součástí dnešního světa?*

	úplně		spíše ano		spíše ne		vůbec ne		p-value
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
CZ/SK	43	12,0	221	61,9	82	23,0	11	3,1	P < 0.000***
ZZ	112	35,0	180	56,3	26	8,1	2	0,6	

Odpovědi víceméně korespondují s tím, co bylo výše řečeno o vývoji řeholních institutů v obou srovnávaných oblastech v posledních šesti desetiletích. Není příliš překvapující, že vnímaná sounáležitost se světem vně řeholního institutu je u západních respondentů vyšší než u českých a slovenských řeholníků. Zcela jistě tento výsledek neplatí obecně, neboť v západním světě existují v zasvěceném životě různé proudy a odpovědi uzavřených, konzervativněji nastavených společenství dotazník nezachytil. S odkazem na určitý „řeholní mainstream“ reprezentovaný Mezinárodní unií generálních představených (UISG) a jejími aktivitami včetně vydávaného Bulletinu²¹ však lze tvrdit, že se instituty systematicky snaží reflektovat aktuální společenská a teologická témata a čerpat z nich podněty pro zasvěcený život. Tato snaha držet krok s aktuálním děním může posilovat pocit sounáležitosti řeholníků s většinovou společností.

Další faktor, který může ovlivňovat subjektivní vnímání řeholníků ohledně míry „zapadnutí“ do společnosti, je řeholní oděv. Velká část zasvěcených osob v západních zemích v současné době nenosí řeholní oděv a není na první pohled rozlišitelná jako nějaká „zvláštní skupina“, zatímco v České republice a na Slovensku je řeholní oděv charakteristickým znakem většiny řádových sester (méně pak řeholních bratří), který tyto osoby předurčuje k tomu, že jsou za „zvláštní skupinu“ automaticky považovány. Je pravděpodobné, že právě řeholní oděv, případně též jeho konkrétní podoba, hraje v otázce identity zasvěcených osob a jejich začlenění do většinové společnosti důležitou roli.²²

Menší pocit sounáležitosti se současnou společností může být způsoben též vnímáním rozdílů mezi „světem venku“ a mikrosvětem řeholní komunity, který mnohdy používá svůj vlastní jazyk a zastává postoje, jež stále nesou stopy předkoncilní exkluzivity řeholního stavu.²³ V tom, že více

21 UISG Bulletin je vydáván třikrát ročně v digitální podobě a je dostupný v sedmi jazycích: <https://www.uisg.org/en/bulletin/>. Časopis je určený generálním představeným i jiným členům UISG a jsou v něm publikovány různé reflexe zasvěceného života ve snaze přispět k jeho lepšímu pochopení a rozvoji v celosvětovém kontextu.

22 Michelman, 'Changing old habits'.

23 Jakšičová and Novotný, *Služebníci*, 371.

než 60 % CZ/SK respondentů uvedlo, že „spíše zapadají“ do současného světa, lze však spatřovat i jejich snahu a touhu po změně. I negativní hodnocení míry zapadnutí do současné společnosti lze alespoň u některých respondentů interpretovat spíše jako výzvu ke změně a kritiku současného stavu řeholních komunit než jako odmítání okolního světa. Nicméně tato možná interpretace výsledků je pouze hypotézou založenou na zkušenostech z komunitního prostředí a na neformálních diskusích mezi řeholníky.²⁴

3. Zasvěcené osoby a znalost magisteriálních dokumentů

Jak bylo řečeno výše, vnitřní reforma církevní instituce a její adaptace na změněné paradigma není možná bez znalosti aktuální teologie a přehodnocení starších teologických výkladů. II. vatikánský koncil věnoval reformě zasvěceného života zvláštní pozornost v dekretu *Perfectae caritatis* a od té doby papežové a CICLSAL vydávají různé typy dokumentů adresovaných zasvěceným osobám. Zejména pontifikát jezuitského papeže Františka je tím charakteristický. V současné době existuje celá řada magisteriálních textů ukotvujících teologii zasvěceného života v evangelním základu, následování Ježíšova osobního příkladu ve vztahu k Bohu i lidem, v prožívání bratrského společenství a v misijní otevřenosti. Otázkou zůstává, nakolik jsou tyto dokumenty dostupné pro členy řeholních komunit a jaká je motivace a ochota mezi řeholníky tyto texty číst a brát vážně.

Pro účel dotazníku bylo cíleně vybráno deset textů. Šest z nich jsou magisteriální dokumenty týkající se zasvěceného života: koncilní dekret o přizpůsobené obnově řeholního života *Perfectae caritatis* (1965), obsáhlá posynodální apoštolská adhortace Jana Pavla II. *Vita consecrata* (1996), instrukce ze začátku nového milénia *Znovu začít od Krista. Obnovené úsilí zasvěceného života v třetím tisíciletí* (2002), dále dva okružní listy vydané k Roku zasvěceného života *Radujte se* (2014) a *Zkoumejte* (2014) a nakonec obsahově velmi významná směrnice *Nové víno do nových měchů. Zasvěcený život po Druhém vatikánském koncilu a dosud otevřené výzvy* (2017). Dále byly zařazeny tři největší encykliky papeže Františka, v nichž otevírá velká evangelizační, sociální a environmentální témata: *Evangelii gaudium* (2013), *Laudato si'* (2015) a *Fratelli tutti* (2020). Poslední titul *Síla povolání. Zasvěcený život dnes* (2019) nepatří mezi oficiální církevní dokumenty, ale jedná se o rozhovor papeže Františka s Fernandem Prado CMF na téma současného zasvěceného života. Respondenti odpovídali na dvě otázky. První zjišťovala, zda o daném titulu slyšeli či ho měli v ruce, druhá se tázala, zda tento text osobně četli. Tabulka 3 ukazuje „popularitu“ vybraných dokumentů mezi řeholníky v obou srovnávaných vzorcích respondentů včetně statistické významnosti. V Tabulce 4 jsou „západní“ řeholníci rozděleni do samostatných jazykových skupin (anglická, německá, italská).

Tabulka 3: Znalost církevních dokumentů – porovnání CZ/SK vs. ZZ

	CZ/SK		ZZ		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Slyšel/a o dokumentu nebo měl/a v ruce					
Perfectae Caritatis	334	92,5	270	82,1	< 0.001***
Vita Consecrata	349	96,7	244	74,2	< 0.001***
Znovu začít od Krista	274	75,9	106	32,2	< 0.001***

24 Velkou touhu po změně vyjádřily české řeholní sestry na semináři „Prožívání řeholních slibů a synodality v kontextu výzev současné společnosti“ v říjnu 2023. Kateřina Štastná, „Řeholnice z celého Česka se setkaly v Praze pod Petřínem“, *Katolické noviny* 25. 10. 2023, <http://katolickenoviny.cz/2023/10/reholnice-z-celeho-ceska-se-setkaly-v-praze-pod-petrinem/>.

Radujte se	230	63,7	137	41,6	< 0.001***
Zkoumejte	139	38,5	69	21,0	< 0.001***
Nové víno do nových měchů	237	65,7	205	62,3	n.s.
Síla povolání	122	33,8	109	33,1	n.s.
Evangelii Gaudium	311	86,1	277	84,2	n.s.
Laudato Si'	307	85,0	321	97,6	< 0.001***
Fratelli Tutti	272	75,3	300	91,2	< 0.001***
Četl/a dokument					
Perfectae Caritatis	286	79,2	210	63,8	< 0.001***
Vita Consecrata	330	91,4	201	61,1	< 0.001***
Znovu začít od Krista	233	64,5	88	27,6	< 0.001***
Radujte se	156	43,2	97	29,5	< 0.001***
Zkoumejte	102	28,3	53	16,1	< 0.001***
Nové víno do nových měchů	172	47,6	148	45,0	n.s.
Síla povolání	81	22,4	61	18,5	n.s.
Evangelii Gaudium	215	59,6	224	68,1	0.020*
Laudato Si'	159	44,0	295	89,7	< 0.001***
Fratelli Tutti	93	25,8	249	75,7	< 0.001***

Porovnáním obou vzorků pomocí chi-square testu bylo zjištěno, že u některých položek je statisticky významná souvislost mezi zemí původu řeholníků a znalostí a četbou dokumentů. Kromě dokumentů *Nové víno do nových měchů*, *Síla povolání* a *Evangelii gaudium*, kde se neprokázal statisticky významný rozdíl, byl u všech ostatních titulů zjištěn velmi významný statistický rozdíl související s tím, ze které země řeholníci pochází a zda znají a čtou dané dokumenty.

Tabulka 4: Znalost církevních dokumentů – porovnání odpovědí v angličtině, němčině a italštině

	AJ		NJ		IT		p-value
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Slyšel/a o něm nebo měl/a v ruce							
Perfectae Caritatis	120	76,4	81	74,3	69	95,8	< 0.001***
Vita Consecrata	91	58,0	82	75,2	71	98,6	< 0.001***
Znovu začít od Krista	22	14,0	24	22,0	60	83,3	< 0.001***
Radujte se	42	26,8	34	31,2	61	84,7	< 0.001***
Zkoumejte	3	1,9	16	14,7	50	69,4	< 0.001***
Nové víno do nových měchů	95	60,5	48	44,0	62	86,1	< 0.001***
Síla povolání	46	29,3	33	30,3	30	41,7	n.s.
Evangelii Gaudium	113	72,0	93	85,3	71	98,6	< 0.001***

Laudato Si'	150	95,5	99	90,8	72	100,0	< 0.020*
Fratelli Tutti	141	89,8	90	82,6	69	95,8	< 0.019*
Četl/a dokument							
Perfectae Caritatis	91	58,0	67	61,5	53	72,2	n.s.
Vita Consecrata	71	45,2	67	61,5	63	87,5	< 0.001***
Znovu začít od Krista	21	13,4	16	14,7	51	70,8	< 0.001***
Radujte se	27	17,2	18	16,5	52	72,2	< 0.001***
Zkoumejte	3	1,9	13	11,9	37	51,4	< 0.001***
Nové víno do nových měchů	65	41,4	27	24,8	56	77,8	< 0.001***
Síla povolání	25	15,9	18	16,5	18	25,0	n.s.
Evangelii Gaudium	89	56,7	69	63,3	66	91,7	< 0.001***
Laudato Si'	143	91,1	86	78,9	66	91,7	< 0.006**
Fratelli Tutti	123	78,3	58	53,2	68	94,4	< 0.001***

Srovnání jednotlivých jazykových skupin „západního“ vzorku v Tabulce 4 ukázalo nápadné rozdíly. Pomocí chi-square testu bylo zjištěno, že kromě povědomí o knize *Síla povolání* a čtenosti dekretu *Perfectae Caritatis* existuje mezi jazykovými skupinami statisticky významný rozdíl.

Tabulky 3 a 4 přinášejí několik zajímavých zjištění. Nápadná je jednoznačná dominance popularity encyklik *Laudato si'* a *Fratelli tutti* mezi západními řeholníky, jejichž znalost je zde vyšší než znalost *Perfectae caritatis* a *Vita consecrata* – střežných, avšak již starších textů pokoncilní obnovy zasvěceného života. V česko-slovenském prostředí naopak tyto dva dokumenty dominují. S adhortací *Vita consecrata* se zde na přelomu milénia běžně pracovalo v řeholní formaci a odpovědi reprezentující převážně střední generaci řeholníků dosvědčují, že většina z nich tento poněkud zdoluhavý a místy abstraktní text přečetla, na rozdíl od řady spolubratrů a spolusester na Západě. Zejména v USA se tento dokument zjevně rozšířil výrazně méně. Ještě více zde zapadla instrukce *Znovu začít od Krista*, která byla v CZ/SK ve své době hojně šířena. Povědomí o *Perfectae caritatis* jako koncilním textu je obecně velké. Z textů k Roku zasvěceného života je výrazně známější první okružní list *Radujte se*, zatímco list *Zkoumejte* spíše zapadl, možná i kvůli své zdoluhavosti, ovšem hlavním důvodem bylo pravděpodobně nepřehledné množství textů, které v tu dobu vycházelo. Materiály k Roku zasvěceného života celkově došly v CZ/SK většího ohlasu než v anglicky a německy mluvících zemích. Dále je nápadné, že italští řeholníci jsou s dokumenty obeznámeni více než všechny ostatní zkoumané skupiny. Kromě toho, že jsou „doma u zdroje“, je třeba vzít v úvahu i určité zkreslení dat, která jsou k dispozici, neboť vzorek je dost malý a většina odpovědí pochází z jednoho velkého společenství. Pravděpodobně ne všechny italské komunity dosahují takové úrovně. Znalost směrnice *Nové víno do nových měchů* se celkově pohybuje mezi 40 a 50 %, méně rozšířená zůstává v německy mluvícím prostředí. Vzhledem k tomu, že obsahuje jasné pojmenované problémy, s nimiž se řeholní instituty napříč kontinenty potýkají, a vyzývá ke změně konkrétních zastaralých a nezdravých praktik, se její rozšíření mezi zasvěcenými osobami jeví jako nedostatečné. Kniha rozhovorů s papežem Františkem *Síla povolání* se celkově příliš velké popularity nedočkala. Je zajímavé, že z velkých encyklik papeže Františka je v česko-slovenském prostředí nejznámější *Evangelii gaudium*, které je v západním světě (zvláště zjevně v USA) až na třetím místě za *Laudato si'* a *Fratelli tutti*. Malá čtenost *Fratelli tutti* v CZ/SK může být zčásti

způsobena malým časovým odstupem mezi vydáním této encykliky a sběrem dat, neboť data v západních zemích byla sbírána o několik měsíců později. Celkově je však ohlas *Laudato si'* a *Fratelli tutti* mezi zasvěcenými osobami v česko-slovenském prostředí výrazně nižší než u řeholníků v západních zemích.

Výsledky odpovídají autorčiným vlastním zkušenostem, podle nichž lze u obou skupin řeholníků pozorovat mírně odlišné teologické akcenty, které však zatím nebyly vědecky potvrzeny. Zatímco západní komunity se zdají být silně osloveny integrální teologií, jež je charakteristická pro učení papeže Františka, a jsou zvyklé promýšlet pojmy jako eko-spiritualita²⁵ či eko-teologie řeholních slibů²⁶, v postkomunistických zemích se mezi řeholníky více udržuje zaměření na výklad řeholních slibů a role zasvěceného života pomocí spekulativní trinitologie a christologie, reprezentovaný např. v posynodální adhortaci *Vita consecrata*. Tyto teologické spekulace mají také své praktické vyznění a představují konkrétní výzvy pro řeholníky, jsou však náročnější na pochopení a postrádají čitelnost a jednoduchost evangelní zvěsti, k níž se snaží vracet encykliky papeže Františka. Ve svém důsledku se tak zasvěcený život může jevit jako složitý teologický konstrukt, což ochromuje jeho flexibilitu a adaptabilitu. Odvažujeme se vyslovit tezi, že právě tato komplikovanost teologických interpretací doprovázená striktně reglementovanou „ortopraxí“ a nálepkou mimořádné skupiny v rámci univerzální církve do značné míry svázala řeholníkům ruce a předdefinovala jejich úhel pohledu, který není vždy snadné přehodnotit. Českým a slovenským institutům zasvěceného života zcela zjevně chybí čtvrtstoletí svobodného vývoje po II. vatikánském koncilu. Pro toto období byla typická spontaneita hledání a tázání se, provázená omyly i z nich plynoucími ponaučeními.²⁷ V této době se též rozvíjely nové teologické přístupy, které ovlivnily pojetí zasvěceného života. Zatímco tyto přístupy, zejména integrální teologie nebo eko-teologie, byly mnohými komunitami na západ od železné opony akceptovány již před několika desetiletími,²⁸ východní společenství se s nimi teprve seznamují. Zdá se, že výzvy papeže Františka k vyjití do ulic dnešního světa a koncept integrální teologie přijímá většina řeholníků v CZ/SK se souhlasem a ochotou, přesto však s určitou zdrženlivostí a menší radikalitou, právě s ohledem na předchozí pevně zakotvená schémata a představy o řeholním životě. Ještě zřetelněji se to projevuje při pokusech aplikovat eko-teologii na zasvěcený život, neboť se zde naráží na předsudky a nedůvěru způsobenou zejména neznalostí vlastního obsahu terminologie.²⁹

4. Společenské a environmentální výzvy adresované Magisteriem zasvěceným osobám

Sociální rozměr poslání zasvěcených osob je v pokoncilní nauce církve obsažen již od začátku. V průběhu šesti desetiletí je pozorovatelný rostoucí důraz, který na něj dokumenty kladou, až po dosavadní vyvrcholení za pontifikátu papeže Františka.³⁰ Environmentální aspekt se objevil až v posledních letech v souvislosti s vydáním encykliky *Laudato si'*.

S nástupem jezuity Bergoglia se zasvěcený život stal jedním ze stěžejních akcentů jeho pontifikátu. Řeholníci jsou konfrontováni s výzvami, před které papež staví univerzální církev, a zároveň

25 Např. Robert E. Shore-Goss, *God Is Green: An Eco-Spirituality of Incarnate Compassion* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2016).

26 Tento přístup v současné době předkládá k diskusím a odborně teologicky zpracovává Gemma Simmonds CJ. Některá dílčí témata se objevují v *Bulletinu UISG* a jsou reflektována na setkáních některých řeholních institutů, zatím však bez dostupných výstupů.

27 Garcia-Martin, 'Crossroads of Identities'.

28 Např. Joan Chittister, *The Fire in these Ashes. A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995).

29 S „eko-přístupem“ ke slibům evangelních rad české řeholní sestry poprvé více seznámila sr. Gemma Simmonds SJ v říjnu 2023 na semináři na téma „Prožívání řeholních slibů a synodality v kontextu výzev současné společnosti“. Pro mnohé účastnice bylo toto téma zcela nové. Srov. Georgina Clarkson, *A Synod within the Synod* (6. 11. 2023), <https://www.infantjesussisters.org/post/a-synod-within-the-synod>.

30 Srov. Pavel VI., *Evangelica Testificatio*, 17–18; CICLSAL, *Elementi Essenziali*, 36–37; CICLSAL, *Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor*, 63; Jan Pavel II., *Vita Consecrata*, 51, 75, 82; CICLSAL, *Znovu začít od Krista: Obnovené úsilí zasvěceného života v třetím tisíciletí*, 36.

je jim připomínáno jejich specifické poslání vyplývající z těchto obecných výzev. Kromě jeho sociálních encyklik, jež našly v řeholním světě značnou odezvu,³¹ bylo zasvěceným osobám v posledních letech adresováno dosud nebývalé množství textů, a to jak od papeže Františka, tak od CICLSAL. Při příležitosti Roku zasvěceného života (30. 11. 2014 – 2. 2. 2016), kterému dal papež motto „Probudte svět“³², vyšly čtyři důležité dokumenty, z nichž každý trochu jiným způsobem vyzýval k odvážnému hledání nových cest pro zasvěcený život, zejména k vyjití na životní periferie všeho druhu, k autentickému svědectví radosti i k radikálnímu postoji sounáležitosti s chudými.³³ V rámci tohoto hledání a přehodnocování dostaly řeholní instituty od papeže následující úkol: dívat se na minulost s vděčností, prožívat přítomnost se zápalem a obejmout budoucnost s nadějí.³⁴ Stěžejním a snadno čitelným teologickým východiskem Františkova pohledu na zasvěcený život je autentické svědectví o setkání s Bohem a životě v blízkém osobním vztahu s ním, které se projevuje nepředstíranou vnitřní radostí a disponibilitou k obětavé službě. Tím se zasvěcený život stává přitažlivým a má potenciál probudit svět.³⁵ List *Zkoumejte* vysvětluje důvody obnovy zasvěceného života s odvoláním na jeho prorockou dimenzi i na velké sociální encykliky posledních desetiletí.³⁶ Nechybí v něm konstatování skutečnosti různých napětí i rizika ideologizace sociální angažovanosti řeholníků, před níž varoval Pavel VI. v době, kdy byla tato napětí velmi živá:³⁷

„Zasvěcený život se přesunul na periferie měst, realizoval skutečné vyjití směrem k chudým, vydal se do světa opuštěných. Musíme uznat příkladnou velkodušnost, ale také to, že nechyběla napětí a riziko ideologizace, zvláště pak v prvních letech po koncilu.“³⁸

V tomto dokumentu jsou také vedle obvyklého zmiňování chudoby a sociální nespravedlnosti poprvé vyjmenována nová ožehavá témata, s nimiž je lidstvo konfrontováno, mimo jiné environmentální i genderová problematika a globalizace:

„Zkušenost chudých, mezináboženský a mezikulturní dialog, doplňková povaha vztahu mezi mužem a ženou, ekologie v nemocném světě, divoce pojímaná eugenika, globalizované hospodaření a komunikace, symbolická řeč. [...] Jedná se o epochální změny, zpochybňující dosavadní systémy hodnot, způsoby mluvy, priority, antropologie. Miliony osob putují napříč světy a civilizacemi, destabilizují světové identity a způsobují prolínání kultur a náboženství.“³⁹

Tváří v tvář těmto skutečnostem jsou zasvěcené osoby postaveny před výzvou „stát se pohostinným prostředníkem v onom hledání Boha, které od počátku zneklidňuje srdce člověka“ a před otázkou, zda dokáží „živit žár myšlení a oživovat tak hodnotu jinakosti a etiky rozdílů v pokojném soužití“.⁴⁰ Poté následuje další náročný apel, a sice nejen dosvědčovat dobro, ale poznávat a ukazovat ho i tam, „kde nejsme zvyklí ho vídat, v ‚neobčanech‘, ‚polovičních občanech‘ či v ‚městském odpadu‘, v lidech

31 V *UISG Bulletinu* vyšla celá řada článků zabývajících se důsledky těchto encyklik pro zasvěcený život. Např. Sheila Kinsey, 'UISG Campaign for the Planet: "Laudato Si" and the Way Forward. Presentation of a Commitment of the Environment', *UISG Bulletin* 169 (2019): 41–48; Fabio Baggio, 'Current Challenges for Ecclesial Communities in Light of "Fratelli Tutti"', *UISG Bulletin* 175 (2021): 11–16.

32 Srov. *Radujte se*, 10.

33 *Apoštolský list papeže Františka všem zasvěceným při příležitosti Roku zasvěceného života*; dva výše citované okružní listy CICLSAL *Radujte se* a *Zkoumejte*; CICLSAL, *Orientační zásady pro správu majetku v institutech zasvěceného života a společnostech apoštolského života*.

34 Srov. *Apoštolský list*, I.1–I.3. Stručné shrnutí dopisu a zamyšlení nad jeho obsahem viz např. Marry Kenny, 'The Year of Consecrated Life', *The Furrow* 66, č. 5 (2015): 262–266; Donal Murray, 'Glorious and Unfinished – the Year of Consecrated Life', *The Furrow* 66, č. 6 (2015): 311–319.

35 *Radujte se*, 10.

36 *Zkoumejte*, 5. Ana Begić, 'Evanoeoskom radikalnošću živjeti poziv na svetost [To Live a Call to Holiness with an Evangelic Radicality]', *Crkva u Svijetu / Church in the World* 50, č. 4 (2015): 613–631.

37 *Evangelica testificatio*, 17.

38 *Zkoumejte*, 13.

39 *Zkoumejte*, 15.

40 *Zkoumejte*, 15.

bez důstojnosti. Je třeba přejít od slov solidarity k činům, které přijímají a uzdravují: zasvěcený život je volán k takové pravdě⁴¹.

Směrnice *Nové víno do nových měchů* (2017) byla do značné míry reakcí na podněty došlé na CICLSAL přímo od řeholníků shromážděných na akcích konaných v Roce zasvěceného života.⁴² Tento dokument nepopírá výše citované velké a vznešené výzvy, naopak mnohé z nich opakuje, poněkud je ovšem staví „zpátky na zem“ tím, že otevřeně pojmenovává některé palčivé problémy, které dlouhodobě přetrvávají v mnoha řeholních institutech. Tyto problémy často velmi ztěžují nebo dokonce znemožňují žít autenticky radostné svědectví zasvěceného života. Poukazuje se zde zejména na škodlivost zastaralých struktur, zneužívání autority, nedostatečnou podporu spoluzodpovědnosti a dialogu i chybně pojatou formaci mladých členů.⁴³ Tento dokument odhaluje zjevný nesoulad mezi deklarovaným ideálem a realitou mnoha řeholních společností.⁴⁴ O tři roky později vyšla ještě instrukce *Dar věrnosti a radost vytrvalosti*, která se snaží reagovat na velký počet odchodů z řeholních společenství.⁴⁵

V rozhovoru s Ferdinandem Prado vysvětluje papež František vztah zasvěcených osob k otázce ekologie, jemuž se oficiální dokumenty zatím explicitně nevěnovaly.

„Pokud my, zasvěcené osoby, ztratíme smysl pro bratrský vztah vůči veškerému stvoření, budeme jednat majetnický. Stane se z nás aristokracie, které je cizí jakýkoli bratrský vztah ke stvoření. Proto jsou v Laudato si' tak důležití chudí. O Laudato si' se mluví jako o ‚zelené‘ encyklice, ale já bych řekl, že je především encyklikou sociální. Opravdu upřednostňovat chudé znamená upřednostňovat také stvoření. Jsme povoláni zasazovat se stále konkrétněji o ochranu stvoření s živým vědomím, že vše bude jednou obnoveno.“⁴⁶

Z citovaných úryvků je zřejmý apel na zasvěcené osoby, aby byly přítomné v současné společnosti jako svědkové autentického křesťanského poselství. Řeholníci jsou vyzýváni neuhýbat a neuzavírat se před realitou, ale reagovat na ni konkrétními činy. O tom, že snahou zasvěceného života je odpovídat na aktuální společenské výzvy, svědčí nedávné synodní odpovědi řeholních institutů⁴⁷ i volba tématu pro Jubileum zasvěceného života 2025. Jubileum, jehož motto zní „Poutníci naděje“, má být zaměřeno na tři koncepty: 1. naslouchání nářku chudých, 2. péče o stvoření a jeho ochrana, 3. solidarita se všemi bratry a sestrami.⁴⁸ Motto zvolil papež František a kardinál Joao Braz de Aviz, prefekt CICLSAL, se v dopise informujícím o tomto jubileu netají tím, že tři výše uvedené koncepty byly vybrány „ve snaze vyjít vstříc papežovým touhám“.⁴⁹ Zdá se, že osobnost papeže Františka má významný vliv na řeholní společenství a jejich praktické i duchovní směřování. Papež pozval řeholníky, aby přípravný rok 2024 prožili jako „velikou symfonii modlitby“,⁵⁰ a často opakuje potřebu bojovat proti duchovnímu zesvětštění, které je „nebezpečné, protože je to

41 Zkoumejte, 16.

42 V rámci Roku zasvěceného života se v Římě uskutečnila dvě celosvětová setkání, jedno určené mladým řeholníkům, druhé vyšším představeným. Z obou vzešly pro CICLSAL podněty z workshopů.

43 *Nové víno*, 8–10; 14–16; 19–26.

44 Wittberg, *God's Call*, Předmluva.

45 CICLSAL, *Dar věrnosti a radost vytrvalosti*. Různé motivy odchodů z řeholních institutů jsou za využití osobních zkušeností jednotlivců analyzovány ve Wittberg et al., *God's Call*.

46 Papež František a Fernando Prado, *Síla povolání. Zasvěcený život dnes* (Praha: Paulínky, 2019), 112.

47 S odvoláním na přednášku sestry Gemmy Simmonds CJ na semináři „Prožívání řeholních slibů a synodality v kontextu výzev současné společnosti“ v Praze 20. 10. 2023. Srov. Clarson, *A Synod within the Synod*.

48 Jubileum zasvěceného života proběhne v Římě 8. – 12. 10. 2025. Přípravná fáze běží již od července 2023 a je vedena mottem „Žížeň po smíření“. Srov. Joao Braz Card. de Aviz, *Dopis všem zasvěceným osobám* (29. 6. 2023).

49 Card. de Aviz, *Dopis všem zasvěceným osobám*.

50 Card. de Aviz, *Dopis všem zasvěceným osobám*.

*způsob života, který redukuje duchovnost na vnější vzhled*⁵¹ a odpojuje ji od evangelia. Františkovy praktické výzvy zůstávají dobře teologicky ukotveny, což je charakteristický rys jeho integrální teologie. Dá se říci, že z hlediska oficiální nauky církve je v současné době o zasvěcené osoby a jejich poslání i budoucí směřování postaráno lépe než kdykoli předtím. Přesto nelze předpokládat, že tato nauka je a bude plně zakotvena v každodenní praxi četných řeholních společenství potýkajících se s vážným nedostatkem mladých členů, kteří by byli schopni rozvinout obnovené poslání zasvěceného života. Navíc je na řeholníky kladen velký nárok, aby toto poslání rozvíjeli v komunitním prostředí, které podporuje vnitřní svobodu, osobní spiritualitu a bratrské vztahy, a mohlo se tak stát dostatečně přitažlivým pro současné i budoucí mladé křesťany. Lze proto předpokládat, že počet řádových komunit bude v budoucnu nadále klesat a zůstanou jen ty, které dokážou oslovit mladou generaci.⁵²

Závěr

Tato studie se zabývá vztahem současných řeholních komunit ke společnosti a k aktuálním výzvám, kterým dnes lidstvo čelí, a snaží se zhodnotit, zda má zasvěcený život potenciál se adaptovat a pokračovat i v dalších generacích. Instituty zasvěceného života tvoří do určité míry uzavřená společenství v rámci univerzální církve a mají za sebou mnohdy dlouhé období vývoje ve zcela odlišném historickém paradigmatu. Proto se dá předpokládat, že pro ně není snadné reagovat na rychle se měnící sociokulturní podmínky, zejména pokročilou sekularizaci a pluralismus názorů a hodnot, přehodnotit teologické přístupy a stát se opět přitažlivými pro mladou generaci. Po stručném nástinu historického vývoje jsme se zaměřili na dvě skupiny řeholníků z geograficky odlišného prostředí, abychom zjistili, zda kulturně-politické prostředí státu ovlivnilo jejich sebepojetí ve vztahu k většinové společnosti. Dále se tento text zabývá magisteriálními dokumenty určenými zasvěceným osobám a jejich rozšířením v řeholních komunitách. Nakonec je na základě zběžné analýzy dokumentů zkoumáno, nakolik současný papež a Magisterium podporují angažovanost členů řeholních institutů na poli sociálním a environmentálním a jaká role se od nich v dnešní a budoucí společnosti požaduje.

Výzkum potvrdil to, co se již dalo předpokládat na základě historického kontextu, a sice, že zasvěcené osoby z vybraných zemí západní Evropy a USA subjektivně více vnímají, že jsou součástí dnešního světa, než řeholníci z České republiky a Slovenska. Je zde patrný dopad nesvobodného vývoje církve v komunistickém Československu v prvním čtvrtstoletí po II. vatikánském koncilu, kdy řeholní instituty mohly uskutečnit jen zlomek pokoncilních změn ve srovnání s tím, čím ve stejné době žily řeholní komunity na Západě. Při troše zjednodušení lze říci, že do České a Slovenské republiky mnohé z těchto změn přicházejí se zpožděním onoho „zameškaného čtvrtstoletí“. Navzdory těžkostem s opouštěním a přehodnocováním původních struktur je velká část zasvěcených osob v těchto dvou zemích otevřená změnám a touží žít své poslání lépe zasazené do evangelního poselství a v porozumění současné mentalitě.

S tím korespondují i další výsledky, které ukázaly, že západní komunity více čtou velké encykliky papeže Františka než čeští a slovenští řeholníci, kteří mají naopak větší povědomí o dokumentech týkajících se zasvěceného života. Z toho vyplývá i větší důraz „západních“ řeholníků na sociální a environmentální témata, spojená zejména s různými formami chudoby a nerovnosti mezi lidmi.

51 Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Priests of the Diocese of Rome (5. 8. 2023), <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2023/documents/20230805-lettera-sacerdoti.html>.

52 Srov. Petráček, *Sekularizace a katolicismus*, 58.

Zasvěcené osoby v České republice a na Slovensku k nim rovněž přistupují otevřeně, ale s menší radikalitou a určitou opatrností, zejména v otázce ekologie, která je v těchto zemích spojena s různými předsudky a dezinterpretacemi.

Magisteriální texty adresované zasvěceným osobám od skončení II. vatikánského koncilu po současnost obsahují sociální tematiku i další výzvy k angažovanosti ve společenských otázkách. Spolu s povzbuzením k aktivní službě mezi potřebnými zaznívá i varování před ideologizací a politizací sociálních otázek. Apel na zasvěcené osoby dosvědčovat Kristovu lásku konkrétní službou mezi nejchudšími výrazně vygradoval za pontifikátu papeže Františka. Přidaly se k němu i environmentální výzvy spolu s důrazným apelem na řeholníky, aby vyšli z uzavřenosti svých komunit na periferie společnosti. Z těchto akcentů vzešlo i téma připravovaného Jubilea zasvěceného života 2025. Kongregace pro zasvěcený život vydala v posledních letech též několik textů poukazujících na přetrvávající negativní jevy v řeholních institutech a nedostatečně provedenou koncilní reformu. Tyto dokumenty vyzývají ke změně a naznačují směr, kterým by se tato změna měla ubírat, aby řeholníci mohli žít pravdivě a naplno své poslání a stali se inspirativnějšími pro současné i budoucí generace. Je tedy možné uzavřít, že z hlediska teoretických podkladů jsou zasvěcené osoby velmi dobře vybaveny na to, aby „žily dnešek i zítřek“ a braly vážně současné teologické, společenské a environmentální výzvy. Zůstává však otevřené, nakolik jednotlivé instituty a komunity tyto výzvy skutečně vážně vezmou, podaří se jim projít zdravou a vyváženou reformou a zda budou pro mladé křesťany dostatečně atraktivní, aby mohly konkurovat mnoha jiným možnostem a volbám, které se dnes nabízejí.

Poděkování: Děkujeme Prof. Peteru Travelovi, Ph.D., a Mgr. Kláře Maliňákové, Ph.D., kteří se významně podíleli na přípravě a realizaci výzkumného projektu *Zasvěcený život dnes*.

Kontakt:

PhDr. Dana Jakšičová, Ph.D.

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci
Cyrilometodějská teologická fakulta
Institut sociálních determinant zdraví
Univerzitní 22, 779 00 Olomouc
dana.jaksicova@upol.cz

Mgr. Alice Košárková, Ph.D.

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci
Cyrilometodějská teologická fakulta
Katedra křesťanské výchovy
Univerzitní 22, 779 00 Olomouc
alice.kosarkova@upol.cz

doc. Vít Hušek, Th.D.

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci
Cyrilometodějská teologická fakulta
Katedra filozofie a patrologie
Univerzitní 22, 779 00 Olomouc
vit.husek@upol.cz

The Ontological Status of Nature in the Era of Humanity

Lucie Kolářová

DOI: 10.32725/cetv.2024.008

Abstract

The text deals with the environmental crisis and how human culture can evolve regarding its attitude to the status of nature. Its aim is to consider how the status of nature can be adequately and justifiably characterised in the Anthropocene era, and this against the backdrop of postmodern changes in their relevant historical lines and perspectives. In this context, the Christian concept cannot be overlooked. The method is chronological concerning historical connections, yet the basic epistemological line is theoretical-systematic, hermeneutical, and based in synthesis. Regarding the issue of nature's autonomy, subject of reflection are the limits of a strictly specialist scientific discourse in relation to the complexity of the ongoing environmental crisis. The text aims to present ideas that may be inspiring for further work on the matter.

Keywords

status of nature, environmental crisis, progress, anthropocentrism, Christianity, Anthropocene, technological reduction, sustainability and sustainable development

Introduction

As topics of theoretical reflection, the ecological question, the environmental crisis, and the issue of the Earth's future unfold from what kind of status nature takes up in the current worldview of Western culture. Practical steps are necessarily bound to theoretical presumptions which need to be conceptualised. The text aims to think through how the status of nature can be adequately and justifiably characterised in postmodern culture in the era of the ongoing Anthropocene, and this against the background of changes in relevant historical lines and viewpoints. Taking into consideration the limited scope and the fundamental impossibility of treating such a topic in an exhaustive manner, we cannot but offer a tentative concept, a rough sketch, which will need further elaboration.

Method and Context

A chronological approach is used as far as historical facts are dealt with, yet the focal point is not on the level of historical data. The main epistemological line is a theoretical-systematic one,

synthesis being the preferred level of thinking. This is by no means a synthesis as a complete ‘theory of everything’, but rather a necessarily perspectivistic attempt at finding a unifying perspective which points beyond the existing dualism of scientific discussion and the dualism of science and life. Partial analyses and factual examples mainly serve to explain the intended connections. The text is primarily a hermeneutical work on well-defined topics; the ideas are based on Christian integral anthropology. The latter does not just imply the official teachings of the largest Christian tradition, the Catholic one, nor any other Christian denomination. If anything, it conveys the context of cultural Christianity, where Christianity and theology are understood as essential factors in the cultural memory of (not only) European societies – for instance by being aware of its overall history, referring to the Bible, maintaining certain values, by representing transcendence and defending it within educational and other institutes, by keeping hope for a complete life not measured by the possibilities of humankind, or by continually taking into consideration the welfare and misery of this culture, striving for mercy and bringing inspiration into society.¹ In the given context, I consider it legitimate that reflection which is not based on the key theorems of Christian orthodoxy entails, for example, creation as a culture-shaping concept.

Starting Point and Content

The text’s content refers to the key epochal change called the anthropological turn, which has been accompanied, since the 15th century – at the start implicitly – by a change of status for nature. In the past few centuries, this change has been a principal hotbed for ideas of what has, for humankind, come to mean progress, growth, and a rightly due future but has now given rise to environmental question and exclamation marks. In order to understand this change, the first part characterises the initial Christian concept, in which the interpretation of nature was still anchored at the start of modern times and against which the historical change can be distinguished. The second part thematises the status of nature in the context of the modern age and turns significant attention to the then technological paradigm and to the pattern of progress. The third part presents the principle of sustainability and so-called sustainable development as a possible programme for the future. In connection with the issue of the autonomy of nature, the text reflects the limits of a purely specialist scientific discourse in relation to the value of nature and also the complexity of the ongoing environmental crisis. The conclusion offers several incentives for contemplation.

0. Clarification of Terms

Specific terms used in the text can have a relatively wide scale of meaning.

Regarding the more and more problematic opposition of *natural* vs *artificial* (Aristoteles) the term ‘nature’ is understood as the comprehensive designation of everything that is, but not, however, as an absolute value, *ens perfectissimum*.² *Nature* and *natural* (*physis*, *natura*) are used in the sense that nature is something natural to the extent that it includes nothing supernatural. Neither does *natural* carry the connotation of *normal*, *normative*, *appropriate*. In the text, nature is further thought of as *creation* (Christian context) and as an object without its own purpose, determined for quantifying research and for gain (modern science and modern society, Anthropocene).

The term ‘anthropocentrism’ is simply meant as the concept in which humankind is the centre of the world and the purpose of all that happens, and this self-centred perspective is the valid

1 Cf. Roman A. Siebenrock, ‘Theologie als Wissenschaft – in Kirche und Gesellschaft: Thesen mit Erläuterungen’, in *Limina: Grazer theologische Perspektiven* 6, no. 2 (2023): 22–23.

2 Cf. Ulrich Lükke, *Das Säugetier von Gottes Gnaden: Evolution, Bewusstsein, Freiheit* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2016), 45–46.

measure of all assessment. In addition, a special kind of Christian anthropocentrism is mentioned separately (the so-called dominion mandate).

The ‘Anthropocene’, as a primarily geochronological term, indicating the fact that the human population substantially influences the state of the Earth’s surface, the hydrosphere and atmosphere, was introduced in 2000 retroactively to the era of the Industrial Revolution from the 18th century.³ The text uses the term in its first sense as an equivalent for the ‘era of humankind’, not as an agenda claim to the superiority of mankind, human individualism, and self-declared exceptionality. Although the term is not subjected to explicit criticism as incurred by the term Chthulucene (according to which Anthropocene offers no necessary narrative to enable the liberation from thought patterns and destructive behaviour for life in general),⁴ it is nevertheless confronted for its potential to bear and protect the ontological status of nature which would correspond to sustainable development.

‘Sustainability’ is understood as the kind of principle of thought and behaviour that is expressed towards life and nature – figuratively speaking – in a human attitude of the *good steward* and *shepherd* (slightly anthropocentric metaphors) and *sibling* (metaphor of a solidary environmental brotherhood).⁵ The term ‘sustainable development’ is sufficiently explained in the text. It is, however, essential to distinguish between *sustainability* and *sustainable development*, which can yet need not be synonyms; the principle of sustainability may under certain circumstances also mean stagnation or non-development, non-growth.

1. Historical Change of Viewpoints

1.1 Christian concept of creation

The Jewish-Christian tradition features no explicit theory of nature. Nor can we find in its main orientation a potential programme declaration regarding the status of nature. Nevertheless, the value of nature can be clearly identified in this tradition.

The Christian worldview states that the world as a whole – the universe, planet Earth, non-living and living nature including people – is the work of God. The world is created, God is the Creator. The notion ‘Creation’ itself indicates no causal mechanism of origin and shaping of the universe, the world, nature, life or consciousness, but ‘merely’ refers to the reason – accessible in faith – for the existence of everything. It is no empirical description of reality as we know from natural science; it is rather an expression of conviction that nature primarily occurs in a certain basic relational framework. Not in the least is it in a context without values. The revolutionary character of the original Jewish monotheism and the subsequent Christian concept consisted in a consequent distinction between God, people, and nature.⁶ As regards the status of nature, this means that it becomes an autonomous area, which allows for an objective approach. Neither humans nor nature are left at the mercy of magical powers; nature becomes “ordinary” nature. However, it is of cardinal importance that nature as such remains divine creation – the same way that an adult, independent person in all their freedom never ceases to be their parents’ child. This metaphor could

3 Regarding the term and publications, see: Subcommission on Quaternary Stratigraphy, ‘Working group on the Anthropocene’, accessed 6th January 2024, <http://quaternary.stratigraphy.org/working-groups/anthropocene/>.

4 Cf. Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

5 Cf. Hana Librová, *Věrní a rozumní: kapitoly o ekologické zpozdilosti* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2016), 62–71. Also cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato si’*. *On Care for Our Common Home*, The Holy See, 2015, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html, 221.

6 Cf. Dirk Ansorge and Medard Kehl, *Und Gott sah, dass es gut war: Eine Theologie der Schöpfung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2018), 44–47, 127–129, 142–146.

be further elaborated upon. The concept of creation is also essentially about the simple acceptance of the complexity of everything we consider to be real, without the possible ‘false dialectics’ which we have too often seen in recent centuries.⁷

1.2 The loss of ontological plausibility

The simple conviction – simple in the best sense of the word and a matter of course since Christian antiquity – that the world in which we live is connected to God gradually loses its plausibility in Western modern cultural history. Yet, surprisingly enough, not even the 16th and 17th centuries, despite the ongoing secularisation of many of life’s domains, caused a weakening to the Christian theorem of belief in creation.⁸ Moreover, also the Enlightenment, otherwise questioning on principle the Christian category of revelation as a source of human (super)natural knowledge, acknowledges and leaves, in its deism, the ‘function of Creator’ to God.⁹ The fundamental turning point comes with Darwin’s hypothesis of evolution.¹⁰ There is much literature with detailed and profound analysis on this loss of the metaphysical vanishing point.¹¹ It is precisely here that the traditional framework to explain creation appears to fall to pieces. It is as if nature were once again secularised and this time for good. Without its relation to God, nature ceases to be creation, and falls out of its frame of values. There is no need to start talking about the proclamation and fulfilment of a kind of programmed progress, but de facto, nothing prevents nature from becoming spiritless matter, a mechanism, raw material, and indeed also – euphemistically speaking – ‘humankind’s environment’.¹²

Seen from the perspective of a lived practice, the difference may not be very obvious. Regardless of whichever worldview in history, people – with the possible exception of hunter-gatherers and their ‘low-impact lifestyle’ – have always cultivated and exploited nature, used and abused it.¹³ It stands to reason that also within the Christian worldview people can behave as usurpers. Admittedly, this is no argumentum ad rem. That is to say, the ontological status of nature remains the ultimate defining horizon of motivation, and therefore of the impacts of human behaviour. For that matter – unrelated to Christianity – it is exactly archaic people, living in a mythical worldview, that set a prototypical example of this, as there was no, especially *mental*, detachment

7 Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, 121.

8 Natural scientists of the modern age were mostly practising Christians and frequently wrote their empirical treatises along with treatises on theology. It was, for example, the ambition of cartographer Gerard Mercator (1512–1594) to develop a complete cosmography in his *Atlas, sive Cosmographicae Meditationes de Fabrica Mundi et Fabricati Figura*, in which he dealt not only with astronomy, geography or history, but also with subjects like the creation, the history of salvation, and with Jesus Christ the Saviour of mankind and the universe. Cf. Lucie Kolářová, ‘Fyzikoteologie raného novověku a kartograf Gerhard Mercator coby teolog’, *Studia theologica* 18, no. 4 (2016): 39–44.

9 Cf. Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: From Abraham to the Present: the 4000-year Quest for God* (London: Mandarin, 1996), 337–362.

10 This hypothesis has long complied with the parameters of a scientific theory, but from the perspective of the theory of science, its hypothetical character is preserved. Cf. Jan Zrzavý et al., *Jak se dělá evoluce: Labyrintem evoluční biologie* (Praha: Argo/Dokořán, 2017), 24–27.

11 For instance: Alister E. McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology* (Oxford/Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), passim; Lükke, *Das Säugetier*, 107–144; Hans Kessler, *Evolution und Schöpfung in neuer Sicht* (Kevelaer: Topos plus, 2017), passim.

12 The sociologist H. Librová points out that the Czech compound ‘životní prostředí’ (literally ‘life environment’) is not self-evident, as *eo ipso* it downgrades nature’s own value by making it a function for the life of humans. The expression fits the attitude of the so-called eco-pragmatism. Cf. Librová, *Věrní a rozumní*, 100–101.

13 Hunters and gatherers from before the Neolithic Revolution were the last humans not to live on energy-credit. In contrast, the Industrial Revolution allows people through technological advance to acquire enormous overproduction and surpluses, which enable them to live on ecological credit (e.g., outside the season of vegetative growth), but when all energy consumption, costs of infrastructure, etc., are reckoned in, humankind unambiguously finds itself energy-wise in the red. This ‘deficit’ has been ‘attained’ for about 200 years, mainly because of storages of conserved energy, which, however, developed for hundreds of millions of years (fossil fuels) and this even multiplies humankind’s debt towards nature. Cf. Václav Bartuška, ‘Protancujeme se dějinami k dalšímu stupni blahobytu?’, in *Něco se muselo stát*, ed. Václav Cílek (Praha: Novela bohémica, 2014), 64–66. Also cf. Václav Cílek and Martin Kašík, *Nejistý plamen: průvodce ropným světem* (Praha: Dokořán, 2007), passim.

from nature¹⁴ and their undeveloped state of technology and minimalist intervention into the eco-system can thus be considered as secondary, respectively as resulting from basic ontology – admittedly this in itself is no guarantee for ‘goodness’ or morality.¹⁵ This was, for example, further represented by Celtic Christianity.¹⁶ And the complete opposite is illustrated by Western democracies that emerged from the self-confident modern spirit.¹⁷

This can be documented by the current issue of the position of animals today. Simply and solely from the ontological perspective, there is no – fundamental – difference between humans and animals;¹⁸ and on the contrary, for reasons of a really existing asymmetry, any other point of view goes against the recognition of autonomous animals, being independent of humans. As a matter of fact, there is plenty of literature mainly from the field of deep or integral ecology which is founded in the view that animals and nature itself have an intrinsic value.¹⁹ Despite the respectable number of schools of thought and alternative movements, they continue to be minority and often marginal projects and initiatives of which the effective strength has so far not managed to turn the direction of mainstream global capitalism and its conformism. With the widely present loss of the ontological anchor it can be observed that, in the current type of culture, we have evident difficulties in finding other than utilitarian justifications for the value of animals, or of nature. In the post-Christian era, the value of nature as such remains, on the whole, unreflected in the mainstream.²⁰

1.3 Exclusivity of modern anthropocentrism

The anthropological turn has brought a new emphasis on human affairs. Admittedly, a basic anthropocentric intention is already inherent in the Christian concept (Gn 1:26,28), the so-called dominion mandate, referred to by Lynn White as the root of the environmental crisis in Judaeo-Christian culture.²¹ Yet more recent critical analysis has shown that the rule of mankind means no dominance of power, but rather a service (*ráddáh*: caring rather than reigning; *kábaš*: protecting rather than dominating; *ábad*: serving rather than tilling; *šámar*: defending and respecting rather than guarding).²² The exclusiveness of humankind ‘created in God’s image’ is the exclusive responsibility for the

14 Cf. Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2019), 9–126.

15 Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 143–145.

16 Cf. Mary Low, *Celtic Christianity and Nature: The Early Irish and Hebridean Traditions* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1996).

17 The modern era is here considered as the beginning of the Enlightenment, of which the thoughts were a vital inspiration for the social transformation of the feudal order, for the industrial revolutions, and economic liberalism.

18 Cf. Albert de Pury, *Člověk a zvíře – stvoření Boží: Starý zákon o zvířatech*, trans. Libuše and Dalibor Antalíkovi (Praha: Kalich, 1999), 73–74.

19 Cf. Arne Næss, ‘The Shallow and the Deep: Long-Range Ecology Movement’, *Inquiry* 16, no. 1–4 (1973): 95–100; cf. Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008); cf. Sean Esbjörn-Hargens and Michael E. Zimmerman, *Integral Ecology: Uniting Multiple Perspectives on the Natural World* (Boston: Integral Books, 2011).

20 Selected examples from the legislative field: several regulations on ‘non-living elements’ in the Czech Republic from 1945 to now. It is obvious from the titles of the separate regulations themselves that the value of non-living nature as such is not only not reflected but not even presupposed: Decree of the President of the Republic on the management of coal and firewood (115/1945 Coll.); Ordinance of the Czech Geological Council on the procedure of the search and exploration of exclusive deposits from the perspective of protection and rational use of mineral resources and on the notification of deposit occurrence of state-owned mineral reserves, its remuneration and on the payment of expenses (85/1988 Coll.); Government Decree of the Czech Socialistic Republic on the conditions of rational exploitation of deposits of non-state mineral reserves (92/1988 Sb.); Law on the disposal of carbon dioxide in natural rock structures and on the change of certain laws (85/2012 Sb.); Law that changes law number 85/2012 Coll., on the disposal of carbon dioxide in natural rock structures and on the change of certain laws in the wording of later regulations (193/2016 Coll.); Notice on tariff return for fees on the disposal of carbon dioxide in natural rock structures (161/2023 Coll.). Cf. *Zákony pro lidi*, ‘Neživé složky’, accessed 6th January 2024, <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/obor/nezive-slozky>.

21 Cf. Lynn White, ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis’, *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203–1207.

22 Cf. Andreas Lienkamp, ‘Mylně chápané pověření vládnout: biblické podněty pro křesťanskou teologii stvoření a etiku životního prostředí’, *Salve: revue pro teologii a duchovní život* 27, no. 4 (2017): 48–52. Cf. Andreas Lienkamp, ‘Herrschaftsauftrag und Nachhaltigkeit: Exemplarische Überlegungen zum Umgang mit der Bibel im Kontext theologischer Ethik’, in *Bibelhermeneutik und Christliche Sozialethik*, eds. Marianne Heimbach-Steins and Georg Steins (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2012), 187–216.

creation, of which it is itself a part and with which it is connected by mutual relations and bonds. It is a different matter that, when people act in conflict with their purpose and fail to fulfil their mandate or even misuse it – which is reflected in the Bible and classified as a sin (Gn 3ff) – then anthropocentrism ceases to be responsibility towards creation.²³

The manifesto of humanism *De dignitate hominis* from the beginning of the modern age puts up a different picture. Giovanni Mirandola places encouraging words to humankind into God's mouth: 'You, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. (...) in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer.'²⁴ The emphasis lies on man's own pursuit; people distinctly stand out in quality above the rest of creation. This is in accordance with the new concept of subject-object dualism: nature becomes that which spreads out (as the object) around humans (as the subject), in contrast to them.²⁵

Truly self-centred wording is then heard as of modern times with its emphasis on humanity's individual autonomy. The Enlightenment puts human reason on a pedestal, yet – seen through the eyes of Christian anthropology – it needs to be added critically that a realistic view on humankind is missing. People are elevated, and at the same time fundamentally reduced. Kohák speaks of the arrogance of Enlightened reason, to which 'mankind appeared to be the only source of all values and every sense, and therefore the unlimited lord and ruler of nature. Enlightened humankind does not take care of nature, but merely conquers and subjugates it.'²⁶ Thus the self-concept of humanity, which no longer considers itself God's creation, literally carbon-copies itself into the status of nature. As of the 19th century, humans – as independent units that are in a specific way reduced – are seen through an entire spectrum of specialist views and of indeed varied, often opposing schools of thought. Guardini notes that people are certainly not what they are made up to be by idealism, positivism, materialism, or even later by existentialism.²⁷ In this way, people cannot even fit onto isolated shelves of highly specialised discourses, of which the 'explanation' remains – subject to whichever methodology – necessarily mostly functional. Modern anthropocentrism seems to be indeed fundamentally different from the Christian *view of humankind* as the 'crown of creation'. For the ubiquitous absolutising of human perspectivity consequentially extracts humankind out of its life context – out of nature and the world as a whole.

2. The Role of Nature in the Modern Narrative

2.1 Progress as a performative programme

At the start of the modern age, the Enlightenment's pioneers and all the 'prophets' of the new humanity, new science and new knowledge, of the new society and the new state, perceived their situation as hopeful and the future as promising. What in Christian tradition fell under the notion of salvation becomes a matter of human pursuit, attainable in this world. Naturally then, the process of growth, anticipated by the Enlightenment, gets to be explicitly called progress in the 19th century.²⁸ The strength and striking power of the innovators' visions cannot be truly appreciated without a wider background of ideas, namely a secularised, immanentistic eschatology. The latter

23 Cf. also Michael Rosenberger, *Krone der Schöpfung? Ursprünge des christlichen Anthropozentrismus und Möglichkeiten seiner Überwindung* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2023).

24 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, trans. A. Robert Caponigri (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1956), 7.

25 Cf. Romano Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit. Die Macht* (Ostfildern/Paderborn: Grünewald/Schöningh, 2022), 30ff.

26 Erazim Kohák, *Člověk, dobro a zlo: o smyslu života v zrcadle dějin, kapitoly z dějin morální filosofie* (Praha: Ježek, 1993), 187.

27 Cf. Guardini, *Das Ende*, 47ff.

28 Cf. Kohák, *Člověk, dobro a zlo*, 176–178.

involves more than the principal expectation of a qualitatively better future. *Progress* is a core conviction, a worldview. Profane human behaviour and actions, considered nearly fateful, gain a quasi-sacral value.²⁹

The global state of technological advance of the 21st century and its culture of consumerism³⁰ can be legitimately applied to the modern Western programme of progress. It almost prevents humankind from being regarded as part of nature, even if at the same time it is perceived, thus far unseen, as biologically determined. As of the 19th century, in the eyes of secularised society, nature has once and for all ‘fallen out of’ not only the theological (creation) but also the philosophical framework and become the subject of highly successful natural science.³¹ It would, however, be a mistake to assume that the new science finds itself in a valueless vacuum.

Enlightened science [...] distinguishes itself from the older periods by what it condemns as non-scientific: by its philosophical perception of the world. This is not what science ‘discovers’ but what it presupposes. It presumes a purely material and mechanical world in which causality becomes the only principle of organisation. Without distinction, it rejects both miracle and sense. What remains is technology. Modern science is a science of working people, one that is practical and useful; not a science of those who meditate about the world.³²

As a mechanism which has been since Newton defined mathematically, nature becomes the subject of scientific observation. It is simply reduced to perfectly natural nature, accessible only to reason.³³ There is nothing confusing or irrational, nothing that is potentially inaccessible or forbidden to people. A view of nature as a spiritless machine is more or less consistent with mechanistical anthropology. Particular examples of elite thinkers that have managed throughout Modern times to combine scientific research and philosophical reflection (for that matter even Isaac Newton) do not change much within the basic cultural orientation.

The concept of progress appears to be no result of an inevitable historical movement, merely used to describe this movement, but rather a semantic concept which is close to a *programme*. It is neither free of presumptions nor expectations. It is connected to a type of utopic thinking,³⁴ which has, in the past centuries, led to numerous strongly effective projects depicting (and even constructing) a new and presumed better social reality. A fitting example of this is the ecological utopia by Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston*.³⁵

2.2 The problem of technological reduction

In the context of a strengthened rationalism and subject-object dualism as the basis of modern natural sciences, also technology was understood as a chance, again exclusively for humanity. Despite the undisputable benefits of technical science for a qualitative improvement in people's lives,³⁶ the question has now emerged of the price that has had to be paid for progress, clearly

29 Cf. Bedřich W. Loewenstein, *Víra v pokrok: dějiny jedné evropské ideje* (Praha: Oikymenh, 2009), 83, 97, 219f.

30 Cf. Gilles Lipovetsky, *Hypermoderní doba: od požítku k úzkosti*, trans. Barbora Holá (Praha: Prostor, 2013), 35f. Cf. Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (London: HarperCollins, 2021), passim.

31 Cf. Konrad Paul Liesmann, *Hodnota člověka: filosoficko-politické eseje*, trans. Jiří Fiala and Jan Frei (Praha: Malovaný kraj, 2010), 29.

32 Kohák, *Člověk, dobro a zlo*, 184.

33 Cf. Kohák, *Člověk, dobro a zlo*, 178f.

34 Cf. Thomas Schölderle, ‘Ikonografie der Utopie. Bilderwelten und ihr Symbolgehalt im utopischen Diskurs der Frühen Neuzeit’, in *Neue Diskurse der Gelehrtenkultur in der Frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Herbert Jaumann and Gideon Stiening (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 507–562.

35 Cf. Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia: the Notebooks and Reports of William Weston* (New York: Bantam, 1975), passim.

36 Cf. Ingeborg Gabriel, ‘Ekologie jako otázka “nového člověka”: antropologické a sociálně-etické úvahy’, *Salve: revue pro teologii a duchovní život* 27, no. 4 (2017): 67–68.

one-sidedly. Technical applications of theoretical knowledge combined with technical-economic processes have, at the latest from the first industrial revolution, been accompanied by massive economic growth, which, however, is assessed by Johan de Tavernier from an environmental point of view as degradation of nature. In technological, more and more depersonalised processes, nature becomes material for production, space for both production and waste storage. Moreover, waste occurs during production as well as consumption. De Tavernier draws attention to what is called the 'tragedy of the commons':³⁷ water is used up, air polluted, but the cost of the damages incurred by pollution and emissions are carried neither by the producer nor by the consumer. The necessary existing connection between (economic) growth and the 'consumption' of nature, he writes, is evidence that the current environmental crisis has indeed all the traits of a social conflict.³⁸

According to Sokol, it is at the latest from the 19th century that technical science comes, unnoticed, under pressure and rule of the economy, which defines to a significant extent what is – measured by financial criteria – possible, beneficial, and desirable.³⁹ The continuing waves of industrial revolution seem to further intensify this clenching of technological-economic gears. Processes that have already happened and are still – on higher levels of advancement and complexity – under way (mechanisation, electrification, motorisation, automation, chemicalisation, robotisation, bionisation, digitalisation) can provide an easy alibi, not in the least for the subjection of nature. Nevertheless, humanity remains responsible, especially when it comes to seemingly anonymised processes, institutions or, for that matter, the so-called free market. For again here, it is all entangled with the personal responsibility of human beings.⁴⁰

Progress that is carried by a vision of building the future is decidedly no indicator of neutrality nor, apparently, of innocence. To say the least, nature pays a heavy – and most visible – price for the idea of progress. From an integral viewpoint, including the anthropological and environmental perspective, progress can never be seriously reduced to mere technical development. Never could it have been only about the 'technical side of things' and quantity, but also and mainly about the anthropological background as well as about what is nowadays exactly meant with the environmental context: about human ingeniousness, about creativity and courage, about the already mentioned connection of values, about beauty and what is good, about (non)solidarity and – newly – about respect for nature and nature for its own sake. The fact that in the modern age narrative most of the given aspects have not for a long time been conceptualised in connection with progress, in no way means they do not exist and have no effect at all. Then as well as now, humans are the only ones who manage to identify meanings, intentions and values that are hidden precisely in technological processes, and differentiate them and treat them in an appropriate way. Evidence of this can well be found in the current environmental sensitivity, sprung up in the culture of technological bedazzlement, a sensitivity that explicitly reveals the consumer role attached to nature, calls it by its true name and rejects it as reductive and misrepresented.

3. The Principle of Sustainability

3.1 Under the burden of responsibility

When we speak today of the Anthropocene as the human era, we talk undoubtedly about the world as defined from an anthropocentric perspective. When looking for a solution how to combine

37 On the issue of global public goods, cf. Bedřich Moldan, *Podmaněná planeta* (Praha: Karolinum, 2015), 421–424.

38 Cf. Johan de Tavernier, *De broosheid van het zinvolle* (Leuven: Acco, 2011), 155.

39 Jan Sokol, *Malá filosofie člověka. Slovník filosofických pojmů* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2010), 149.

40 Cf. Konrad Hilpert, *Zentrale Fragen christlicher Ethik: für Schule und Erwachsenenbildung*, (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2009), 18–24.

human development with nature's autonomy in a sustainable way both in the present and for the future, it seems to be an impossible task for people to step out of this perspective in one way or another and adopt a perspective which ranks them on the same level as other biotic systems and denies their privileged position in nature. Although the biocentric conception would have the advantage of, by definition, applying an ethical value of nature to all things living and it would therefore be impossible for the human attitude to nature not to have a moral quality, this biocentric conception would not be able to acknowledge people's reflective consciousness as a specific and peculiar category in the domain of living nature.⁴¹ Radical biologism can justify the value of an individual phenotype just as little as of any other subject.⁴² Nonetheless, people seem to be the only 'teleological centre of life'⁴³ that is credited with a moral responsibility for their own actions. If we cannot relinquish this anthropologically fundamental state of moral liability, then consequently – when disputing the modern programme of progress – this requires humankind to transform its own anthropocentric disposition in favour of a model that takes into account nature's autonomous value, even if only humankind itself articulates and defends it.

The notion of *sustainability* semantically indicates in that direction. It is symptomatic that, while the so-called ecological critique⁴⁴ became a point of public and specialised debates already in the 1970s, *sustainability* has been an explicit topic of the environmental discourse only in the past few decades, when, in the eyes of specialists, the state of nature appears to be practically unsustainable and alarming.⁴⁵ The term *sustainable development* can be understood as a synonym of progress which can be responsibly implemented and newly explained not just for Western culture but on a planetary scale. It can be justifiably classified as an opposing concept to the destructive dynamics of progress that is conceived – recklessly from the environmental perspective – as unlimited growth of material and intellectual goods and assets for humankind.⁴⁶ Again we are dealing with a performative term with a clearly ethical connotation, for sustainability evidently and necessarily implies responsibility.

3.2 The limits of scientific rationality

The complexity and diverse impacts of the current environmental crisis indicates that it is no longer possible to reduce nature to the subject of scientific observation. Even just a content analysis of the considered concepts (progress, anthropocentrism, environmental crisis, sustainability, sustainable development) exceeds the scope of a purely specialist understanding. Humanity relates to nature as an entity living in the middle of it, neither above nor outside it, and this even if it culturally transforms it.⁴⁷ For humans, the given relationship proceeds primarily within an existential, not within a specialist or scientific framework; never can the coexistence of nature and humans be entirely objectivised. The strict methodology of the 'classical' natural science disciplines (physics, biology, chemistry) enables us to gain objective expertise with regards to content and thus to understand how nature works. Research is relatively independent of morality, emotions, formative intentions, subjective approaches, and opinions. The presented conclusions are nevertheless always only partial reports concerned with partial aspects, whereas people, in reality, have to deal with complex phenomena with which our lives are firmly interconnected.

41 Cf. Josef Petr Ondok, *Člověk a příroda: hledání etického vztahu* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1998), 25–28.

42 Cf. Jean-Claude Wolf, *Tierethik: neue Perspektiven für Menschen und Tiere* (Erlangen: Harald Fischer, 2005), 58.

43 Term by Taylor, who uses it in an egalitarian sense for whichever individual organism. Cf. Paul W. Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 99–168.

44 Cf. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

45 Cf. Moldan, *Podmaněná planeta*, 337–343, 352–360, 441f.

46 Cf. Moldan, *Podmaněná planeta*, 334, 337, 467–468.

47 Cf. Josef Šmajš, *Kultura proti přírodě: tři ekologické eseje* (Brno: Zvláštní vydání, 1994), 37–41f.

In recent years, we have seen the emergence of a whole spectrum of new expert borderline disciplines, auxiliary sciences, or applied research fields that combine various methodological procedures (waste management and raw material treatment; rights of the environment; Green Social Work⁴⁸).⁴⁹ The trend towards multi-disciplinarity – a higher level of content openness, permeability, and flexibility across various discourses and a search for adequate methodology – reveals at least an increased sense of mutual connectedness and the unworkability of assigning *sustainability* in its entirety to only one specialist discourse.

The advantages of a (technical-)scientific approach, relative objectivity, detachment, and the absence of value-laden standpoints, can, on the other hand, be read as a basic deficit regarding the programme of sustainability. For it is principally not possible to transfer the fundamental complexity of the whole matter to the level of only rationalisation, however sophisticated it may be. This is no complexity of a mere cognitive character. Nature is not a spiritless machine, but rather a complex interactive structure.⁵⁰ People are no rational machines and in order to live they need a motivation and must activate a will, not only as individuals but also as members of human society. Kohák aptly captures the fundamental lack of the modern scientific approach to nature in a situation of crisis: 'Objective and systematic analysis remains rhetorical, if there is no civic will for implementation.'⁵¹ From a not too distant history, we can refer to the case of well-known studies, *The Limits to Growth* (1972) and *Beyond the Limits* (1992),⁵² which represented, in their time and in the best sense of the word, the systematic fact-based approach to the issue of the ecological crisis. There is no mention of love for nature. It contains purely factual wording, calculations and statistical data, and the observation that the current conduct of Western civilisation is not sustainable in the long run. Even though the Club of Rome (in existence since 1968 and initiators of both texts) had and still has an undoubtable impact, the technocratic and economic paradigm has decidedly not been weakened by it, nor have well-established and often harmful social and economic processes by any means been abandoned. The principle of sustainability is not just a theoretical category, for it is at the same time a practical principle of conduct. As such it does not ensue from 'hard facts' but from a basic existential, ethically outlined attitude of humankind. Objectivistic approaches remain significant tools for the ecological solution, yet they are not the fuel to start processes of revitalisation.

3.3 Complexity is the challenge

In the meantime, parameters that are measurable in nature are becoming more and more exact and everything points to the fact that global humanity faces the necessity of a fundamental turn in the way it uses the Earth's natural and cultural riches.⁵³ An ecologically conscientious attitude aimed at sustainability dramatically transforms the criteria of what is considered progress. As said before, it is a kind of development that is sustainable in the long term, without exhausting unrenewable reserves of all kinds or prospering on credit. When thinking this through consistently, this may even mean, for various domains and depending on the circumstances, a *sustainable retreat*,

48 Cf., for instance, Lena Dominelli, *Green Social Work: From Environmental Crises to Environmental Justice* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).

49 Cf. Moldan, *Podmaněná planeta*, 75–76, 119, 343.

50 Cf. Humberto Maturana: *Reflections on Bringing Forth Worlds*, eds. Frederick Steier and Pille Bunnell (Upton Pyne: Imprint Academic, 2023), *passim*.

51 Erazim Kohák, *Zelená svatozář: kapitoly z ekologické etiky* (Praha: Karolinum, 2023), 173.

52 Cf. Donella H. Meadows et al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Universe Books, 1972). Cf. Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows and Jorgen Randers, *Beyond the Limits: Confronting Global Collapse, Envisioning a Sustainable Future* (Post Mills/Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1992).

53 Cf. Moldan, *Podmaněná planeta*, 470–471.

as mentioned by Lovelock.⁵⁴ From the viewpoint of quality, progress can then even be classified as a programme of limited consumption, non-growth, or voluntary modesty. Examples of both individual and communal practice are available⁵⁵ and provide many models worth following, but the global crisis requires a global systemic arrangement.

The question of nature's status seems to be of vital importance. In an age of inexhaustible numbers of exact and detailed analyses, humanity lacks a common unifying perspective that would enable effective and global action. Postmodernity has given up on meta-narratives and all-encompassing stories: plurality is the slogan of our age.⁵⁶ The need for a unifying perspective can only be fulfilled by tapping into reality and by acknowledging its complexity, and it is precisely fragmentary knowledge that can lead to ignorance unless it makes provision for the broader reality.⁵⁷ Solving dilemmas – between objectivity and subjectivity, theory and practice, the individual and society – has evidently outlived its usefulness. Many people instigate a turn to ecology, which could well be, in the Anthropocene, a source of strength to protect nature's fundamental values against (self-)destruction by the human community. A green ideology is hardly what is meant here, but rather a cultivation of humanity's basic attitude towards nature and the world, the ability to stand up against exploitation, resignation, and indifference. Nowadays, this role does not in principle depend upon people's worldview or religion. Still, the question remains in earnest which sources could be broached for this new consciousness.

From the position of Christian theology, Celia Deane-Drummond speaks of *EcoSpirit*:

It recognises that facts alone about environmental issues are not enough; what is needed is something more elemental, that probes the background assumptions pervading modern thought in a way that leads to denial – what the editors term 'apocalyptic insomnia'. Such sensitivity to context echoes something of the concerns in other contextual theologies. In the main, eco-theology turns against the tide of radical postmodern relativism (...) in that it accepts that environmental problems have a substantial and reasonable basis in reality. At their best, postmodern critiques show up the limitations of scientific analysis and theological dogmas. Eco-theology can survive such criticism by also challenging the secular idea that the sciences are sufficient to solve environmental problems. Moreover, I suggest that even at a secular level the various forms of eco-theology need to be viewed as important contributions to myth making and symbol making, where 'myth' is not intended to imply the lack of truth, but rather shows its capacity to reach beyond the rational to include other dimensions of knowing.⁵⁸

For religious thought and practice formed, according to Deane-Drummond, part of the roots of the environmental problem and also continue to be a legitimate part of potential solutions.⁵⁹

Conclusion

The status of nature in human history presents itself as variable. The Jewish-Christian liberalisation of nature, which started around the first millennium BC, enabled the understanding of nature as a worldly, non-sacral space of which the ontological value was, however, for a long

54 Cf. James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia: Why the Earth Is Fighting Back – and How We Can Still Save Humanity* (Santa Barbara/California: Allen Lane, 2006).

55 For the Czech Republic, see Librová, *Věrní a rozumní*, 104–106, 159–292.

56 Cf. Wolfgang Iser, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 263–276, 319–328.

57 Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, 117f, 121.

58 Celia Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology* (Winona: Anselm Academic, 2008), 11.

59 Cf. Deane-Drummond, *Eco-Theology*, 11ff.

time, theologically guaranteed. With the anthropological turn in modern Western history, it was natural that the anthropomorphic and anthropocentric perspective of human perception, taken out of its theocentric context, gradually became an exclusive and merely horizontal perspective. For the modern age, as of the Enlightenment, the programme of progress was identified as essential. Nature's status is revealed as subservient. Within a functional-pragmatical framework, which gets to be more and more technocratic, there seem to be insufficient potent instruments of thought for reflection on the autonomy of nature as a vital and inevitable value of contemporary civilisation.⁶⁰ In industrial societies, nature is degraded to raw material and space for production, and space for waste dumping from both production and consumption processes. Techno-science, in the grip of economic interests as of the 19th century, provides know-how for ideas and applications which further support and help create the concept of progress. Nature is submitted to the interests of humankind and this is taken as legitimate. Nevertheless, the changeability of nature's status in history fortunately means a chance for change, too.

In times when the modern concept of progress is disputed and the environmental susceptibility relatively awakened, *sustainability* presents the principle which may enable the practical effectuation of a kind of justifiable development that is also feasible in all responsibility. The question is as follows: Which ideas and values should be and are permitted to be used as foundation for this principle? Objectivistic approaches of the specialist scientific discourse remain a significant analytical tool to solve ecological problems, but, at the same time, their reductivity obstructs from grasping the complexity of the environmental crisis. From an integral anthropological perspective, all indications suggest that, as long as nature figures in the plans of humanity as a functional space more or less empty of values, then no potential is created for its renewal. Yet – despite praiseworthy and long-term efforts to negotiate binding international environmental treaties⁶¹ – global civilisation seems to lack an internally anchored and commonly shared ability for a unifying perspective in this critical situation. The mentioned legislation will clearly be hardly effective without the support in a culture which, through a specific lifestyle, creates conditions for environmental sensitivity, alertness, and awareness. Any systemic defence of nature appears to be arduous if the status of nature lacks a supporting foundation that is both obvious to and accepted by the wider public. Development towards a unifying perspective presupposes – on a global level – the ability of at least elementary agreement on how to define universal human interests in a state of environmental emergency. It is evident that consistent and rigorous debate cannot in the end fail to get to the ontological level of the problem, since human interests are always led by fundamental values and basic convictions of human societies and are connected to elemental human certainties on the meaning and purpose of their lives and of life in general.⁶² However, it is precisely at this level that the big question arises of what might be that ultimate substantiation for appropriate cooperative action by all of humanity.

The environmental crisis and the issues of human development and the Earth's future require all contexts to be taken into account. In traditional Christian wording, synthetic thinking should be focused on the task of getting closer to the state of ontological equal rights for the whole of creation, in relation to each other. Furthermore, the concept of nature as creation contains, even outside its original context, universally plausible meanings – for example, the fact that it does not

60 Nor does the solution seem to be an emotional glorification of nature's beauties or a connected romantic 19th century sentiment which meet with, to say the least, ambivalent reactions in critical analyses. Cf. Librová, *Věrní a rozumní*, 29–30, 128.

61 A first treaty *Antarctic Treaty System* was already negotiated in 1959. For an overview of treaties, cf. Moldan, *Podmaněná planeta*, 430–434.

62 Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *Gott in der Schöpfung. Ökologische Schöpfungslehre* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1993), 37.

remove nature out of its relational or value framework. This could even present an inspiration and a challenge in the contemporary postmodern culture. From an anthropocentric perspective, the status of nature only has a chance of transformation if being conscious of our responsibility to nature becomes a moral duty for humankind. Even this is understandably not without a risk. In the ecological ethics discourse, Medard Kehl speaks of, among others, responsibility motivated by gratefulness and responsibility as (eschatological) composure.⁶³ In other words, this would mean that being aware of the fact that the world which is at our disposal can neither be taken as a matter of course nor be had on demand, that this consciousness must be accompanied by trust and humility which will not allow humanity to absolutise even its own responsibility. Care for nature proves to be an expression of maturity of an adult person who understands freedom as loving thoughtfulness which cannot create a 'new creation' but can instead make the Earth a place where it is good to live.

Contact:**Lucie Kolářová, Dr. Theol.**

University of South Bohemia

Faculty of Theology

Department of Theological Disciplines

Kněžská 8, 370 01 České Budějovice

kolaroval@tf.jcu.cz

63 Cf. Ansorge and Kehl, *Und Gott sah*, 425–428, 432–436.

Future Primitives

Michael Forest

DOI: 10.32725/cetv.2024.009

‘Is it impossible to combine the hardness of these savages with the intellectualness of the
civilized man?’

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*¹

‘It seems easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of
nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our
imagination.’

Frederic Jameson, *The Seeds of Time*²

Abstract

This article presents two typical but inadequate responses to the philosophical problem of constructing an environmental identity and ethic for our climate-impacted future. It finds difficulties with a primitivist mentality that renounces technology in favour of a nostalgic view of the human past, then critiques the opposite position that puts full faith in capitalistic technology in order to avoid shedding our consumer culture and economic commitment to unlimited growth. Finally, an alternative is presented as the ‘future primitive’ which points to an identity which befits the difficult years ahead as well as the hope for a sustainable future. The essay considers common texts from the anarcho-primitivist writings of John Zerzan as well as the techno-futurist tradition of various kinds of eco-modernist environmentalism. In short, a sustainable future will not be populated by the identity fostered in advanced capitalistic economies, but also briefly offers a model in the prescient figure of the American environmentalist Henry David Thoreau.

Keywords: climate change, primitivism, environmental ethics, techno-futurism, eco-modernism, Henry David Thoreau, false dilemma fallacy, future primitives

Introduction

Climate change and our trepidation for an uncertain but frightening future brings forward all our practices for review and modification. But also, it brings forward our very self-conception as hu-

1 Henry David Thoreau, ‘Walden,’ In *The Portable Thoreau*, ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer (New York: Penguin, 2012), 207.

2 Frederic Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xii.

mans. Whatever human life will be like in the future, it surely will not resemble the social patterns that produce these emission levels. Correspondingly, whatever self-conceptions humans will have, they are unlikely to be the consumer identities that ground the global culture today. In this essay, I want to further discuss about human life in the not-so-distant future and point out a common pattern of false dichotomies that pepper some of the literature. Avoiding these false dichotomies, I hope to advance a simple but sustainably based model of human life and identity according to the trope 'future primitives', a term that has been around with various permutations since the 1960s.³ False dichotomies, or false dilemmas, offer an unduly restricted range of choices that mislead us into unnecessarily narrowing our available options. 'False Dichotomy' refers to an informal fallacy that has a valid argumentative form – either A or B, not A, therefore B – but unnecessarily restricts the range of options in the first premise. The dichotomy is false because instead of being limited to 'A or B' we recognise 'A or B or C or D, etc.' As we move forward with solutions to climate change, we are frequently met with such a restricted range of options. On one hand, we meet with those who emphasise a severe restriction of emissions by a rejection of the technological culture that reinforces these emissions. The 'primitives' hope to achieve sustainability by undercutting the technological thrust of civilisation that brought us to this precipitous moment. On the other hand, the 'techno futurists' hope to achieve sustainability through an expansion and redirection of the technological culture that produced these unforeseen problems. These debates are complicated by background attitudes and positions on technology, capitalism, and the very nature of civilisation. While these are difficult and problematic issues, they are also likely unavoidable and come with further sets of false dichotomies that muddle the issues. In this paper, I would like to explore them to a degree sufficient to find each of these alternatives to be profoundly flawed, and to offer an unpleasant alternative that combines the least alluring features of each, but which seem to be required to morally navigate the most successful and sustainable future for humans and all other species. As such, I will examine each alternative in turn before offering the neglected possibility.

Bias and Civilisation: The False Dichotomies

Much has changed in our understanding of primitive peoples through anthropological investigations in the last half-century, but older conceptions linger in popular debate. I use the term 'civilisation' vaguely to refer to the different forms of hierarchical society that has followed settled agriculture and contrast it to the more mobile societies of the pastoralists and foragers – more 'primitive' in the sense that all human life was originally organised this way. In several keyways, civilisation has been defined and justified by a self-promoting interpretation over against primitive peoples. Various referred to as primitives, savages, hunter-gatherers or foragers, they have functioned as a limit to the boundaries of civilisation's self-understanding. The idea of a foraging society does not really become explicit in European thought prior to the 1740s. However, prior characterisations of the 'natural man' versus the 'civilised man' allowed European thinkers a handy contrast for their purposes of justifying ideas of progress or the necessity of various types of governments. The most famous, or notorious, of such characterisations was that of Thomas Hobbes who portrayed the natural state as one of almost constant labour and anxiety. Hobbes characterises pre-civilised life as a constant struggle for limited resources which inevitably leads to violent

3 As far as I can determine, this term originated in the literature in a California journal *Planet Drum*, volume 3 from 1974. The very brief article 'Future Primitive' by Jeremiah Gorsline and Freeman House gestured toward a local movement for an environmentally conscious future. Curiously, the seventh track on the 1972 album *Caravanserai* by the rock band Santana is an instrumental entitled 'Future Primitive'. There are likely prior references.

conflict. Without a powerful enforcer to cow our inherently selfish and unlimited desires, we are engaged in a continual state of war:

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same is consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such conditions there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently no culture of the earth, no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea, no removing such things as require much force, no knowledge of the face of the earth, no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.⁴

The key features here are: (1) Hobbes's reduction of pre-civilised life to bestial terms, (2) his characterisation of that life as the antithesis of all that is *hoped for*⁵ in civilised life, (3) a characterisation of non-civilised life as necessarily involving insufficient resources, and (4) his view that it is constant warfare.⁶ It is not important whether Hobbes thought that the state of nature was ever a historical reality. Relative to our own conception of pre-history, there is almost no comparison to Hobbes's likely belief that the world was only several thousand years old. However, it is instructive to draw from field data and anthropological studies of foraging societies in order to belie the ingrained misconceptions. As far as the first point, it is a key move to identify the human species with its manifestation in civilisation – or, in less charitable terms – in its domesticated state. A hallmark of civilisation's characterisation of ancient foragers is to render them hairy, bestial knuckle-draggers with a strong tendency toward violence.⁷ To call someone a cave-man or a Neanderthal is always a pejorative. However, it is good to keep in mind the simple tenets of our current anthropological beliefs – humans existed for several hundred thousand years as a successful species prior to the very recent manifestation of civilisation after settled agriculture which is only 5 to 12 thousand years old. If we trace back to the entire hominid line, we have several million years of successful life on earth. Rather than identifying pre-civilised *homo sapiens* with animals, pre-civilised ancient foragers are the more accurate and proper model of the species whereas our current manifestation in civilised life is a deviation.⁸ Just as Hobbes projected the ills in his own times onto the state of nature, we also hold a similar common assumption: that pre-civilised life was a continual struggle for limited resources. A moment to pause and reflect that such a meager and scavenging existence was unlikely to have supported the species for such an incredibly long stretch of time might be enough to allay that misconception. But to add insult to the misconception's injury, some recent anthropological data estimates that most adult

4 Thomas Hobbes, 'Leviathan', In (1651) Part I, Chapter 13, section 9, in *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 8th ed., ed. Stephen Cahn (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2012), 578.

5 I characterise Hobbes as drawing the contrast to what is *hoped for* in civilised life rather than *the fact* of civilised life. It may or may not have occurred to Hobbes that the evils of civil war and social disorder that he experienced were themselves the products of civilised life rather than the absence of it.

6 I leave out many features of Hobbes's account such as his odd individualism, etc.

7 Identification and characterisation of Neanderthals has been particularly instructive on this point. For instance, see Ian Tattersall, *The Last Neanderthal: the Rise, Success and Mysterious Extinction of our Nearest Relatives* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), or Erik Trinkaus and Pat Shipman, *The Neandertals: Changing the Image of Mankind* (New York: Knopf, 1993). In the last few years, since genetic analyses have located Neanderthal genes in contemporary Homo Sapiens as a commonality – especially among those with Euro-ancestry – and thus inferred various episodes of interbreeding, the corresponding imagery of Neanderthal's has become progressively Homo Sapien-ised.

8 Certainly temporally, as in the comment by John Parkington, et al., that 'Depending on how human origin is defined, human prehistory thus covers all but a small fraction (95–99.7%) of the duration of human existence.' See, John Parkington, et al. 'Prehistoric Populations', In *Encyclopedia of Population*, eds. Paul Demeny and Geoffrey McNichol, Vol. 2. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003), 789.

members of foraging societies ‘work’ an average of 14 hours per week.⁹ This data didn’t even factor in children and the elderly who do not really forage at all. However we balance the numbers with further data, it’s a sobering contrast as we plod and commute through our ever-increasing work weeks.¹⁰ The main contribution of the article was correcting our biased characterisation of forager societies – and thus by inference the state of Homo Sapiens prior to widespread civilisation – and that this form of social life can and did meet needs and satisfactions.

It is certainly the case that foraging bands live quite differently than the typical lives of those in civilisation. Being non-literate and retaining only the simple technologies that can be abandoned and acquired easily, their lives take on a degree of simplicity that is hard for us to imagine. Yet their lives were highly successful in that they consistently acquired the resources they needed, were able to maintain and increase their population and secure a lifestyle that they could pass onto their descendants. The relatively small numbers of humans¹¹ lessened anthropogenic impact on the environment¹² thus ensuring available foods for an indefinite future. The important point is to correct our lingering false conception that primitive life was necessarily a struggle with starvation and somehow less than human. This false view of pre-civilised life is a condition for a false dichotomy for it deflects attention from simpler forms of human organisation and limits our awareness of the wide range of models of living and identity. *Either* you can be fully human and thus ‘civilised’ *or* you are some kind of degraded being suffering starvation and disease. It is not surprising that philosophers – and the intellectual class in general – promoted this early form of false dichotomy and defined humans outside of civilisation as degraded, for the social conditions of the intellectual class are tied to our leisure status within the class system of civilisation. To define the human as only realised in that same system is certainly self-serving, and seems to have also required a reinterpretation of human origins as a mere preparation leading up to hierarchical civilisation.¹³ A fresh reappraisal of primitive life can loosen us from the grip of this false dichotomy, but it might also offer alternatives to contemporary consumer identity.

9 The *locus classicus* of this literature is Marshall Sahlens’s ‘The Original Affluent Society’ reprinted countless times. The version used here is from *Limited Wants, Unlimited Means*, edited by John Gowdy (Washington DC: Island Press, 1998), 5-41. Although a sample of sources are utilised, much of the data comes from the !Kung people of the Kalahari Desert. Sahlens’s idea was originally presented in 1966 and published in different forms in the years following his presentation. A critical but ultimately supporting viewpoint about this work can be found in Nurit Bird-David’s ‘Beyond ‘The Original Affluent Society’: A Culturalist Reformulation’ *Current Anthropology* Vol. 33, No. 1 (Feb., 1992), 25-47. The article includes multiple commenters also critically discussing the canonical status of Sahlens’s article.

10 In this section I have focused on Hobbes but there are numerous such accounts across the centuries. For instance, Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet’s great paean to progress *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1795) trans. June Barraclough, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1955). Condorcet notes that ‘[In this natural state] the uncertainty of life, the difficulty man experiences in providing for his needs, and the necessary cycle of extreme activity and total idleness do not allow him the leisure in which he can indulge in thought and enrich his understanding with new combinations of ideas.’ (p. 5) Condorcet goes so far as to identify the appearance of leisure with the higher class of a hierarchical society in which the labour of the lower classes frees up the time and energy of this ‘class of men whose time is not wholly taken up in manual labour and whose desires extend beyond their elementary needs.’ (p. 6) Closer to our own time, the anthropologist Melville Herkovits notes that ‘The aboriginal Australians are a classic example of a people whose economic resources are of the scantiest. In many places their habitat is even more severe than the Bushmen, although this perhaps not quite true in the northern portion [...] A tabulation of the foodstuffs which the aborigines of the northwest central Queensland extract from the country they inhabit is instructive ... The variety in this list is impressive, but we must not be deceived into thinking that variety indicates plenty, for the available quantities of each element in it are so slight that only the most intense application makes survival possible’ *Economic Anthropology* (New York: Knopf, 1952).

11 While numbers are hard to gauge without hard data, the current consensus estimate of world population prior to civilisation’s deployment of settled agriculture is very roughly about 4 million people. See, et al. Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones, *Atlas of World Population History* (New York: Puffin, 1978).

12 Humans have always had an impact on the environment, but the relatively small population lessened the consequences of that impact. Some current research conjectures on the impact of pre-civilised humans on climate change and whether they produced enough CO2 emissions to warm the atmosphere to the point of eliminating a glacial period that could have been occurring now. See William Ruddiman, *Plows, Plagues, and Petroleum: How Humans Took Control of Climate* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005).

13 Maybe the clearest version of this is found in Aristotle’s *Politics*, especially Book I, chapters 1-2, 1252a-1253b, e.g., in J.L. Ackrill, *A New Aristotle Reader* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1987), 507-510.

First Contrary of the False Alternative: Past Primitives

The self-importance of the ruling and intellectual classes may also skew the deeper causes of civilisation's problems. According to some sources, agricultural stress from overpopulation led to deforestation and its consequences as an endemic source weakening and eventually leading to the collapses of ancient civilisations.¹⁴ Just as our understanding of ancient Greece is molded by the Homeric epics and the works of the ruling and intellectual class in ancient Athens, there is a disincentive to explore the potentially inherent problems of civilisation within the very leisure class whose existence depends on the continual reliance and depletion of a limited environment. This is especially true if there is really no going back to the old way of the foragers.¹⁵ Thus the intellectual and ruling class has a built-in motivation to avoid the harsh reality that undergirds their rule, especially if they suspect that such a natural depletion will only doom them in the long run. The myth of *growth and increase* as the key indicators of success and progress would have contributed to the inability to come to terms with the data. It suggests another false dichotomy as well: either the past was a golden age or the golden age will come through growth and increase. But the key focus of the present study is a further feature: *the inability to discover oneself in a self-image outside of civilisation*.

'Primitivism' is not just a descriptive term for simple societies; it is also an ancient ethical position and has been proposed as a solution to various problems of human living. Epicurus offered it as a way to a life of tranquility, Buddha to nirvana. St. Francis offered it as a way of communion with nature and the divine, Rousseau as an avenue out of corruption and back to our original state. These ethical positions mostly focused on attaining or preserving a sense of flourishing or well-being – variously conceived – that constituted an option for a segment of the world. While many could offer this as a general way, it was realistically presented to a select group conceived over against the wider trends of the civilisation. On the other hand, contemporary primitivists tend to also engage in a struggle against the forces that continuously harm and thus do injustice to all the earth's inhabitants. They do so with an analysis of contemporary society from a moral point of view, but also as a far-reaching critique of the underlying causes of harm that has roots in the nature of civilisation. Some authors are so taken by the primitivist style that they look to it for a solution to all the problems of contemporary society. And in recent years, more prominence has been given to the voices of those who critique civilisation itself. In similar fashion, they begin with the overwhelming problems of our technological culture. And they trace the source of the problem not simply back to the industrial revolution, but to the origins of civilisation in settled agriculture and the development of a hierarchical society. This recent genre of primitivist writers has generally grown out of the environmentalist movement, but some writers also have roots in the anarchist movement.

Such an extended attack on the dysfunction of civilisation is found across the writings of John Zerzan.¹⁶ His writings crystallise all these negative positions and, drawing on environmental,

14 Clive Ponting, *A New Green History of the World: the Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations*, Revised Edit. (New York: Penguin, 2007), 1-86.

15 By some accounts, knowledge required for successful foraging is lost within one generation of the shift towards settled agriculture. For a more recent study, see Gary Paul Nabhan and Sara St. Antoine, 'The Loss of Floral and Faunal Story: The Extinction of Experience,' In *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, eds., Stephen R. Keller and Edward O. Wilson, (Washington DC: Island Press, 1993), 229-250.

16 Zerzan was born in 1943 and was ABD at USC in History when he left the programme. He has not held academic positions and his publications are all from non-academic sources, typically in anarchist venues. As such, Zerzan rejects property laws and publishes his works with an 'anti-copyright' disclaimer; e.g., 'This book may be freely pirated and quoted. The author and publishers, however, would like to be informed at: ...' *Future Primitives*, title page. Zerzan gained fame, or notoriety, as a correspondent with the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski, and for lending theoretical support for the 1999 anti-WTO protests in Seattle.

anarchist, and primitivist traditions, looks for the solution to the problem of civilisation in the 'future primitive.' An interesting feature is that he does not simply argue his point abstractly, but also attempts to enact a change in lifestyle and a clear rejection of the current self-image of the human being in favour of a new self-conception. Zerzan labels himself and others as 'future primitives' and the ambiguity of the term is helpful. It could refer to the writer and his community in the near future.¹⁷ Clearly, they are not members of a traditional foraging society. They have grown up within civilisation, but the attempt to shed the self-image of either the human as consumer or the human as civilised within some niche of a hierarchical society leads them to creative attempts to remake themselves. It may also refer to distant forms of human life that could be envisioned in centuries to come, perhaps after the collapse of civilisation in a post-apocalyptic world. But my interest is primarily in the ability to fashion a self-image of the human being outside of civilisation and one that might suggest some way to live that out.

In order to fashion an ideal of life, Zerzan plumbs through the anthropological literature on primitive societies and constructs the negation of the civilised person through a process of subtraction. As Zerzan notes,

Life before or outside civilization is now defined more specifically as social existence prior to domestication of animals and plants. Mounting evidence demonstrates that before the Neolithic shift from a foraging or gatherer-hunter mode of existence to an agricultural lifeway, most people had ample free time, considerable gender autonomy or equality, an ethos of egalitarianism and sharing, and no organized violence.¹⁸

Zerzan builds a model of what he desires to overcome in contemporary society, then roots around for echoes of that in the anthropological literature about ancient and contemporary primitive peoples. We are overworked, but primitives live in greater leisure.¹⁹ We are locked into narrow specialisations, but primitives share a common socially undivided life.²⁰ We are violent, but primitives were less prone to systematic violence.²¹ We have intractable inequalities, but primitives lived as more egalitarian.²² We suffer from chronic mental and physical diseases, but there is evidence that this is rare among simple societies.²³ In short, our problems are endemic to civilisation and the solution is to be found in the human being that flourished prior to the Neolithic transformation. Further, and maybe the most extreme claim Zerzan makes, the very languages we use – both in written and in spoken terms – have divorced us from the environment that shelters us and rendered the natural world into an object to be exploited rather than simply a home of embedded relations for a co-existing creature.²⁴ As he sums it up in *Future Primitives*,

17 Zerzan himself lives in a modest house in Eugene, Oregon and draws social security. The palpable sense of compromise with a society one is in rebellion against gives his visions of primitivism a sense of idealised desire. See the article by Zander Sherman, 'Anarchy in the USA: Four Years after Occupy Wall Street, Meet the Man Who's Been Quietly Fanning the Flames of the Country's Most Important Insurrectionary Movements,' *The Believer*, Vol. 13, no. 3, Fall 2015 <http://www.believermag.com/issues/201511/>.

18 John Zerzan, *Twilight of the Machines* (Port Townsend WA: Feral House, 2008), 107.

19 John Zerzan, *Future Primitive and Other Essays* (Columbia, MO: Autononmedia, Anti-copyright, 1994), 30-31.

20 Zerzan, *Twilight of the Machines*, Preface, vii.

21 Zerzan, *Future Primitive*, 36, 42-44 – no headhunting until farming, 19 – less territorial, *Twilight of the Machines*, 19-26, 48 – 'Head-hunting, cannibalism, slavery, war all appear only with the onset of agriculture.'

22 Zerzan, *Future Primitive*, 34-35 – anarchy as autonomy, 36-37 – lowered ritual life and thus division of labour leads to greater egalitarianism, 38-39 – without ritual, there are no strong gender divisions, 16-17 – this includes no strong gender division between hunters and gatherers, *Twilight of the Machines*, 11-18 gives a general summation of the position.

23 John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal* 2nd, Rev. Edit. (Columbia, MO: C.A.L. Press/Paleo Editions, Anti-copyright 1999), 82-83, 87, which includes the better nutrition of primitives, *Future Primitives*, 132-33 and the next essay in Part I entitled 'The Mass Psychology of Misery.'

24 Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal*, 15-43; *Future Primitives*, 27 – on symbolic culture as domination, *Twilight of the Machines*, 3-10.

To 'define' a disalienated world would be impossible and even undesirable, but I think we can and should try to reveal the unworld of today and how it got this way. We have taken a monstrously wrong turn with symbolic culture and division of labor, from a place of enchantment, understanding and wholeness to the absence we find at the heart of the doctrine of progress. Empty and emptying, the logic of domestication with its demand to control everything now shows us the ruin of the civilization that ruins the rest. Assuming the inferiority of nature enables the domination of cultural systems that soon will make the very earth uninhabitable.²⁵

The palpable despair that runs through Zerzan's writings is part of the attraction of his thought, and logically only this could lead to a wholesale rejection of civilisation and the sole viable solution to its pathological destructiveness in the recovery of the simple and peaceful lives of primitive peoples. We have lost our way on the earth and primitivism is 'finding our way back home.'²⁶

It might help to assess some of the claims Zerzan makes on his laundry list of key issues so that we have some rough gauge of these issues regarding civilisation and primitive societies. For instance, it does appear that band societies generally have exhibited greater gender equality, and the sharing cultures hold to a greater egalitarianism.²⁷ Not having property, of course, limits inequality. And I take it as an open question whether the type of debilitating psychological problems we find on the increase in contemporary society do not have roots in our retreat from the natural world for a lifetime of navigating complex social structures.²⁸ But one of the key claims that Zerzan makes is that civilisation is responsible for increasing violence and that primitive life in pre-civilised times was more peaceful and non-aggressive. Unfortunately, much recent research has gone the other way and proposed that violence, and violent death from other humans, was not so uncommon. Lawrence Keeley's *War Before Civilization* establishes significant evidence from an archeological perspective that fortifications and skeletal remains show endemic violence in most pre-civilised societies.²⁹ Steven LeBlanc argues in *Constant Battles* that humans never lived in ecological balance and argues that violence and warfare are perennial rational responses provoked by crises of necessary resources.³⁰ Rather than supposing an Edenic pre-history, it seems that primitive peoples had their own stresses and difficulties.³¹ So, while we can correct the bias of our outmoded view that pre-civilised life was a constant struggle with starvation and suffering, we need not infer that it was a state of grace either.

In an anarcho-primitivist conception, the process of overcoming the alienation of civilisation is similar to a process of healing a wound and returning to health. However, what connects and identifies us now is our loss. For Zerzan, 'Even the likelihood of a collapse of the global techno-structure should not lure us away from the acknowledgement of our decisive potential roles' for 'we are all wounded, and paradoxically, this estrangement becomes the basis for communality.

25 Zerzan, *Future Primitive*, 45-46.

26 This is the title of the last chapter of *Twilight of the Machines*, 123.

27 See, inter alia, Patricia Draper, 'Kung Women: Contrasts in Sexual Egalitarianism in Foraging and Sedentary Contexts,' in *Toward and Anthropology of Women*, ed. R.R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 77-109; Karen Endicott, 'Gender relations in hunter-gatherer societies,' in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*, ed. R.B. Lee and R. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 411-418.

28 Notice also the difference between social patterns in agricultural civilisations, industrial civilisations, and in our globalised consumer culture. Zerzan tends to lump all of these into a single notion of civilisations but expressed with greater intensity and frequency. But this is not established in any way. It is largely anecdotal.

29 Lawrence, W. Keeley, *War Before Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

30 Steven L. LeBlanc & Katherine Register, *Constant Battles: The Myth of the Peaceful, Noble Savage* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003).

31 I should add that neither Keeley nor LeBlanc infer that violence is somehow a part of human nature. They only argue that there is evidence for persistent violence in the archeological record and that it appears to spike during periods of resource depletion.

A gathering of the traumatized may be forming, a spiritual kinship demanding recovery.³² An attempt to recover a pre-civilised life from humans trained from birth to internalise civilisation's rules is likely to be a mere groping, but the attempt has been labeled in provocative ways that provides some interest. In *Future Primitive*, Zerzan uses the term 'feral' to describe the state of being primitive again after shedding civilisation's outer and inner conditions.³³ But he has very little to say about how that is done. To be feral is the opposite of being domesticated and controlled, and clearly the attraction of primitive life for those in civilisation is the sense of being free from being domesticated and controlled. Thus, wondering about being feral is recognition of the absence of a kind of power one might have had if one were to have been alive many millennia ago. And for Zerzan, 'future primitives' always seems to be a term that essentially reverts back to the past.³⁴ Maybe it's apparent that this ideal presents its own form of alienation. On Zerzan's account, I am alienated from my authentic desires because of civilisation domestication of my spontaneous nature, but I am also alienated from the ideal of the feral primitive not only in culture and practice but in time. In Zerzan's writings, at least, there is little to 'feral' other than the negation of what-we-are-now, and this is problematic for his notion of 'primitive' and explains why he is so focused on the past and a pre-historical model of primitivism. Both of these approaches block discussion of what might count as viable pragmatic actions toward living as a future primitive now and in the near future, which is, I suppose, the point of building the model. This constitutes another form of the false dichotomy as it vacillates between two alternatives and attempts to drive us into the feral primitive by simply negating our current status in civilisation. But the ideal is not fleshed out and the vast majority of us would simply stick with our current status. While this offer to generate a new self-image of a human being as a future primitive seemed promising, it fails to deliver the promise because it is really advocating being a *past primitive*.

In terms of developing our self-image as sustainable human beings, the issue of language and symbolic culture is, if you will excuse the expression, symbolic of the problem. Zerzan has so rejected the state of humanity *as we are* that he has glorified a version of human existence without language, symbolic culture, ritual, and rationality that is not actually a version *ourselves* at all but that of another type of human that is only ancestrally related to us. It *may* well be that language and rationality are constitutive elements in human domination of nature and of internalised and externalised social control. However, the elimination of these features is really the erasure of any identity proper to *Homo sapiens*. A pre-symbolic, proto-linguistic mind seems more appropriate for other species of hominins, from *Homo habilis* through *Homo neandertalensis*.³⁵ One may even wonder whether this desire for pre-symbolic primitivism is less an exploration of prehistory and more an indulgence of nostalgia for childhood. In any event it is not us, and this is instructive in our attempts to avoid the false alternatives fallacy that seems to oscillate between what-we-are-now and what-we-were-prehistory. Hobbes and Zerzan utilise the same set of false alternatives but lionise and demonise each other's contraries.

Further, this version of primitivism is in important ways an escape fantasy from the problems of civilisation. We do have real problems with contemporary global life, and the matter of global warming and the effects of anthropogenic climate change require sophisticated analysis, and likely

32 Zerzan, *Twilight of the Machines*, 117.

33 Zerzan, *Future Primitive*, 144, 146.

34 Zerzan clearly accepts the notion of a golden age, and the feral primitive is a return to that.

35 Some instructive accounts at modeling what different groups of hominins might have thought like are given by Frederick L. Coolidge and Thomas Wynn in their very accessible books, *The Rise of Homo sapiens: The Evolution of Modern Thinking* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) and *How to Think Like a Neandertal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). They utilised a combination of archeological and neuropsychological evidence to articulate differences that help a lay reader grasp key capacities/limitations in the record of human pre-history.

a greater form of internalised and externalised social control. We need solutions for our pressing environmental problems that develop practical strategies to get results. And so we need a corresponding sense of self-identity in which we can locate ourselves in the problem, in the solution, and in the steps that lead from one to the other. I will argue that some variant of primitivism will be a part of that requirement, but it cannot be a past primitivism, it must be a future primitivism and it must be one that does not deny our history and our present but carries us forward with a sense of scientific and technological sophistication. It is precisely along these lines that many of the futurist-oriented thinkers who glory in our technological savvy have proposed a way out of our contemporary problems.

Second Contrary of the False Alternative: The Techno-Futurists

At the other end of the spectrum from the radical retraction of modern technologies, a growing number of environmentalists have advocated the very opposite – abandonment of traditional philosophical re-conceptions of identity and moral theory in favour of a practical orientation to environmental problems that focuses on political compromise and technological solutions. An explicit advocate against traditional environmentalism and in favour of ‘eco-pragmatism’ is Andrew Light, who has a foot in both worlds as a philosophy professor and a consultant in international climate change negotiations. Following in the pragmatist tradition of John Dewey, Light seeks a reformation of philosophy away from ‘conversation that occurs mostly among philosophers, directed primarily toward other environmental philosophers and our students.’³⁶ This typically, though not necessarily, refers to philosophers who focus on questions of the intrinsic value of nature and often involve a non-anthropocentric point of view. Instead, Light advocates that philosophers focus on policy matters and assume an anthropocentric position to accommodate their new audience of policy makers and advocates ‘taking into account the overwhelming ethical anthropocentrism of most humans.’³⁷ In this view, philosophers are out of step with policy makers who shape the environmental regulations and international agreements that effect day to day decisions of great impact to the environment. Light then echoed this in the context of discussing the philosophical work that could be done in climate ethics, and noted that philosophers tended to be held back by two kinds of commitments:

The first is that because most appeals to the claim that nature has nonanthropocentric intrinsic value in the literature require the creation of a new basis for morality, then they are often on shaky philosophical ground. The second is that because these claims by environmental ethicists often wind up asserting that this special kind of natural value outweighs or trumps human needs, these theories are also generally unhelpful when it comes to forming environmental policies.³⁸

Light’s approach seeks to maximise the impact of ethical thinking on the world as it is, not the idealised world discussed by many deep ecologists or those committed to Aldo Leopold’s land ethic. Rather, our environmental thinking will be most effective if it accommodates the policy debates that currently shape the world we live in.

36 Andrew Light, ‘Taking Environmental Ethics Public,’ (2002) In *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works*, 2nd Edition, ed. David Schmidtz and Elizabeth Willot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 656.

37 Ibid. 657.

38 Light, ‘Climate Ethics for Climate Action,’ 558. I should mention that Light has a record of advocating this position that goes back to at least to essays from the mid-1990s.

This shift from theory to practice can also be found in popular writers such as Stewart Brand, the founder and editor of *The Whole Earth Catalog*. Brand's 2009 book was *Whole Earth Discipline: An Ecopragmatist Manifesto*. He adopts the phrase 'ecopragmatist' for his title and on the opening page announces that

When roles shift, ideologies have to shift, and ideologies hate to shift. The workaround is pragmatism – “a practical way of thinking concerned with results rather than with theories and principles.” The shift is deeper than moving from one ideology to another; the shift is to discard ideology entirely.³⁹

Brand's version of 'ecopragmatism' moves to 'discard ideology entirely' and this hard-headed practical approach appeals to American sensibilities for action over thinking. While not a professional philosopher, Brand exemplifies the popular approach and popular sense of 'pragmatic.' Another version of 'eco-pragmatism' is 'eco-modernism', a movement that seeks to shift discussion towards technological innovations that solve our environmental problems with geo-engineered solutions. For instance, the group that wrote *An Ecomodernist Manifesto* stressed the successes of past technological solutions and looked forward to an ecological future guided by technological innovations that substitute efficient materials and processes for ecologically inefficient ones:

Decoupling human well-being from the destruction of nature requires the conscious acceleration of emergent decoupling processes. In some cases, the objective is the development of technological substitutes. Reducing deforestation and indoor air pollution requires the substitution of wood and charcoal with modern energy. In other cases, humanity's goal should be to use resources more productively. For example, increasing agricultural yields can reduce the conversion of forests and grasslands to farms. Humans should seek to liberate the environment from nature.

Urbanization, agricultural intensification, nuclear power, aquaculture, and desalination are all processes with a demonstrated potential to reduce human demands on the environment, allowing more room for non-human species. Suburbanization, low-yield farming, and many forms of renewable energy production, in contrast, generally require more land and resources and leave less room for nature.⁴⁰

The view emphasises the environmental gains for nature in the technological efficiency of human resource production. The key hope from eco-modernism is generally to work within the given system of economics and politics to find human-friendly solutions to energy needs that will simultaneously benefit the non-human natural world. This benefit to nature is often portrayed as simply being left alone – a natural world preserved from further human exploitation. The authors also approach the difficult issue of climate change with the belief that 'meaningful climate mitigation is fundamentally a technological challenge' and thus that 'even dramatic limits to per capita global consumption would be insufficient to achieve significant climate mitigation.'⁴¹ These proposals are all very general, and this befits the literary form of a manifesto – a general statement of belief and approach. And given that, it is hard to disagree with. Limited by the economic and technological patterns that so powerfully shape the many societies around the globe, who

39 Stewart Brand, *Whole Earth Discipline: An Ecopragmatist Manifesto* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2009), 1.

40 Asufu-Adjaye, Brook, et al., *An Ecomodernist Manifesto* (April 2015) at www.ecomodernism.org, 18. There are eighteen authors listed in the document. The website describes them as 'signers' to the document.

41 Ibid., 21.

could disagree with the notion that intelligence applied to technological innovations in energy production, agriculture and climate control are necessary for both human flourishing and the preservation of the non-human natural world?

But it is one thing to argue that future technological innovations are necessary, it is another to argue that they are sufficient. One reason to doubt that technological innovations are sufficient is that they have generally arisen and been powered by the capitalist economy that seeks to gain market advantages by technologically perfecting products and processes that help corporations gain price or product benefits over against competitors within a given market, or even outflanking the entire industry by an innovation so dominating that the previous market collapses. Agricultural innovations such as genetically modified seeds might be marketed to us as an altruistic breakthrough for impoverished people to gain nutritional advantages, but we quickly find the corporate interests driving toward greater exploitation. The authors of *An Ecomodernist Manifesto* reject such close ties:

Too often, modernization is conflated, both by its defenders and critics, with capitalism, corporate power, and laissez-faire economic policies. We reject such reductions. What we refer to when we speak of modernization is the long-term evolution of social, economic, political, and technological arrangements in human societies toward vastly improved material well-being, public health, resource productivity, economic integration, shared infrastructure, and personal freedom.⁴²

A nice idea, but it is hard not to be skeptical that one can separate these forms of modernisation from capitalism. It is easy to say that one desires the separation, but the way forward is not at all clear. One of the reasons that one might be skeptical is that the position as advanced asks for little or no sacrifice. It asks for little or no personal transformation and essentially leaves human beings and human societies operating and thinking of themselves exactly as we are within the consumer identities of late capitalism. In essence, it offers a promise of avoiding large scale personal and social transformation through energy substitutions that can bring us everything we still now desire without radically altering the self-identity of the species that has crossed every available spot on the earth in search of ways to exploit it for the satisfaction of our desires.

A bias is a kind of blind spot – one thinks that they are seeing everything clearly but in fact misses what is often right there.⁴³ Intellectually, our blind spots can be manifested in the simple egoist's unarticulated belief that they deserve more than others; or it can occur in groups, in the socially reinforced beliefs that people categorised differently are inferior and deserving of unequal treatment. Another kind of generalised bias is to deflect attention away from long term concerns and to focus our intellectual attentions on achieving shorter term goals. This appeals to the practical mindset that makes decisions based on tangible results and 'common sense.' But the problem with focusing on more immediate results is that it deflects our energies from thinking about longer term cycles, longer term problems, and longer term solutions. If the benefits gained from our attention to practical policy issues also carries the seed of reluctance to actively encounter a more radical interrogation of ourselves and our patterns of living, then we would be selling future solutions for short term gains. It is the position of this argument that environmental solutions will only come from refashioning our self-identity from the consumer models of success

⁴² Ibid., 28.

⁴³ For more on this use of bias and the blind spot as a metaphor, see Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), see chapter 7, especially 244-267.

embedded in our culture's encouragement of satisfying all of our desires. The denial of desires, seems old fashioned and out of step with the upbeat language of the technological futurists.

This disposition towards bias is vividly illustrated in the writings of Pascal Bruckner whose 2013 book *The Fanaticism of the Apocalypse* attempts to undercut serious environmental concerns by focusing on a perceived undercurrent of anti-humanism in the environmental movement. The viewpoint functions as a way to preclude the abandonment of desires typical of life in most globalised societies. Bruckner tries to defang traditional environmental arguments under a strategy of discrediting them as fear-producing approaches built on guilt and therefore as 'anti-human.' I would like to consider this strategy as a candidate for a kind of general bias – in which our drive for short-term interests blinds us to the long-term effects of our actions, but this is achieved by deflecting inquiry from the consequences of our exploitation. His claim is essentially that environmentalists are stuck using the ascetic critiques and strategies of outmoded religious practices: 'Consider the meaning of contemporary jargon of the famous carbon footprint that we all leave behind us. What is it, after all, if not the gaseous equivalent of Original Sin, of the stain that we inflict on our Mother Gaia by the simple fact of being present and breathing?'⁴⁴ We should be willing to consider Bruckner's point that the use of terror and apocalypse can be self-serving, and may ideologically replace the terror induced by the threat of nuclear war, or hell. On the other hand, the terror of nuclear war wasn't merely a fantasy; and the social consequences of environmental degradation are also real and worthy of a healthier dose of terror than they have been given, even if the scientists who proclaim it function as high priests of an intellectual culture. In this way, Bruckner serves to prevent the required insights about the consequences of climate change by the ad hominem strategy of labelling environmentalists as fanatics who want to deprive us of pleasure. But the re-enforcement of the bias continues, even as Bruckner does address the environmental challenge. The key to his solution is not in giving up consumer desires. Rather the solution is to embrace a science-fiction like vision of future technology. He notes that

A race has begun between the forces of despair and those of human ingenuity. In other words, the remedy is found in the disease [...], in the despised industrial civilization, the frightening science, the endless crisis, the globalization that exceeds our grasp: Only an increase in research, an explosion of creativity, or an unprecedented technological advance will be able to save us. We have to try to push back the boundaries of the possible by encouraging the most fantastic initiatives, the most mind-boggling ideas. We have to transform the increasing scarcity of resources into a wealth of inventions. We may be at the dawn of an unheard-of revival of architecture, building construction, industry, and agriculture⁴⁵

Bruckner's strategy is appealing: we can think our way out of this problem rather than give up the consumer desires that we have grown up with and which we now cannot imagine life without. We can exploit our resources and get away with it by being cleverer than we ever have been. Of course, that's a useful fantasy and wildly imaginative. It also indulges the satisfaction of the wealthier consumer class. By his strategy, we are allowed to enjoy our present conditions and remain optimistic that geniuses will save us from ourselves. Bruckner is the crude version of ecomodernism given by the *Manifesto* author's reliance on energy substitutions. His position represents the naked desire to cling to the status quo and be rescued from ourselves. My point here is

44 Pascal Bruckner, *The Fanaticism of the Apocalypse: Save the Earth, Punish Human Beings*, trans. Steven Rendell (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2013), 2.

45 Bruckner, *Fanaticism*, 184-185.

not to address the anti-environmentalist arguments head on, but rather note the strategies that are devised which allow us to avoid the unpleasant conclusions that are considered non-controversial by climate scientists. I would also like to add that this approach has its merits. As advanced by the ecomodernists, creative solutions have been a hallmark of success since the industrial revolution, and they should be encouraged for our environmental problems. But we can smell the odour of a lingering bad faith that allows us to persist in the practices that we know are damaging while clinging to the fantastic hope of a technological rescue by a *scientist-ex-machina*. In the end, I would argue that the likely interpretation is that our fantastic hopes for a scientific miracle are based on our inability to give up our self-image as contemporary consumers. Part of the issue then may be that we cannot hope for the future because we have no viable self-images beyond our roles in a consumer society. Despite Bruckner's contrast of religious anti-humanism, we detect an almost religious faith, hope and love for techno-capitalism. This position on our identity is presaged by the Frederic Jameson epigram at the top of the paper. It does seem easier to imagine the destruction of the earth than to imagine any alternative to consumer capitalism. The question extends the problem of bias: we interpret our failure of imagination as a difficulty in technological innovation, rather than a failure of imagination in re-thinking who we are outside the consumer civilisation we are locked into.

Here we have another false dichotomy, in this case Bruckner restricts the options to either we embrace the dazzling technological future or we are just pleasure-denying anti-humanists. Of course, the argument has its attraction not only because as all humans we love pleasure and freedom, but also because it allows to remain in stasis – the option to remain as I am without the difficulties involved in changing into a different kind of person lend the position a believability that is not warranted by its argument.

If Zerzan had romanticised the primitivism of pre-civilised humans and tried to solve the problems of the present by reversion to the past, the futurists have misplaced their faith in hoping that an intensification of modernist technologies would be sufficient to ensure an ecologically sound future in the celebration of the Anthropocene Era.⁴⁶ But the patterns of human exploitation have not receded. Exploitation of natural resources, of domesticated animals, and of other humans continues apace with no realistic end in sight. New technologies do change impacts, but they also often fall under the control of wealthy and powerful interests rather than the liberalised, egalitarian vision of the futurists.

While placing too much emphasis on a particular political regime may not be prudent, the 2016 election of Donald Trump exemplifies a great weakness of the modernist approach. After so many people worked so hard for theoretical and practical solutions to our environmental and climate problems, it can all be rolled back by a wave of deregulation and greed stemming from an identity grounded in the consumer ideal of the satisfaction of unlimited desires. The unfolding of that presidential term points to the promise of corporate exploitation satisfying insatiable greed for more and more and it appears politically fueled by the scapegoating of minority groups to explain why many middle class consumers have not been matching such consumer 'success.' My argument, at any rate, is that the transformation of our self-identity is a necessary condition for the any viable solution to our continued exploitation. And as bright and noble as many of the goals of the ecopragmatists and ecomodernists are, they will not succeed if we remain rooted in the self-identity

46 The authors of *An Ecomodernist Manifesto* embrace this central anthropogenic role, similar to Andrew Light's rejection of nonanthropocentric notions of value: 'We value the liberal principles of democracy, tolerance, and pluralism in themselves, even as we affirm them as keys to achieving a *great* Anthropocene.' Asufu-Adjaye, Brook, et al., *An Ecomodernist Manifesto*, 31.

of capitalist consumers. Deflection away from the traditional philosophical task of re-thinking ourselves must be avoided. Our task is not merely technological, but also a spiritual one.

Conclusion: The Future Primitive

Climate change and the dramatic consequences that may be in our near future have transformed our problem from a personal decision about limiting one's desires to one of global policy. And this point changes the debate on primitivism. For the discussion is no longer a simple matter of choosing the best alternative lifestyle in the context of an individual life. The environmental exigencies of the 21st Century are forcing us to reconsider the very model of human living on a universal scale. We can no longer afford to limit our reflections on primitivism to a personal decision of lifestyle fulfillment. We are confronted with the consequences of our environmental impact by every individual and on every individual. This is the 'unpleasant alternative' that I referred to in the introduction. It is unpleasant because we have to change who we are, and that involves not only shedding our consumer identity but also the products and habits we have acquired that are unnecessarily drawn out of the earth and fill it back up again as waste. In short, we have to give up on many of these desires. As such, our mode of living is no longer one in which we can choose any appealing lifestyle without impacting the rest of the globe. If we have any moral obligations at all, we have an obligation to do no gratuitous harm to another. And if we have any rights at all, we have the right not to be gratuitously harmed by another.⁴⁷ But now we are aware of the environmental impact that comes with basic levels of consumption in middle-class living around the world: greenhouse gases that come from fossil fuel production of electricity and auto emissions, emissions and land use for increased red meat consumption, waste products from production and consumption that contaminate the air, water, and land that we share with fellow humans and that we leave to our descendants. This constitutes a form of involuntary harm on others. Each element that impacts on other human beings simultaneously impacts a myriad of other species and the consequences of our consumption ripples through a multitude of ecosystems. This means that the choice of a lifestyle is no longer simply a personal or individual decision. It is a decision that has to be made in awareness of, and in conjunction with, other people.

But we are also faced with the need to embrace the scientific and technological solutions that not only function as solutions to our current crises but will also enable us to live equitably as one species of earth's inhabitants along with all the others. This means that, contrary to the false dichotomy's either/or premise, we seem to be faced with, at minimum, a both/and approach. We need technological solutions for our technological problems but we also need a complete spiritual transformation of our self-conception and our understanding of our place on earth. Our way out, if we make it, will not be pleasant but it must be future oriented rather than a reversion to the past.

Curiously, we might gesture to an individual to help us re-think ourselves and reconceive a new kind of human self-identity – the Future Primitive. When Henry David Thoreau went to live in the woods near Walden Pond on 4th July 1845, it was meant to enact a meditation on primitivism, the past, the future, environmental degradation, consumerism, and more. Or, maybe more accurately, it *came to mean* all these things as Thoreau progressively came to understand the implications of his decision. Initially seeking a mode of living that gave him the freedom

47 For a view on the right not be harmed and its relation to climate change, see John Broome's *Climate Matters* (Oxford: 2012), especially chapters 4 and 5.

to live a writer's life without much income, it allowed him to explore a model of simple living that was 'primitivist' and yet never intended to be a complete isolation from civilisation. It is also significant that one of the writing projects from this experiment in simple living – that masterpiece of American literature, *Walden* – has become one of the literary and philosophical foundations of the environmental movement. One of the crucial elements in Thoreau's work is the transformation that he undergoes away from being a member of a consumer society through his retreat into the woods by Walden Pond. Like a hero in a story of old, Thoreau was wounded by his encounter with the beast, in this case, the acquisitive society that gauged success in life by material possessions: 'what is the nature of the luxury which enervates and destroys nations? Are we sure that there is none of it in our own lives? The philosopher is in advance of his age even in the outward form of his life.'⁴⁸ But Thoreau didn't stay in the woods. He returned to live in Concord, as a writer, as a naturalist, and as a public lecturer. Thoreau learned a form of primitivism in his two year exodus into the woods, but didn't remain there. Nor was he ultimately seduced by his admittedly romantic infatuation with Native American ways of living. Thoreau returned to staid, middle class, Concord having shed such inhibiting self-conceptions since 'the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.'⁴⁹ My point is that Thoreau did not seek a past primitivism. He didn't even forsake the technologies and sciences of his day. But he had transformed himself through primitivism toward a future model which combined the power and simplicity of voluntary poverty with his best efforts to use the most current science and technology to achieve an ecologically sound and sensitive life. As Thoreau had recounted a tale from Darwin's voyages, he reflected 'Is it impossible to combine the hardiness of these savages with the intellectualness of the civilised man?'⁵⁰ I propose that Thoreau made that combination in himself. And importantly for us, he became that person. He grew up in a middle class household. His father was a shopkeeper and there were neither woodsmen nor even farmers in his family. His education was 'classical' meaning that he was drilled in foreign languages and literature. There was nothing to prepare him for anything other than middle class consumer life. But Thoreau's intelligence and encounter with nature through the voluntary poverty that he embraced enabled him to become an amateur naturalist and most famously an articulate voice for a new form of living. He became a future primitive.

We live in different times, with newer technologies and a different sense of the dangers of the planet than Thoreau did. But it is clear that our need is for a similar profile of human living: to shed the consumer identity that we are saturated in, immerse ourselves instead in a naturalistic and environmental ecological sensibility, and from there utilise the best science and technology at our disposal to transform ourselves and protect the world we currently are exploiting.

In this essay, I have argued that typical approaches to our environmental future fall into the pattern of a false dilemma fallacy. Either a past primitivism that renounces advanced technologies, or a techno-futurism designed to avoid the problems generated by consumer culture and identity. In classic dilemma fashion, these are presented as contradictories when in fact they are merely contraries. Finally, I have offered a third alternative which has the virtue of bringing forward the best in each approach. Yet, it comes with a price: we must shed our consumer mentality and reforge our identities for a new era. In the words of Thoreau, 'it appears as if men had deliberately

48 Henry David Thoreau, 'Walden', in (1854) *The Portable Thoreau*, ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer, (New York: Penguin, 2012), 209.

49 Ibid., 203.

50 Ibid., 207. I should add that Thoreau had a slightly more sophisticated use of the term 'savage' than we do. Thoreau was aware that the etymology of the term referred to 'people in the woods' and for Thoreau this was a complimentary label. Being educated and aware of the unrefined views of many of his fellow citizens, he also employed it ironically.

chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. Yet they honestly think there is no choice left. But alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear. It is never too late to give up our prejudices.⁵¹

Contact:***Assoc. Prof. Michael Forest***

Canisius University

Department of Philosophy

2001 Main Street

Buffalo NY 14208 USA

forestm@canisius.edu

51 Ibid., 203.

Studie Varia

Studies Varia

Transformation of the Values of Agape Love as a Learning Agent for Moral Change in the Context of Theology Students

GP Harianto, Ester Widiyaningtyas, Urbanus Sukri, Desire Karo Karo, Victoria Woen, David Ming

DOI: 10.32725/cetv.2024.010

Abstract

The objective of this study was to examine the parallels between the Agape Love and moral change in theological students. The findings imply that transformation of the values of Agape Love as a learning agent for moral change in the context of theological students should aim to bring about God's Kingdom's reconciliation. Contextualising learning agent content into students' circumstances and backgrounds involves shifting from a Christian moral and character to the theological students. The goal of Agape Love is to completely change students' lives, including their cognitive, emotional, and behavioural aspects. Dialectics, cooperative learning, and inquiry-based learning are all incorporated into the learning approach in theological students. This research aims to answer several questions: What are the values of Agape Love as a learning agent for moral change in theology students? This literature research method provides answers: (1) Agape Love is a source of Christian moral values; (2) the moral value of Agape Love based on 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 is a lifestyle that students of theology can apply as service to God: not easily giving up in facing life's problems, but strengthening personal relationships with God and fellow students as well as all lecturers and staff as co-workers in school of theology; (3) the strategy of applying the values of Agape Love, doing-learning Agape Love, learning as an agent of moral change, and learning modelling for it to become an exemplary individual characteristic in theological students.

Keywords: the values of agape love; learning; morals; theology student

Introduction

Educational qualifications always lead to the achievement of the institution's vision and mission. In this case, the vision of the theological high school is to direct students to become servants of

God who are Biblically knowledgeable, have good character in life, and are charismatic in service and theology.¹ This vision reflects a vocation and will never change but is always relevant to the needs of the era. The vision is the conceptual basis for the Bible School or Theological School as a basis for describing goals. If the vision is a conceptual guide, then the goals are operational targets, and to achieve the intended goals it is necessary to define the mission.² The mission is the basis for the operational management of the Theological High School where to carry out its mission, and each school needs to establish a teaching curriculum.

Knowles said that the vision will be realised in a mission that is spelled out in the objectives and needs of the programme, which includes the following: (1) the goals and needs of each individual; (2) the goals and needs of the institution; (3) community goals and needs.³ This was emphasised by Nasution who stated that the components of the curriculum include: objectives, design of learning materials (knowledge), teaching and learning processes, and assessment or evaluation.⁴ But in the field, it was found that the vision of several theological high schools had not been maximally translated into both the course curriculum and the hidden curriculum. So, in the field of service, it was found that there were alumni who did not serve. Some of them only work in public places, not in a church, teach in elementary schools but not teach religion, open their businesses, get married, and become housewives. Here it can be seen that there is a gap between the vision and the quality of alumni in service.

In the field of curriculum, the high school of theology has a Bachelor of Theology (SI) Bachelor of Theology Study programme in the field of Theology/Clergy using a curriculum from the Ministry of Religion of 80 credits and 80 credits local, which is oriented towards the needs of churches in Indonesia. Although the theological high school has made a syllabus for the courses taught (160 credits) both in theory and field practice, it has been recorded, reproduced in limited numbers, and distributed to teachers and those in need. But the problem that arises is that not all teaching lecturers are prepared to teach materials by the curriculum that has been given. Even though every lecturer who wants to teach is invited, a syllabus is given the scope of what they want to teach. This condition seemed to get worse because there was a lecturer who dictated what was taught to students, not from the existing syllabus. There are even some lecturers who rely on a syllabus (which is taught by lecturers at other theological colleges) to be used as teaching materials in theological high schools. Thus there is a gap between the syllabus made by the school that has not been used in the learning process.

In the growth of morality, it was found that many students violated student rules as follows: not all students were dressed in uniform attributes (uniform and tie) that had been determined by the school, students entered class, not on time, some students plagiarised paper assignments, quarrelled with fellow students, went out without paying attention to the provisions of dating, came home late at night, and there are even students who come to boarding houses of the opposite sex not according to the allotted time. These moral violations occur continuously, at any time, and become a routine task for the student affairs department in carrying out their duties. This is increasingly felt when students begin to carry out service practices and even have plunged into service, then criticism arises from various parties regarding the moral quality of the

1 Muner Daliman, Hanna Suparti, and David Ming, 'Transformational Leadership In The Personality, Performance And Commitments Of Kadesi Theological High School Organizations', *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal* 27 (2021): 1-15.

2 D. Ming, and M. Daliman, 'Mission Theology in the context of a Multiple Society', *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 103 (2) (2002), <https://doi:10.46222/pharosjot.103.2015>.

3 Malcolm Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species* (Michigan: Gulf Publishing Company, 1990), 30.

4 S. Nasution, *Pengembangan Kurikulum* (Bandung: Citra Aditya Bakti, 1990), 23.

student concerned. Thus the student service is hampered (becomes a stumbling block) because their morality has not yet reached the standard of the morality of God's servant.

The morality referred to here is the moral values of *ágape* love which are the basis for the faith growth of students. The values of *ágape* love have long been instilled into the basic character of the students of the theological high school, which are not only taught in theory in class, sermons, and lectures, but are also taught in practice in daily life in schools between the leaders, staff, lecturers, and students.

This situation is indeed the basis of the teaching and learning process in the theological high school. The students experienced a process of understanding and applying the values of *ágape* love which characterises the life of the students.

Wandt & Brown said that an action or a process determines the value of something. Educational evaluation is an action or activity (carried out with the intention of) – or a process – which takes place in the world of education (i.e., everything related to or that occurs in the field of education).⁵ Educational evaluation is the activity or process of determining the value of education, so that there can be known the quality or results. For the pattern of education in higher theology schools, evaluation work has not been carried out in all fields. For example, evaluations regarding the increase in the number of students, student problems, and infrastructure are always carried out routinely, but evaluations of teaching lecturers, for example, have never been done. Evaluation of student learning processes or field service evaluations has not been carried out. Thus, the evaluation work has not been carried out optimally.

The distribution of the alumni above was found by several alumni as follows: not all alumni services, and not all alumni have good achievements so there are also alumni who instead of serving become a 'source of problems' at the place of service. The objectives of the study programme are as follows: first, to produce graduates who are capable, knowledgeable, broad-minded, honest and responsible, competent, and professional in the field of Pastoral and Missiology so that they can start growing, nurturing, developing, and maturing the congregations of Christ so that the congregation can independently and work together to spread the gospel to the whole world. Second, preparing full-time servants of God who have a strong biblical-systematic foundation with insight and personality of Christ. Third, prepare full-time servants of God who have a pastoral spirit (shepherding) and use biblical leadership methods. Fourth, prepare full-time servants of God who can develop potential in themselves and others as role models and witnesses for Christ. By looking at the vision and graduates of the alumni above, it can be seen that there is a gap between theory in class and practice in everyday life or the field. About the above, Sidjabat said that as long as students are in college, they need to have theoretical pressure (in class with a teacher) and practice (in the field with a mentor) to work in balance.⁶ Thus theological education needs to put its educational goals in balance between theory and practice.

The theory above is synchronised with Gulo's 'two-dimensional vision' theory which argues that there are two dimensions that are unified in vision, namely the 'top-down' dimension and the 'will-now' dimension. The top-down dimension is none other than God's statement which contains values that want to be realised in concrete situations such as love, justice, and truth. The will-now dimension shows the relationship between reality and idealism. According to Gulo, vision is built on existing reality, where an understanding of existing reality is presented as an ideal, namely

5 Anas Sudjono, *Pengantar Evaluasi Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Rajawali, 2007), 35.

6 B. S. Sidjabat, *Panggilan Pendidikan Teologi Di Indonesia* (Bandung: Institut Alkitab Tiranus, 2003), 56.

God's statement.⁷ So, the purpose of education is to realise this philosophical vision that is set in the mission of the educational process.

Continuing the thoughts above, Weld completes the data in the field. In his research, he found that educational theology which was starting to grow had several weaknesses: first, theology was unable to supply the clergy needed in the field. Second, the cost of providing education is too high. Third, it does not produce servants of God with the local congregation or culture. Fourth, the insufficient selection of prospective seminary students, because graduates when serving in the field cannot show themselves as a shepherd with the spirit needed by the church. This research aims to answer the following question: What are the values of Agape Love as a learning agent for moral change in theology students?

Method

The research on 'transforming the values of agape love as a learning agent for moral change in theology students' uses a library study with a content analysis approach.⁸ The three things studied in this research are: collecting library data about understanding, and values, and making agape love a transforming agent of moral change for theology students.

Discussion

Understanding Agape Love

The word 'love' in Hebrew (Khessed) refers to the values of loyalty. God establishes an intimate relationship with his people and maintains it even though humans violate its conditions. God loves His people: 'God loves His children and cares for them' (Ex 34:6; Hos 2:21; Deut 5:10; 7:9).⁹ In the New Testament the love that is meant is 'agape' love. The word 'agape' is love that is highest in appearance, which sees an infinite value in the object of its love.¹⁰ 'Agape' love is love that is not concerned with personal interests. This love comes from a heart that is concerned and concerned for others.¹¹ 'Agape' love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, does not arise from the man himself, but is poured out by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who love (Rom. 5:5).¹² Paul wrote: 'Such are these three things, namely faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love' (1 Cor 13:13). Here, 'agape' reflects and reflects the character of God's love for humans, so one can call it a constant love, a love that endures with fidelity. Loyalty is built on trust. Such love will not fade away; such love is a love of permanent commitment.¹³ In this regard, Dodd defines agape as 'agape is not primarily an emotion of affection, it is primarily an active determination of the will'.¹⁴ In essence, agape is not an emotion, not a feeling of love, but an attitude that is determined to act. The will of man is activated more than his feelings. Thus, agape is a person's will and effort to seek

7 Gulo, W. 'Penampakan Identitas Dan Ciri Khas Dalam Penyelenggaraan Sekolah Kristen' dalam *Weinata Sairin (Penyunting)*, *Identitas & Ciri Khas Pendidikan Kristen Di Indonesia Antara Konseptual Dan Operasional* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011), 23.

8 Hsiu-Fang Hsieh, and Sarah E. Shannon, 'Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis', *Qualitative Health Research* 15(9) (2005): 1277-88.

9 Marie Claire Barth-Frommel, *Hati Allah Bagaikan Hati Seorang Ibu* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2003), 45.

10 Roger Robert, *Hidup Suci* (Bandung: LLB, 1996), 23.

11 J. L. C. Abineno, *Pedoman Praktis Untuk Pelayanan Pastoral* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2003).

12 T. Andrian et al., 'The concept of time management based on Ephesians 5:15-17 and relevance to contemporary Christian leaders', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 77(3) (2021).

13 R. C. Sproul, *Kebenaran Dasar Iman Kristen* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 15.

14 G. P. Harianto et al., 'Honor Dei as a learning of the need to appreciate God's servants in the Church', *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 104 (1) (2023), 1-14.

and seek the 'summum bonum' for others.¹⁵

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, the King James Version of the Bible translates the word 'love' as charity, which means kindness. The word charity means good wishes or love for fellow human beings. But actually, the Greek word used in this verse is agape, which means God's love.¹⁶ In the book 'The Four Loves', Lewis says that agape love is the highest and highest form of love, which sees something of equal worth in the object of its love. Because agape is a gift from God.¹⁷ Furthermore, 1 John 4:16 says: 'God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.' This means that God's nature is love and God is the source of love, true love. If humans want to find true love, they must come and look for it at the source, namely God. "For love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7-8). So, knowing God means knowing love. Having no love is to have no God.¹⁸ Not only focusing on God but agape love is also related to relationships with fellowship.¹⁹

The above understanding is also said by the Apostle John in 1 John 4:8 that God is agape. The manifestation of God's love is in Jesus. Everyone who wants to receive God's love must believe in Jesus. John 3:16 reads, 'For God's great love for this world, that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but have eternal life.' Piet Go O. Carm, from Catholic thought, calls it 'moral love' which emphasises action: bringing out what is good for those who are loved and trying to do what is good as much as possible.²⁰

From the description above, the researcher argues that agape love is a source of Christian moral values. The values of agape love are not something abstract or vague but something real, so that one can know whether love exists or not in a given situation.²¹

The Moral Value of Agape Love Based on 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

The moral values of Love can be taken from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 as follows: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." [KJV]

Value of Long Patience

The term 'long-suffering' in Greek 'makrothumei' is a combination of two words, namely 'macro' which means long, and 'tumors' which means temperament. Patience gives strength to be able to withstand the pressures of life caused by suffering. Patience means standing up to trials (not being easily angered, not easily discouraged, not easily broken hearted); stoic; calm; unhurried; no need for lust.²²

God himself is long-suffering (Ex 34:6-7; Num 14:18; 2 Pet 3:9). Patience means not giving up

15 Ibid.

16 Kenneth E. Hagin, *Kasih Jalan Menuju Kemenangan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pekabaran Injil Immanuel, 2001), 23.

17 Josh McDowell, and Norman Geisler, *Kasih Itu Selalu Benar* (Jakarta: Professional Books, 1997), 14.

18 J. Stephen Lang, *Pedoman Lengkap Janji – Janji Alkitab* (Bandung: Kalam Hidup, 2001), 56.

19 G. P. Harianto et al., 'Opus Dei: a Challenge for Church Leadership', *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 104(2) 2023.

20 Piet Go O. Carm., *Teologi Modal Dasar* (Malang: Dioma, 2007), 35.

21 Geoffrey W. Grogan, 'A Biblical Theology of the Love of God', in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 17.

22 B. T. Finlayson et al. 'Solution Focused Brief Therapy Telemental Health Suicide Intervention', *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 45(1) (2023): 49–60, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-021-09599-1>.

easily in the face of difficulty and difficult life problems. In all the bitter experiences he does not want to take revenge, he does not want to justify himself, because he knows that the truth must win. In this regard, Paul said, 'Always be humble, gentle, and patient.... Be patient with one another, and forgive another when one holds a grudge against another' (Eph 4:2; Col 3:13).

The quality of 'patience' is not passivity, but mastery or restraint or self-control in the face of resistance and other things that cause anger. Patience is giving a place and time for humans with a specific purpose. For God, long-suffering is an opportunity given for comfort (Rom 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9).²³

From the description above, the researcher argues that long-suffering means not easily giving up in facing difficulty and difficult life problems, but being able to control oneself and not to cause anger to oneself human beings.

Value of Generosity

The word 'chrestotes' (kindness) is the preeminent moral form denoting kindness and gentleness. Kindness is kindness in action, kindness in attitude, gentleness in dealing with others, benevolence, kindness, and generosity. So, this describes the ability to act according to the agreement of others. Generous means 'kindness; the nature of love and compassion; generosity'. Meanwhile, 'generous' refers to 'like giving; not stingy; compassionate and loving; helpful; kind'.²⁴

Generosity is the nature of helping others. Generous or kind, always tenderly sweet, respectful, and polite to everyone around him, not harsh and hasty in his words. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus once said to His disciples, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy' (Matthew 5:7). It was further said that David himself had experienced the bitterness of this life, but he still felt God's inclusion. God gives sufficiency, even abundance to him. That is why David says, "Only goodness and kindness will follow me all the days of my life" (Ps 23:6). It is a determination and an example of life that should be imitated. In Galatians 6:9-10 it says, 'Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, while there is still a chance for us, let us do good to everyone, but especially to our friends in the faith.'

For God, generosity is God's attitude towards human beings full of compassion, which, among other things, means that He likes to do good and give good things to people. This attribute is called His mercy (Ps 23:6). Man should be generous, and God will teach him with the same mercy (Matthew 5:7).²⁵

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that generosity is an act of helping others, being respectful and polite to everyone around him, not being rude and hasty in his words.

Value of Not Jealous

The moral value 'not jealous' refers to jealous people. Jealousy is a self-destructive trait. Envious people are usually miserable, restless, and unable to rejoice. 'Not jealous' is not 'not feeling or not happy to see other people's luck'.²⁶

The moral 'not jealous' means that a person who has love tries not to be affected by anything that belongs to someone else in his life. He is always grateful for what he has. He worked hard, then

23 J. D. Douglas, *Ensiklopedi Alkitab Masa Kini II* (Jakarta: Yayasan Komunikasi BinaKasih/OMF, 1995), 29.

24 James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (MacDonald Publishing, 1990).

25 Robert D. Enright et al., 'The Philosophy and Social Science of Agape Love,' *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 42(4) (2022): 220-37.

26 David L. Baker, *Roh Dan Kerohanian Dalam Jemaat* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia Bible, 1993), 16.

the results he left to God. He let God bless his labours. With this principle, his heart does not burn with jealousy. Thus, jealousy is the feeling that life is not fair because other people have something they want and cannot have.²⁷

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that not being jealous is a person who tries not to be affected by anything that belongs to other people, is always grateful for what he has, works hard, the results are left to God, and lets God bless his efforts.

Values of Not Boasting

The value of 'not boasting' (ou perpereuetai) shows selflessness. The proud person feels that all he has is due to his effort and persistence. He exalts himself too much. For a person like this God is not important in his life and success. But people who have love are not like that, because love does not boast. What he has is solely the blessing of God. For him, God is the source of life, strength, and hope. The Bible says: 'then do not say in your heart: it was my power and the strength of my hands that made me obtain this wealth, but you must remember your God, for it was he who gave you the strength to obtain wealth' (Deut 8:17-18). "Pride" means standing upright, rising, resting on one's feet.²⁸

But a child of God who has the love of Christ is meek and humble in heart, knowing that 'all blessings come only by the grace of God alone' (1 Cor 15:10). He is always simple and humble and does not consider himself greater and smarter than others (Rom 12:16).

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that the moral value of not boasting is that everything one has is solely the blessing of God. He is always simple and humble and does not consider himself greater and smarter than others.

Value Of Not Arrogant

The value of 'not arrogant' (ou fusioutai) shows humility, respect, and respect for all people. An arrogant nature is usually favouritism in association, one who only wants to hang out with certain people. He tends to look down on those who are lower than him. Arrogance is 'excessive self-esteem; arrogant'.²⁹

Proud, arrogant, a haughty heart emphasises refusing to depend on God and submit to Him, but who gives his own condition the honour that should be given to God, is seen as the true root and essence of sin.³⁰

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that the value of not being arrogant is being humble, appreciating, and respecting everyone.

Value of Not Impolite

The phrase 'do not be immodest' includes both shameful (1 Cor 12:23-24; Rev 16:15) and unlawful (1 Cor 14:40) meanings and is used in the context of sexual ethics (Rom 1:27; 1 Cor 7:35-36), as well as in the context of lifestyle (Rom 13:12-13; 1 Thess 4:11-12).³¹

The moral value is 'not to be immodest' (ouk askhemonei) in other words, the moral value of love

27 Ken Campbell, *7 Emosi Perusak Jiwa* (Yogyakarta: Andi, 2008), 38.

28 Ibid.

29 *New Strong's*, 27.

30 Ibid., 67.

31 Baker, *Roh Dan*, 19.

is to 'live modestly' (euskhemonos peripateo, Rom 13:13). The value of 'polite' refers to always paying attention to the etiquette of justice in society, order and discipline. Everyone has freedom in their life, but don't believe in using that freedom irresponsibly. In this regard, Paul said, 'Everything is permissible; righteous, but not everything builds up' (1 Cor 10:23). Freedom must be used rightly, 'so that I may win as many as possible' (1 Cor 9:19). Polite means 'respect, orderly according to the rules; civilized'.³²

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that 'not doing something that is not polite' is paying attention to the rules of justice in society, order, and discipline.

Value of Not Self-gain

The value of 'not seeking one's own gain': self-interest in the Greek 'ta heautēs' refers to seeking mutual benefit. In this case, Paul describes the life of those who have been saved in this way, 'so that those who are alive no longer live for themselves, and no one dies for himself' (2 Cor 5:15; Rom 14:7). Every believer is called to be a channel of blessing to others.³³

Believers no longer have rights over themselves but live continuously imitating the life of Jesus. He lives while always loving others. Here the believer is willing not to use his rights for his own sake.

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that the value of 'not seeking self-interest' means trying to seek mutual benefit.

Value of Not Grumpy

As with the moral values of being grumpy, the moral values of 'not being angry' and 'not keeping other people's mistakes' are parallel, which becomes one unit in the understanding of the values above.

The moral value 'grumpy' means quick to be offended; irritable.³⁴ Angry people make other people feel depressed. People cannot control themselves. When emotions overpower, his mouth, his hands, and his whole being lose control. Angry means 'very displeased (because of being insulted, mistreated)'.³⁵ Thus, Angry is a feeling of displeasure with events in his life or towards the behaviour of other people that cause tension. Temper is often an attitude of hostility towards those who attack.³⁶ So 'not being angry' implies trying to be patient, gentle, and unemotional. 'Not getting angry' means forgiving and forgetting, not attacking or reviling. 'Keep your heart always full of the Holy Spirit' (Eph 5:18).

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that 'not angry' is a person who can control himself, that the powerful emotions, his mouth, hands, and all of himself can be controlled.

Values of Not Storing Other People's Errors

The value of 'not keeping other people's mistakes' (logizetai ta kakon) means to think, calculate, and think about [other people's] mistakes.³⁷ The moral 'do not keep other people's mistakes' means

32 Ibid.

33 Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 18.

34 Baker, *Roh Dan*, 17.

35 A. Marques, et al., 'Religious-based interventions for depression: A systematic review and meta-analysis of experimental studies', *Journal of Affective Disorders* (2023): 289–296, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2022.04>.

36 L. Webb et al., 'Psychosocial health in adolescent unmarried motherhood in rural Uganda: Implications for community-based collaborative mental health education, and empowerment strategies in the prevention of depression and suicide', *Transcultural Psychiatry* (2023): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13634615221147361>.

37 Baker, *Roh Dan*, 14.

that believers do not think about other people's mistakes and tend always to forgive, just as how God has forgiven all human sins and forgotten everything, so believers forgive and forget all the mistakes of others (Matt 18:32-35). Humans are unable to do so but the Holy Spirit reveals agape love in the life of every true child of God (Phil 1:17-21). This is done because God has already forgiven believers. God first helps and resolves all the sins and mistakes of believers. 'Forgive one another if one holds a grudge against another. Just as God has forgiven you, you will do the same' (Col 3:13).

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that the moral of 'not keeping other people's mistakes' is not counting the mistakes made by other people or registering them as material for accusations, or continuing to think about them so as to foster hatred towards that person.

Value is Not Rejoicing

The Hebrew word for 'joy' is 'simkha'; the verb 'sameach' and the Greek 'khara' mean full of cheer which is a quiet or good rejoicing, a very great joy centred on Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 13 refers to the word 'sungkhairei' which means to rejoice.³⁸ This joy is a gift given by God to believers.

In both the OT and NT joy remains a characteristic of believers as individuals and of the church in general. Joy is quality or character, and not merely a feeling of the heart, which is based on God himself and indeed comes from Him (Ps 16:11; Phil 4:4; Rom 15:13), which characterises Christian life in this world (1 Pet 1:8), and is the beginning of eternal joy with Christ, later in the kingdom of Heaven (Rev 19:7).³⁹ Thus, the value of 'not rejoicing' is because of the injustice in seeing others suffer misfortune or experience difficulties.

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that not being happy is feeling sad when you see your neighbour suffering: he cries with those who cry.

Value Covers Everything

The moral 'covers everything' (stegei) refers to someone who can keep (bear) a secret. The word 'everything' in the Greek 'pania', emphasises the meaning continuously.⁴⁰ Paul said: 'You have an intense love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins' (1 Pet 4:8). In this regard, the word 'cover' means 'to hide; keep it a secret'.⁴¹ So, the covering work is a burden that is carried out continuously by someone who loves God.

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that 'covering everything' is keeping (carrying) secrets continuously.

Value of 'Believe Everything'

The moral values of 'believe everything' and 'expect everything' are parallel and have a unified meaning, as follows. First, the moral 'believe everything': 'believe' – the Hebrew 'emun' and the Greek 'pisteuo' both refer to the meaning of faithfulness to God.⁴² The moral 'believing all things and hoping all things' means that one still loves a person who might offend a human being, one

38 Ruth Groenhout, 'The Love of God the Father: Agapé and Masculinity', in *Visions of Agapé: Problems and Possibilities in Human and Divine Love*, ed. Craig A. Boyd (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008), 47–60.

39 J.D. Douglas, *Ensiklopedi Alkitab Masa Kini II* (Jakarta: Yayasan Komunikasi BinaKasih/OMF, 1995), 35.

40 Baker, *Roh Dan*, 24.

41 Groenhout, 'The Love of God', 47–60.

42 Everett F. Harrison, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966), 57.

still believes in him and always expects the best from him. People who have the love of Christ will always think and act positively by relying on God's help (2 Cor 5:6-7).

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that 'believing everything' is someone who still loves people who might hurt human hearts, someone still believes in him and always expects the best from him.

Value Expects Everything

The value of 'expecting everything': the word 'expect' means 'hope; looking forward to; want; depend on; rely on.'⁴³ Thus, 'expect all things' (Greek, *panta elpizei*), meaning that under no circumstances do those who love never lose hope. Such hope can be seen in the prayer of the Prophet Habakkuk who was determined to praise God and still hoped for God's salvation even though he did not receive any blessings from Him (Hab 3:17-19).⁴⁴ Based on the description above, the researcher argues that 'expecting everything' is a condition in which people who love never lose hope.

Value of Patience Bears Everything

The word 'bear' means to 'bear; shoulder; ensure; responsible.'⁴⁵ So, the moral value of 'bearing all things' (*panta hupomenei*) emphasises that it is a person who is patient, who endures opposition and rejection and still loves. He continued to follow God's will, whatever the cost, with firm faith and hope (Rom 5:2-5).⁴⁶

Based on the description above, the researcher argues that 'bearing everything' is a person who is patient, who can withstand opposition, and rejection, and who continues to follow God's will no matter the risk.

The Values of Agape Love as Learning Agents of Moral Change in Theology Students

Agape Love Learning for Theology Students

Neto argues that love is one of the most fundamental aspects of the human experience.⁴⁷ There are six relatively independent styles of love. The main styles include Eros (passionate romantic love), Ludus (game love), and Storge (familial love). The compound of two of each of the main styles forms three secondary styles: Pragma (practical love, compounds of Storge and Ludus), Mania (possessive, dependent love, compounds of Eros and Ludus), and Agape (altruistic love, compounds of Eros and Storge). Agape love is the source and lifestyle of theology students. Agape love originates from the values of agape love as follows: (1) long-suffering means not giving up easily in the face of difficulty and difficult life problems, but being able to control oneself so as not to provoke one's anger. (2) Generosity is an act that likes to help others, is respectful and polite to everyone around him, and is not rude and hasty in his words. (3) Not jealous is a person who

43 New Strong's.

44 Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 33.

45 Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 58.

46 Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Michigan: Grand Rapids Knowles, 1990), 48.

47 Félix Neto, 'Love Styles: A Cross-Cultural Study of British, Indian, and Portuguese College Students', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 38(2) (2007): 239–54, <https://utpjournals.press/doi/10.3138/jcfs.38.2.239>.

tries so that his life is not affected by anything that belongs to other people; he is always grateful for what he has, works hard, the results are left to God, and he lets God bless his efforts. (4) He does not boast that all he has is solely the blessing of God. He is always simple and humble and does not consider himself greater and smarter than others. (5) Not being arrogant is being humble, appreciating, and respecting everyone. (6) Not to do something that is not polite is to pay attention to the rules of justice in society, order, and discipline. (7) Not seeking personal gain means trying to seek mutual benefit. (8) Not grumpy is a person who can control himself. If the powerful emotions, his mouth, hands, and all of himself can be controlled. (9) Not keeping other people's mistakes is not counting the mistakes made by other people or registering them as material for accusation or continuing to think about them to foster hatred towards that person. (10) Not to rejoice is to feel sad when you see your neighbour suffering; he cries with those who cry. (11) Covering everything is keeping (carrying) secrets continuously. (12) Believing in everything is that one still loves someone who might offend a human being, one still believes in him and always expects the best from him. (13) Hope that everything is in such a state that those who love never lose hope. (14) Patiently enduring everything is a person who is patient, who can withstand opposition, and rejection, and who continues to follow God's will no matter the risk.

Deeper, Neto says that the style of love is held by three generations: female students, their mothers, and their maternal grandmothers. There is little in common in love styles between generations. Significant generational differences were found in the four love styles: Eros, Storge, Pragma and Agape. However, as expected, mothers and grandmothers, did not differ in their degree of agreement with the various styles of love, except for Pragma with grandmothers who exhibited a more practical love than mothers.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, the results of research by Li-wen Lin and C. Huddleston-Casas show that agape love can be applied by people based on factors such as age, religiosity, and relationship satisfaction which have a positive correlation with Agape. People with more education reported lower Agape compassion scores than people with less education.⁴⁹ Men reported higher levels of Agape love than women when controlling for age, education, religiosity, and relationship satisfaction. Thus, theology students can apply Agape love in their daily lives both on campus and off campus.⁵⁰

Learning the Values of Agape Love as an Agent of Moral Change

The moral virtue of agape has been under-explored in the world of research. The ancient idea of agape (love) serving others includes effort and even pain on the part of the expressing kindness. Agape is a way forward with the construction of changes in psychological health for individuals, peace, and unity for families and communities.⁵¹ So moral Agape is very appropriate to be an agent of change in human morality, especially theology students, who will later become servants who serve God. So Agape (agapao) is a basis for leadership behaviour and to show how agapao works in different leadership styles. Agape is useful for action (agapao) and helps the reader see how 'good' leadership behaviours develop and what good behaviours must be achieved.⁵² A theology student can develop Agape and become an agent of moral change because Agape is (in the

48 Ibid.

49 Stephen G. Post, 'The Tradition of Agape', in *Altruism and Altruistic Love: Science, Philosophy, and Religion in Dialogue*, eds. Stephen G. Post et al. (New York: Oxford Academic, 2002). <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195143584.003.0006>.

50 Li-Wen Lin, and Catherine A. Huddleston-Casas, 'Agape Love in Couple Relationships', *Marriage & Family Review* 37(4) (2005): 29–48.

51 Robert D. Enright et al., 'The Philosophy and Social Science of Agape Love', *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 42(4) (2022): 220–37.

52 Bruce E. Winston, 'Agapao Leadership', *Journal: Inner Resources for Leaders* 1, no.1(2008).

process of) changing the morale of the students themselves in their struggles of life.⁵³ First, student morality is measured by three aspects as follows: student character, student discipline, and student worship. Second, regarding the formation of student morality (character, discipline, and worship), the School issues student regulations covering the following: Self-Ordinance, Social Discipline, Spiritual Order, Off-Campus Activity Order, and Student Senate Organisational Order. The third is strengthening personal relationships with God and fellow students as well as all lecturers and staff as co-workers in God.

The goals of moral change are: (1) to foster and develop a good spiritual life through lifestyle and ministry; (2) provide opportunities for growth in the spiritual field through maximising the gifts of worship, witness, attitude in service and triggering the Word of God. This happens, according to Rodriguez and Silverman, when the supremacy of love becomes a moral vision that is fixed on agape values.⁵⁴

Learning to Model the Values of Agape Love as Agents of Moral Change for Theology Students

Learning is not just in the classroom but throughout life: humans keep learning. Modelling is not only done in the classroom but more importantly, is applied throughout life. So a theology student is a servant of God who has a lifestyle of holiness of faith in God by expressing agape values within himself.⁵⁵ Agape is a basis for learning to live together to develop the character of individuals, families, and society as a person's resources to be able to live with others. Family becomes an ideal life learning process. Living in society is a broader process in which a person begins to take responsibility for society's problems by applying Agape values to become the basis for the growth of individual, family, and community character.

In this regard, Greenway said that modelling a person as an Agape lifestyle is a cornerstone of modern ethics and enables a person from agape love to legitimise the spiritual reality of agape, awaken people to its power, clarify its ethical implicitness, and validate our spiritual communion with all beings in all creation.⁵⁶ Carr says that God is the model for the practice of agape values, which are then modelled on humans in relationships between humans. This transitional relationship is a skill or moral knowledge.⁵⁷

In producing fast, effective moral changes for theology students' lives, humans (lecturers and students) and agape teaching materials can be used as models of change. Both of these (humans and agape teaching materials) act as change facilitators.⁵⁸ This modelling is a training process in the life of theology students with the humans around them.

Conclusion

Agape love is a source of Christian moral values. The values of agape love are not something abstract or vague but something real, so that one can know whether love exists or not in a given situation.

53 Ruth Groenhout, 'The Love of God the Father: Agapé and Masculinity', in *Visions of Agapé: Problems and Possibilities in Human and Divine Love*, ed. Craig A. Boyd (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008), 47–60.

54 D. J. Rodriguez, and Eric J. Silverman, *The Supremacy of Love: An Agape-Centered Vision of Aristotelian Virtue Ethics* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), 45.

55 G. P. Harianto et al., 'Honor Dei'.

56 William Greenway, *Agape Ethics: Moral Realism and Love for All Life* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publisher, 2016), 25.

57 David Carr, 'Love, Truth and Moral Judgement' *Philosophy* 94(04) (2019): 529–45.

58 G. P. Harianto et al., 'Missionary Thinking in the Perspective of Adult Education Principles and Bible Study', *Jurnal Jaffray* 20, no. 2, (2022), 163–180.

The Moral Value of Agape Love based on 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 is a lifestyle that emphasises: long-suffering means not giving up easily in facing life's problems; generosity as an action that likes to help others, being respectful and polite to everyone around him, not harsh and hasty in his words; not jealous is a person who tries not to be affected by anything that belongs to other people; not boasting is that all one has is solely the blessing of God; not being arrogant is being humble, appreciating and respecting everyone; pay attention to the order of justice in society, order and discipline; not seeking mutual benefit; not counting the mistakes that other people make; one who can control himself; feel sad when you see others suffer; keeping secrets continuously; someone still loves people who might hurt human hearts; under no circumstances do those who love never lose hope; and be resistant to the opposition.

The values of agape love as agents of moral change for theology students: learning of agape love for theology students, learning the values of agape love as agents of moral change, and learning to model the values of agape love as agents of moral change for theology students.

Contact:***GP Harianto***

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Excelsius
hariantogp@sttexcelsius.ac.id

Ester Widiyaningtyas

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Excelsius
esterprasetyo70@gmail.com

Urbanus Sukri

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Anak Bangsa
urbanussukri9@gmail

Desire Karo Karo

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Anak Bangsa
blessingkaban@gmail.com

Victoria Woen

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Excelsius
vicwoen1411@gmal.com

David Ming

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kadesi
davidmingmng3@gmal.com

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS-SK): Validation Study of the Slovak Version for Adolescents¹

Katarína Šiňanská, Magdaléna Hovanová, Lucia Tóthová

DOI: 10.32725/cetv.2024.011

Abstract:

The goal of the paper is to verify the factor structure of the MSPSS questionnaire, which measures social support sources within the original three-factor structure, verify its psychometric properties, and adjust it to Slovak conditions including the correct language adaptation. MSPSS is one of the most widely used methodologies measuring an individual's perception of social support from three sources: family, friends and a significant other. The empirical verification was performed on a research file of adolescent high school students ($n = 249$). The questionnaires were administered to secondary school students who were randomly drawn from a list of all the secondary schools in the Košice and Prešov regions of Slovakia with the consent of the management of the secondary school concerned. The factor analysis confirmed the original model with three subscales: significant other, family, friends. The study also sufficiently confirmed the psychometric properties (reliability and concurrent validity) of the Slovak version of the research instrument as well as its reliability for use in adolescents as a target group, therefore it can be concluded that MSPSS-SK can be used by helping professionals (such as teachers, school psychologists, or school social workers) to measure the social support of high school students.

Keywords:

MSPSS (Slovak version), social support, factor analysis, psychometric properties, adolescence

Introduction

The absence of a validated methodology for measuring sources of social support in adolescents in the Slovak conditions led the authors to a validation study of the MSPSS questionnaire as one of the most commonly used methodologies for measuring social support in order to support researchers from social work practice and other helping professions.

¹ This work was supported by VEGA, Grant number: 1/0754/21; „Push - pull“ social factors related to the degree of radicalization of adolescents in the context of social work.

Social support as a concept has been addressed by specialised literature for more than 50 years and its research remains of current interest² due to the fact that it is a broad, multi-dimensional, and complex construct.³ The classic view of social support defines it as an individual's recognition that others are willing to provide assistance. This fosters a sense of social security, facilitating an individual to undertake risks and empowering them to attempt problem-solving independently, often regarded as a 'stress buffer'. More recent perspectives propose a broader framework emphasising that social support goes beyond mere assistance, extending to aiding the recipient in their personal development, flourishing, or advancement, particularly in the face of adversity.⁴ Social support can be categorised according to different criteria, for example, macrolevel, meso-level, and microlevel.⁵ We can distinguish types of social support such as instrumental support, informational support, emotional support, assessment support.⁶ It is also possible to differentiate social support sources (availability of family members and friends providing the individual with psychological and material resources).⁷

Social support is often used in the context of the individual's relationships and includes their perception of support provided by family, friends, or any person with a special role in their life.⁸ The social support network consists of persons from the individual's social environment who affect their feelings and perception by playing an important role in making positive changes (e.g., reducing insecurity, anxiety, or tension) mainly during difficult life situations and crises.⁹ This

- 2 Maria Ekbäck et al., 'The Swedish version of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) – a psychometric evaluation study in women with hirsutism and nursing students', *Health and Quality of Life Outcomes* 11, no.168 (2013): 1–9; Anna Jašková and Antónia Sabolová Fabianová, *Sociálna práca ako rizikové povolanie* (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej university, 2018).
- 3 Katarzyna Adamczyk, 'Development and validation of the Polish-language version of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)', *Revue internationale de psychologie sociale* 26, no. 4 (2013): 25–48; Reza Bagherian-Sararoudi et al., 'Psychometric properties of the persian version of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support in Iran', *International Journal of Preventive Medicine* 4, no. 11 (2013): 1277–1281; Gülşah Başol, 'Validity and Reliability of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support- Revised, with a Turkish Sample', *Social Behavior and Personality* 36, no. 10 (2008): 1303–1314, <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2008.36.10.1303>; Belinda Bruwer, 'Psychometric properties of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in youth', *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, no. 49 (2008): 195–201, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2007.09.002>; Arechabala M. C. Mantuliz and Claudia M. Castillo, 'Validation of a scale of perceived social support in a group of elders under control in a hypertension program in the metropolitan region', *CIENCIA Y ENFERMERIA* 8, no. 1 (2002), 49–55; Muhammad Rizwan and Sobia Aftab, 'Psychometric properties of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support in Pakistan young adults', *Pakistan Journal of Psychology* 40, no. 1 (2009): 51–65; Kaina Zhou et al., 'Reliability and validity of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support in Chinese mainland patients with methadone maintenance treatment', *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, no. 60 (2015):182–188, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsy.2015.03.007>.
- 4 Irwin G. Sarason and Barbara R. Sarason, *Social Support: Theory, Research and Applications* (Washington: Springer Science & Business Media, 2013); Feeney, Brooke C., and Nancy L. Collins, 'New Look at Social Support: A Theoretical Perspective on Thriving through Relationships', *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 19, no. 2 (2015): 113–147.
- 5 Vladimír Kebza, *Psychosociální determinanty zdraví* (Praha: Academia, 2005); Jaro Křivohlavý, *Psychologie zdraví* (Praha: Portál, 2009).
- 6 Brenda E. Hogan, Linden Wolfgang, and Bahman Najarian, 'Social support interventions: Do they work?' *Clinical Psychology Review* 22, no. 3 (2002): 381–440, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-7358\(01\)00102-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-7358(01)00102-7); Jaro Křivohlavý, *Psychologie zdraví* (Praha: Portál, 2001); Teresa Seeman, *Support & social conflict: Section one – Social support* (San Francisco: University of California, 2008); Cathy D. Sherbourne and Anita L. Stewart 'The MOS Social Support Survey', *Social Science Medicine*, no. 32 (1991): 705–714, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(91\)90150-b](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(91)90150-b); Catarina Sjolander and Gerd Ahlstrom, 'The meaning and validation of social support networks for close family of persons with advanced cancer', *BMC Nursing* 11, no. 17 (2012): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6955-11-17>.
- 7 Anne Denis, Callahan Stacey, and Martine Bouvard, 'Evaluation of the French Version of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support During the Postpartum Period', *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, no. 19 (2015): 1245–1251, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-014-1630-9>.
- 8 Larissa M. D. Gabardo-Martins, Maria C. Ferreira, and Felipe Valentini, 'Psychometric Properties of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', *Trends in Psychology* 25, no. 4 (2017): 1885–1895, <https://doi.org/10.9788/TP2017.4-18En>; Kamalpreet Kaur and Nimisha Beri, 'Psychometric Properties Of Multidimensional Scale Of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS): Indian Adaptation', *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research* 8, no. 11 (2019): 2796–2801; Janet Nakigudde et al., 'Adaptation of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support in a Ugandan setting', *African Health Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2009): 35–41; Michaela Šavrnichová, Holdoš Juraj and Angela Almašiová, *Excesívne používanie internetu u adolescentov na Slovensku* (Banská Bystrica: Univerzita Mateja Bela, Belianum, 2020).
- 9 Viera Bačová, *Kvalita života a sociálny kapitál* (Prešov: FF, PU v Prešove, 2008); Yuki Komatsu et al., 'Buffering effect of social support in the workplace on job strain and depressive symptoms', *Journal of Occupational Health*, no. 52 (2010): 140–148, <https://doi.org/10.1539/sangyoeisei.b9012>; Eva Koubeková, 'Vztahy medzi percipovanou sociálnou oporou a niektorými osobnostnými charakteristikami

social network helps improve emotional and physical health, that is, overall optimal functioning.¹⁰ Social support is a direct protective or buffering factor in situations when an individual is exposed to the effects of chronic stress.¹¹

Adolescence is a difficult life period. It is characterised by family conflicts, mood swings, and risk behaviour. During this period, adolescents are challenged by many requirements as well as opportunities.¹² Social relationships are an important aspect of adolescent life.¹³ Social support plays an important role in the adolescent's mental health and well-being and works as a buffer against a variety of negative phenomena they face.¹⁴ Social support provided by family, peers, and friends is irreplaceable for adolescents.¹⁵ During adolescence, the process of individualisation is taking place – a battle between autonomy and personal identity, therefore it may not always be easy to provide the adolescent with social support or for the adolescence to accept it. However, an appropriate form of social support helps the adolescent use effective coping strategies: adolescents with better support manifest higher levels of self-respect and better social capabilities. It gives them an opportunity to share common interests and feel understood and respected.¹⁶

Measuring the Social Support

There are several standardised instruments useful in measuring social support. Very often, the Social Support Survey (MOS)¹⁷ is used to measure types of social support, which we subsequently

- adolescentov', *Psychológia a patopsychológia dieťaťa* 36, no. 1 (2001): 39–49; Jiří Kožený and Lýdie Tišanská, 'Dotazník sociálnej opory - MOS: Vnútorňá štruktúra nástroja', *Československá psychologie* 47, no. 2 (2003): 135–143; Jiří Mareš, 'Diagnostika sociálnej opory u detí a dospievajúcich', *Pedagogika* 52, no. 3 (2002): 267–289; Eva Šimová, 'Starí rodičia ako zdroj sociálnej opory', *Československá psychologie* 47, no. 1 (2003), 31–41; Helena Zděnková, 'Sociálna opora vnímaná deťmi hospitalizovanými na pediatrickom oddelení', *Psychológia a patopsychológia dieťaťa* 35, no. 4 (2000): 334–343.
- 10 Lúbia Bánovčinová and Martina Bašková, 'Role of the Family, Friends and Significant Others in Providing Social Support and Enhancing Quality of Life in Cancer Patients', *SHS Web of Conferences* 30 (January 1, 2016): 00020, <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20163000020>; Maddalena De Maria et al., 'Psychometric evaluation of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) in people with chronic diseases', *Ann Ist Super Sanità* 54, no. 4 (2018): 308–315, https://doi.org/10.4415/ANN_18_04_07; Kaur and Beri, 'Psychometric Properties Of Multidimensional Scale Of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS): Indian Adaptation', 2797; Orsolya Papp-Zipernovszky, Kékesi Márk Z. and Szilvia Jámbori, 'A multidimenzióális észlelt társas támogatás kérdőív magyar nyelvű validálása', *Mentálhigiéne és Pszichoszomatika folyóirat* 18, no. 3 (2017): 230–262; Eleni Tsilika et al., 'Psychometric Properties of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in Greek Nurses', *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research* 51, no. 1 (2019): 23–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0844562118799903>.
- 11 Karen Aroian, Templin Thomas N., and Vidya Ramaswamy, 'Adaptation and Psychometric Evaluation of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support for Arab Immigrant Women', *Health Care for Women International*, no. 31 (2010): 153–169, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07399330903052145>; Markéta Elichová, Monika Flídrová, and Alena Jilečková, 'Burn Out Syndrome in Social Workers in the Czech Republic', *Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences* 11, no. 7 (2016): 1617–1622, <https://doi.org/10.36478/jeasci.2016.1617.1622>; Ana M. Trejos-Herrera et al., 'Validity and Reliability of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in Colombian Adolescents', *Psychosocial Intervention* 27, no. 1 (2018): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.5093/pi2018a1>; Jozef Výrost and Ivan Slaměnik, *Sociální psychologie* (Praha: Grada, 2008).
- 12 Peter Brnula and Ladislav Vaska, 'After the Divorce: Social Work in Slovakia since the Peaceful Division of Czechoslovakia', in *European Social Work Education and Practice*, 2020, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45811-9_4; Janie Canty-Mitchell and Gregory D. Zimet, 'Psychometric properties of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in Urban Adolescents', *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28, no. 3 (2000): 391–400, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005109522457>.
- 13 Angelina Wilson, Joana S. Yendork, and Nceba Z. Somhlaba, 'Psychometric Properties of Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support among Ghanaian Adolescents', *Child Indicators Research*, no. 10 (2017): 101–115, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-016-9367-1>.
- 14 Bruwer et al., 'Psychometric properties of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in youth', 197; Okki D. Laksmi et al., 'Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in Indonesian adolescent disaster survivors: A psychometric evaluation', 6.
- 15 Angela Almašiová et al., 'Excessive use of the internet and playing computer games in socially excluded Slovak communities', *Addictology* 19, no. 4 (2019): 169–177, <https://doi.org/10.35198/01-2019-004-0001>; Lisa M. Edwards, 'Measuring Perceived Social Support in Mexican American Youth: Psychometric Properties of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 26, no. 2 (2004): 187–194, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986304264374>; Vidya Ramaswamy, Aroian Karen J., and Thomas Templin, 'Adaptation and psychometric evaluation of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support for Arab American adolescents', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, no. 43 (2009): 49–56, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-008-9220-x>; Wilson, Yendork and Somhlaba, 'Psychometric Properties of Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support among Ghanaian Adolescents', 110.
- 16 Trejos-Herrera et al., 'Validity and Reliability of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in Colombian Adolescents', 18.
- 17 Sherbourne and Stewart, 'The MOS Social Support Survey', 705–714.

use in the study to test for concurrent validity, and we therefore also describe in greater detail in the Methods section. The Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ)¹⁸ measures perceived social support; it has a longer (27 items) and shorter (6 items) version. Each item measures two aspects (number of available persons whom the individual can address when in distress in different situations and the individual's level of perceived support available in a specific situation). The Social Support behaviours scale (SS-B)¹⁹ measures different types of social support (emotional, socialisation, material, financial, and instrumental support). However, its disadvantage is that it has as many as 45 items.

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)²⁰ is the most widely used one to measure social support provided by an individual's perception of social support from three sources: family, friends, and a significant other. The MSPSS methodology will be addressed in detail further on, as it is the specific subject of this validation study. Its aim is to validate the factor structure of the MSPSS questionnaire, which measures sources of social support within the original three-factor structure, to verify its psychometric properties and to adapt it to Slovak conditions, including correct language adaptation. The MSPSS has been validated as a three-factor model (family, friends, significant other) using different target groups, most frequently chronic patients. We offer an overview of the different validation studies in Table 1, which is sorted by year and the research sets are described in every case.

Table 1 Overview of validation studies of the MSPSS questionnaire with different research sets

Authors	Location	Year	Research set	Cronbach's alpha	Comment
Başol	Turkey	2008	school staff (n=433)	.87 – .92	Highlighting the issue of understanding the <i>significant other</i> factor.
Pedersen et al.	Denmark	2009	cardiac patients and their partners (n=446)	.91 – .95	
Nakigudde et al.	Uganda	2009	women after childbirth (n=240)	.79 – .82	
Ng et al.	Malaysia	2010	students of medicine (n=237)	.89	
Wongpakaran, Wongpakaran, Ruktrakul	Thailand	2011	students of medicine (n=310); Psychiatric patients (n=152)	.87 - .91	

18 Irwin G. Sarason, Barbara R. Sarason, and Gregory R. Pierce, 'Social Support: The Search for Theory', *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* 9, no. 1 (1990): 133–147, <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1990.9.1.133>.

19 Alan Vaux, Riedel Sharon, and Doreen Stewart, 'Modes of social support: The social support behaviors (SS-B) scale', *Community psychology* 15, no. 2 (1987): 209–232, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00919279>.

20 Gregory D. Zimet et al., 'The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', *Journal of Personality Assessment* 52, no. 1 (1988): 30–41, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5201_2.

Ng et al.	Malaysia	2012	psychiatric outpatients (n=228)	.89	
Ekbäck et al.	Sweden	2013	women with hirsutism (n=127), control sample nursing students (n=154)	.91 - .95	
Bagherian-Sararoudi et al.	Iran	2013	heart attack patients (n=176) general population (n=71)	.85 - .93 .87 - .92	
Stewart et al.	Malaysia	2014	women attending antenatal clinic (n=583)	.85 - .88	
Denis, Callahan, Bouvard	France	2015	women after childbirth (n=148)	.89	
Zhou et al.	China	2015	methadone users (n=1212)	.84 - .89	
Wang et al.	China	2017	parents of children with cerebral palsy (n=487)	.90 - .84	
Gabardo-Martins et al.	Brazil	2017	general population (employees) (n=831)	.96 - .93	
Papp-Zipernovszky, Kékesi, Jámboi	Hungary	2017	adult population (n=1073)	.87 - .93	Confirmed three factors after removing two items (one item from the family factor and one from the friends factor).
De Maria et al.	Italy	2018	chronic patients (n=176)	.91 - .96	
Tsilika et al.	Greece	2019	nurses (N=150)	.95 - .96	

As the study focuses on adolescents, we offer an overview of the validation studies conducted through this research sample in the separate Table 2.

Table 2 Overview of validation studies of the MOS questionnaire with an adolescent research sample

Authors	Location	Year	Research set	Cronbach's alpha	Comment
Edwards	Mexico	2004	$n=290$.61 – .90	
Rizwan, Aftab	Pakistan	2009	$n=273$.86 – .87	
Adamczyk	Poland	2013	$n=418$ (university students)	.89 – .94	
Wilson et al.	Ghana	2017	$n=717$.61 – .74	In conclusion, they also considered a 2-factor formulation of the questionnaire because it would therefore seem that other contextual factors, translation and sampling issues might explain the emergence of either a single- or two-factor structure.
Kaur, Beri	India (Punjab region)	2019	$n=461$.84 – .87	

It can be concluded that in most countries, MSPSS has showed good reliability and validity corresponding with the three-dimensional structure, mainly in countries where individualist culture prevails and individuals can clearly differentiate between different sources of support,²¹ which indicates the international validity of MSPSS. The scale represents an internationally recognised instrument with quick implementation.²²

However, it is necessary to point out that in some countries, only the two-factor model has been confirmed, for example, in Chile, the scale has been verified with a sample of adults ($n = 76$; $\alpha = .86$) and the Family and Friends subscales have been confirmed.²³ The two-factor model has also been accepted in Nigeria after being verified with a sample of patients with brain stroke ($n = 140$; $\alpha = .78$), again on the Family and Friends subscales.²⁴ In Zimbabwe, a sample of cancer patients has been used ($n = 120$), accepting the Family (including the 'significant other' factor; $\alpha = .89$) and Friends ($\alpha = .89$) subscales (overall $\alpha = .91$).²⁵

The authors of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, Zimet et al.,²⁶ have paid special attention to perceived social support. They have proposed for the concept to be investigated

21 Wilson, Yendork, and Somhlaba, 'Psychometric Properties of Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support among Ghanaian Adolescents', 101–115.

22 Jermaine M. Dambi et al., 'Psychometric evaluation of the Shona version of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Scale (MSPSS–Shona) in adult informal caregivers of patients with cancer in Harare, Zimbabwe', *Malawi Medical Journal* 29, no. 2 (2017): 89–96, <https://doi.org/10.4314/mmj.v29i2.3>; Denis, Stacey, and Bouvard, 'Evaluation of the French Version of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support During the Postpartum Period', *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, no. 19 (2015): 1245–1251, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-014-1630-9>.

23 Mantuliz and Castillo, 'Validation of a scale of perceived social support in a group of elders under control in a hypertension program in the metropolitan region', 52.

24 Ashiru H. Mohammad et al., 'Validity and Reliability of the Hausa Version of Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Index', *Iran Red Crescent Medical Journal* 17, no. 2 (2015): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.5812/ircmj.18776>.

25 Dambi, Chiwaridzo, Tadyanemhandu, and Nhunzvi, 'Psychometric evaluation of the Shona version of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Scale (MSPSS–Shona) in adult informal caregivers of patients with cancer in Harare, Zimbabwe', 89–96.

26 Zimet et al., 'The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', 30–41.

multidimensionally, that is, using the three dimensions incorporated in MSPSS. This approach is currently the most frequently used method in investigating perceived social support. The first dimension represents support provided by the family (the extent to which an individual perceives they receive support from their relatives), the second dimension represents support provided by friends, and the third represents support provided by a significant other. The third dimension is unique as it lets the respondent decide who this 'significant other' should be.²⁷ The Significant Other dimension is saturated by items focused on one's perception of social support received from a 'special person'. It can be interpreted in a variety of ways as it could be a romantic partner, teacher, advisor, etc. The concept of 'significant other' can refer to a romantic as well as any other kind of close relationship.²⁸ It is necessary to take into account that this special person can differ according to the culture in which the research is performed.²⁹ However, using a more specific term could weaken the instrument, such as 'romantic partner' would assume the existence of a romantic relationship.³⁰

In the studies in which two dimensions have been confirmed, the Significant Other dimension is incorporated in the Family or Friends dimensions.³¹ In general, it is assumed that the respondents understand 'significant other' as their current romantic partner. However, not all respondents are bound to have romantic relationships. Moreover, in some specific groups, the respective items may seem inappropriate (e.g. dating is strictly forbidden for Arabic adolescents as the Islamic codes of conduct allow romantic relationship only within marriage). For the purpose of investigating adolescent Arabic immigrants,³² a revised version of MSPSS has been proposed in which they replace the significant other related items with items focused on social support provided by school staff. Their design has been confirmed by factor analysis. Prezza and Pacilli³³ asked their respondents to specify what kind of significant other they had in mind after filling in the questionnaire. More than three-quarters of the older, married respondents had their spouse in mind. Separated, divorced, or widowed respondents usually, but not exclusively meant their children. The younger as well as unmarried respondents opted for their friends, relatives, but also romantic partners. The results have confirmed that 'significant other' can be interpreted differently based on the age or marital status of the individual. Wongpakaran and Wongpakaran³⁴ have also proposed a revised version of MSPSS. They have instructed the respondents not to use friends or family when asked about the significant other. Two groups of respondents have been used in this research: the first group was administered the original survey while the other filled in the reviewed version. The reviewed version has showed higher reliability. It is necessary to think about the language asymmetry in translation. For example, 'significant other' has been translated as 'one best friend' in Chinese, therefore Chinese

27 Sheung-Tak, Cheng, and Alfred C. M. Chan, 'The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support: dimensionality and age and gender differences in adolescents', *Personality and Individual Differences*, no. 37 (2004): 1359–1369, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2004.01.006>.

28 Karen Aroian, Templin Thomas N., and Vidya Ramaswamy, 'Adaptation and Psychometric Evaluation of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support for Arab Immigrant Women', *Health Care for Women International*, no. 31 (2010): 153–169, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07399330903052145>.

29 Başol, 'Validity and Reliability of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support-Revised, with a Turkish Sample', 1303–1314.

30 Bagherian-Sararoudi, Ahmadrza, Ehsan, Sarafraz, and Zimet, 'Psychometric properties of the persian version of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support in Iran', 1277–1281.

31 Sammy K. Ho and Edmund S. Chan, 'Modification and validation of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support for Chinese school teachers', *Cogent Education* 4, no. 1 (2017): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1277824>.

32 Ramaswamy, Aroian, and Templin, 'Adaptation and psychometric evaluation of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support for Arab American adolescents', 49–56.

33 Miretta Prezza and Maria G. Pacilli, 'Perceived social support from significant others, family and friends and several socio-demographic characteristics', *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, no. 12 (2002): 422–429, <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.696>.

34 Nahathai Wongpakaran and Tinakon Wongpakaran, 'A revised Thai Multi-Dimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', *The Spanish Journal of Psychology* 15, no. 3 (2012): 1503–1509, https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_sjop.2012.v15.n3.39434.

respondents would probably speak of their best friends instead of their romantic partner (if applicable at the time). Ho and Chan³⁵ have therefore used the reviewed scale,³⁶ replacing four items from the Significant Other dimension with items measuring social support in the respondents' work life (questions about their colleagues and superiors); the respondents have been teachers. Moreover, the term 'friends' was also specified as 'not a colleague'. The authors have proposed a four-factor structure allowing the analysis of support from both the working as well as other environments.

Methodology

Participants

We compiled a list of all secondary schools in the Košice and Prešov regions (irrespective of the sponsor). From this list, secondary schools were randomly selected based on a chosen criterion – one gymnasium (grammar school) and two vocational schools. Only schools with instruction in the Slovak language were included in the selection process (for the sake of understanding item meanings and eliminating cultural specifics). Subsequently, schools were invited to participate in the research, with a request to provide access to one class each from the second and third classes. In the case of refusal by any school, substitute schools were pre-drawn for each category. The questionnaires were administered in person.

In the process of validating the research instrument, it is not necessarily imperative to conduct data collection on a nationally representative sample, as it is not crucial to generalise the interpretation back to the population.³⁷ The sample size takes precedence, and it was considered for both Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) applications.³⁸ According to the application of Rules of Thumb, our sample falls within the boundary of being considered fair to good.³⁹

The scale was verified on a research sample of high school students ($n = 249$; 60.6% girls) from the Košice and Prešov self-governing regions in the 2nd and 3rd year of studies (61% and 39% respectively). The average age was 17.34 years ($SD = .799$; Min-Max = 16-21; Median = 17).

Research instrument

The research for validation consisted of a battery of questionnaires to establish the validity of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) questionnaire. For concurrent validity verification, The Social Support Survey (MOS) questionnaire designed to measure social support was to be positively correlated. To verify concurrent validity in the negative direction, we chose the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA-S), a questionnaire measuring loneliness. We then offer more detailed descriptions of each methodology.

35 Ho and Chan, 'Modification and validation of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support for Chinese school teachers', 1–11.

36 Robert D. Šolcová et al., *Job demands and worker health* (Washington DC: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 1975); Zimet et al., 'The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', 30–41.

37 Peter Gavora, 'Validita a reliabilita výskumných nástrojov: princípy a reálna prax', *Pedagogická orientace* 23, no. 4 (2013): 511–534.

38 Erika J. Wolf et al., 'Sample Size Requirements for Structural Equation Models: An Evaluation of Power, Bias, and Solution Propriety', *Educational and Psychological* 76, no. 6 (2013): 913–934, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001316441349523>. Theodoros A. Kyriazos, 'Applied Psychometrics: Sample Size and Sample Power Considerations in Factor Analysis (EFA, CFA) and SEM in General', *Psychology* 9, (2018): 2207–2230, <https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2018.98126>. Michael White, 'Sample size in quantitative instrument validation studies: A systematic review of articles published in Scopus, 2021', *Heliyon* 8, no.12, (2022): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e12223>.

39 Robert F. DeVellis, *Scale Development: Theory and Applications*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2017).

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)⁴⁰ version consists of 12 items divided into dimensions of the social support sources (family – items: 3, 4, 8, 11; friends – items: 6, 7, 9, 12; significant other – items: 1, 2, 5, 10). It also measures perceived social support using a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree). It is a brief, but complete and easy-to-understand instrument. The MSPSS-SK (we will only use the abbreviation MSPSS-SK to refer to the Slovak version) research instrument in the Slovak language was created through a standard translation process performed by professional translators, and it was verified by independent back-translation.

The Social Support Survey (MOS)⁴¹ measures the types of social support by means of 19 items covering four dimensions (emotional, positive social interaction, availability for a person for fun, instrumental support, affectionate support). The psychometric properties of the original survey ($n = 2\,987$) were reliable since the Cronbach's alpha for the whole scale was .97 and .91 – .96 for the individual dimensions. The survey measures social support using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never; 5 = Always).

Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA-S)⁴² is a shortened 15-item version of the original SELSA scale for identifying loneliness using three subscales (romantic, family, and social relationships). The respondents express their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) and the individual items were formulated as positive as well as negative statements. The original questionnaire provided good internal consistency values for individual subscales as verified by Cronbach's alpha (romantic – .87; family – .89; social – .90).⁴³

Table 3 presents a general overview of each questionnaire in the context of factor scores using means, standard deviations, and reliability estimates for each of the subscales MSPSS-SK, SELSA, and MOS. All values from the research instrument are listed in Table 3.

Table 3 Means, standard deviations, and reliability estimates for each of the subscales the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Slovak adaptation (MSPSS-SK), SELSA, and MOS

Factors and the number of items		Standard deviation	Min.	Max.	Cronbach's alpha
MSPSS-SK	SO – 4	1.39	1	7	.65
	FA – 4	1.46	1	7	.92
	FR – 4	1.48	1	7	.92
SELSA	ROM – 5	1.81	1	7	.79
	FAM – 5	1.39	1	6.8	.87
	SOC – 5	1.19	1	5.8	.79

40 Zimet et al., 'The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', 30–41.

41 Sherbourne and Stewart, 'The MOS Social Support Survey', 705–714.

42 Enrico DiTomasso and Barry Spinner, 'The development and initial validation of the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA)', *Personality and Individual Differences* 14, no. 1 (1993): 127–134, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869\(93\)90182-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(93)90182-3).

43 Enrico DiTomasso, Brannen Cyndi, and Lisa A. Best, 'Measurement and Validity Characteristics of the Short Version of the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults', *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 64, no. 1 (2004): 99–119, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164403258450>.

MOS	TAN – 4	.65	2	5	.79
	AFF – 3	.98	1	5	.80
	POS – 3	.71	1	5	.78
	EMI – 8	.77	1,25	5	.92

MSPSS-SK – Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Slovak adaptation – family (FA), friends (FR), and significant other (SO)

SELSA – romantic (ROM), family (FAM), social (SOC)

MOS – Social Support Survey – tangible support (TAN); affectionate support (AFF); positive social interaction (POS); emotional/informational support (EMI)

Statistical analyses

The statistical procedures were performed using the available statistical software (SPSS v.25 for measuring Exploratory Factor Analysis and AMOS v.25 for measuring Confirmatory Factor Analysis). Analyses were performed with the same data. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was chosen first and later Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to confirm the structure. We also used Varimax Rotation to determine the maximisation of the shared variance of the correlations.⁴⁴ To verify the factor structure of MSPSS-SK, a confirmatory factor analysis⁴⁵ was used in accordance with the original questionnaire. At the same time, additional statistical methods (calculating Cronbach's alpha and correlation coefficients; non-parametric methods in terms of sample distribution), and calculation of descriptive characteristics (arithmetic average, standard deviation, median).

In terms of the internal consistency analysis, the SELSA-S scale shows good reliability values as verified by Cronbach's alpha. Reliability of the whole instrument was $\alpha = .91$ and the reliability of the subscales varied from .91 to .92. The internal consistency values in the subscales were comparable to the original validation study of this methodology (original values: Family .85; Friends .75; Significant other .72).

Factor analysis was performed first, which showed the same distribution of factors as in the questionnaire by Zimet et al.⁴⁶ (3 factors). This has been confirmed by a considerable number of other validation studies, including, for example, the validation of the Polish version of the MSPSS.⁴⁷ Factor analysis here extracted three distinct factors. The results suggest confirmation of the subscale groupings presented in the original study by Zimet et al.⁴⁸ The results in the De Maria et al.⁴⁹ study support the use of scores for each factor and the combined scores of the 12 items of the MSPSS. Cronbach's alpha was 0.92 for the Family factor, 0.96 for the Friends factor, 0.93 for the Significant Others factor, and 0.91 for the entire scale, indicating excellent internal consistency, comparable to the authors' results (Cronbach's alpha was 0.92 for the Family factor, 0.96 for the Friends factor, 0.93 for the Significant Others factor, and 0.91 for the entire scale, showing an excellent internal

44 Christian Acal, Ana M. Aguilera, and Manuel Escabias, 'New Modeling Approaches Based on Varimax Rotation of Functional Principal Components', *Mathematics* 8, no. 11 (2020): 2085, <https://doi.org/10.3390/math8112085>; Keith E. Dilbeck, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods* (SAGE Publications, 2017), <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411>.

45 Yan Xia and Yanyun Yang, 'RMSEA, CFI, and TLI in structural equation modeling with ordered categorical data: The story they tell depends on the estimation methods', *Behavior Research Methods* 51, no. 1 (2019): 409–428, <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-018-1055-2>.

46 Zimet et al., 'The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', 30–41.

47 Katarzyna Adamczyk, 'Development and validation of the Polish-language version of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS)', 25–48.

48 Zimet et al., 'The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', 30–41.

49 De Maria et al., 'Psychometric evaluation of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) in people with chronic diseases', 308–315.

consistency). In the context of the validation of the Hungarian MSPSS on a sample of adults, the authors Papp-Zipernovszky et al.⁵⁰ calculated psychometric properties suggesting that each of the three factors has a good level of reliability and validity (Family: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$; Friends: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.93$; Significant Others: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$, MSPSS Total: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$). The computed psychometric properties suggest that each factor has a good level of reliability and validity (Family: Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$; Friends: Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$; Significant Others: Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$, MSPSS Total: Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$). The CFA study by Wang et al.⁵¹ suggested that the original three-factor model was replicated in a specific population: Chinese parents of children with cerebral palsy.

High statistical significance was confirmed in the correlation between factors and individual items as well as between the factors themselves (Tables 4, 5). It may indicate that the scale could also be used as a one-dimensional scale for measuring perceived social support. However, its ability to measure the level of perceived social support from the sources represented by the respective factors is of much greater importance.

Table 4 Exploratory factor analysis: Items and Varimax Rotated Factor Loadings for the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Slovak adaptation

Items	Significant other	Family	Friend
1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need	.890**		
2. There is a special person with whom I can share joys and sorrows	.878**		
3. My family really tries to help me		.896**	
4. I get the emotional help and support I need from my family		.882**	
5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me	.876**		
6. My friends really try to help me			.909**
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong			.919**
8. I can talk about my problems with my family		.870**	
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows			.905**
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings	.887**		
11. My family is willing to help me make decisions		.899**	
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends			.882**

** $p < .005$

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

50 Papp-Zipernovszky, Kékesi and Jámbori, 'A multidimenzionális észlelt társas támogatás kérdőív magyar nyelvű validálása', 230–262.

51 Yongli Wang et al., 'Psychometric Properties of Multi-Dimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support in Chinese Parents of Children with Cerebral Palsy', *Frontiers in Psychology*, no. 8 (2017): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02020>.

Table 5 Intercorrelations of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Slovak adaptation

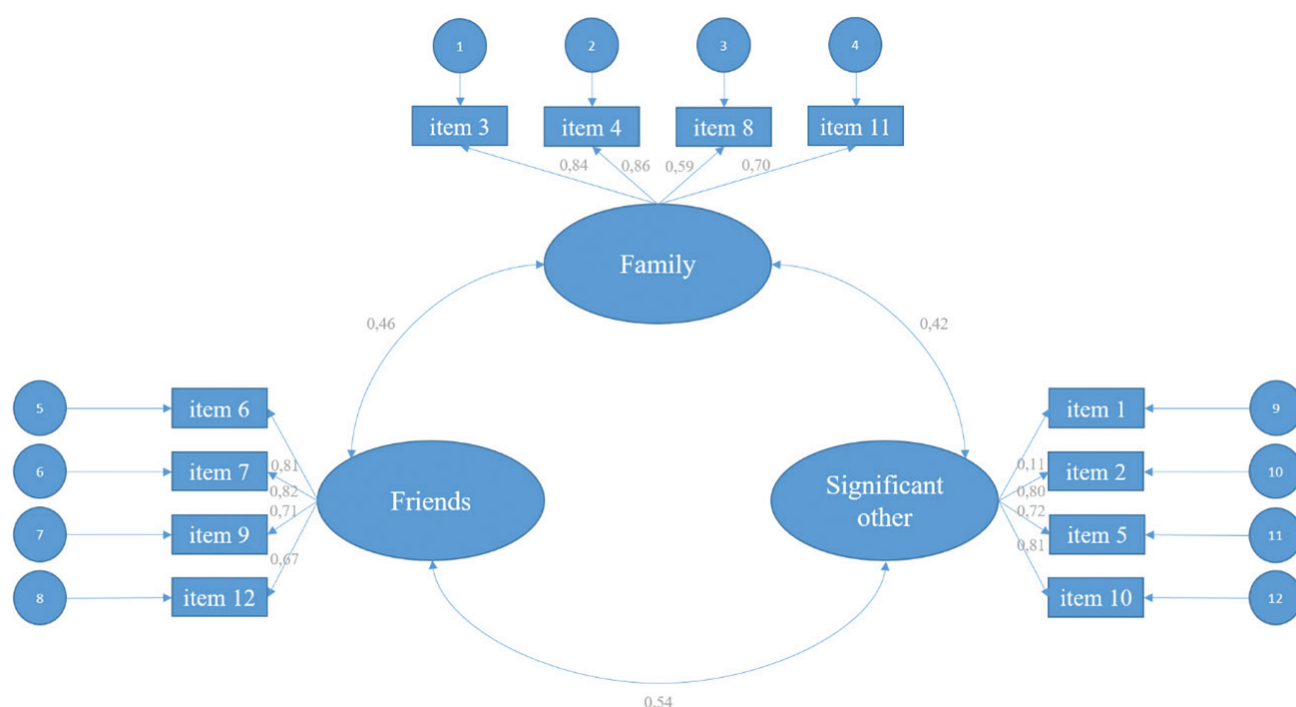
	Family	Friend
Significant other	.379**	.487**
Family		.516**

** $p < .005$

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to confirm the factor structure. This method based on structural equation modelling allows for the identification of causal relationships between the observed and latent variables in theoretical models;⁵² it also allowed for verifying the adequacy of the solution. The results of the three-factor modelling indicate satisfactory correspondence values with the data in all indices observed (CFI = .960; TLI = .948; GFI = .917; RMSEA = .083). Further adjustment would be possible, but unnecessary in terms of theoretical justification. There were potential residual covariances between the items pertaining to different factors, but their anticipated impact was not that significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that this model (Figure 1) is consistent with practice in statistics⁵³ and it can be considered suitable.

Figure 1 The Structure Model of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Slovak adaptation) with standardised factor loadings and correlations



52 Gregory R. Hancock and Ralph O. Mueller, 'Rethinking construct reliability within latent variable systems', *Structural Equation Modeling: Present and Future*, 195–216.

53 Peter Prudon, 'Confirmatory Factor Analysis as a Tool in Research Using Questionnaires: A Critique', *Comprehensive Psychology* 4, no. 10 (2015): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.2466/03.CP.4.10>; Bruce Thompson, *Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Understanding Concepts and Applications* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1037/10694-000>.

By identifying the mutual correlations between the individual factors in MSPSS-SK, SELSA Loneliness Scale and MOS – Social Support Survey, the concurrent and discriminant validity was verified (Table 6). Statistically significant correlation was confirmed in the expected direction with SELSA (measuring individual loneliness subscales) in which the strongest negative correlation was found in the following subscales: Family (SELSA) and Family (MSPSS-SK), ($r = -.707$); Social Relationships (SELSA) and Friends (MSPSS-SK), ($r = -.674$). The medium strong negative intensity between the Romantic Relationships (SELSA) and Significant Other (MSPSS-SK) indicate the importance of interpreting the ‘significant other’ as a source of social support for adolescents (who exactly is a significant other). In general, it is assumed that the respondents understand ‘significant other’ as their current romantic partner. However, a medium strong negative correlation was also confirmed between the social relationships (SELSA) and significant other (MSPSS-SK) subscales. Therefore, it is possible that adolescent individuals without romantic relationships understood this source of social support as any kind of social relationship with a special person (this issue will be further addressed in the discussion). Loneliness during adolescence (statistically very high significant correlation) in the Family subscale is saturated by social support from a significant other (MSPSS-SK) although with a weak negative correlation ($r = -.234$).

Table 6 Correlations of factors of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Slovak adaptation (MSPSS-SK) Subscales with the SELSA, MOS and Individual Difference Measures

		Significant other	Family	Friends
SELSA	ROM	-.473**	-.051	-.057
	FAM	-.234**	-.707**	-.371**
	SOC	-.337**	-.349**	-.674**
MOS	TAN	.414**	.515**	.374**
	AFF	.602**	.295**	.237**
	POS	.573**	.330**	.528**
	EMI	.678**	.479**	.571**

** $p < .005$

SELSA – romantic (ROM), family (FAM), social (SOC)

MOS – Social Support Survey – tangible support (TAN); affectionate support (AFF); positive social interaction (POS); emotional/informational support (EMI)

As for the MOS methodology measuring social support, positive correlation between individual subscales was expected and confirmed (all with high statistical significance). The strongest correlation was found between the significant other (MSPSS-SK) and emotional/informational support (MOS) subscales, ($r = .676$). Equally strong correlation was found between affectionate support and positive social interaction (MOS) subscales. Very high statistical significance was also measured in the correlation between Family (MSPSS-SK) and affectionate support (MOS) social support sources, although with low intensity ($r = .295$).

Discussion

This article presents a validation study to measure adolescents' sources of social support. As it has been shown to be a multidimensional construct, it is essential to take this into account when measuring it. The objective was to present a Slovak adaptation of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support questionnaire as a multidimensional instrument for measuring sources of social support and to validate its psychometric properties. The adequacy of the three-factor structure of the Slovak version in accordance with the original questionnaire,⁵⁴ namely the factors family, friends, and significant other, was firstly demonstrated by means of exploratory factor analysis. This structure was subsequently validated and confirmed in confirmatory factor analysis (CFI = .960; TLI = .948; GFI = .917; RMSEA = .083).

We have demonstrated that the methodology is correctly focused on measuring sources of social support through the identification of concurrent validity. Statistically significant correlations in the negative direction were anticipated with the SELSA methodology (measuring loneliness) (strongest for the family factor in both questionnaires, .707; weakest for the family (MSPSS-SK) and romantic relationships (SELSA) factors, .051). Associations between social support and loneliness have been confirmed by several other studies with different target groups.⁵⁵

In contrast, positive correlations were anticipated with the MOS (strongest for emotional/informational support (MOS) and significant other (MSPSS-SK) .678; weakest for affectionate support (MOS) and friends (MSPSS-SK) .237).

The Slovak adaptation of the MSPSS-SK, as well as the original questionnaire and other language versions, confirms the validity of all three subscales, and we feel that the above research review has demonstrated this, as well as the validity of the Slovak adaptation of the MSPSS-SK used for the target group of adolescents. There were also lower correlations within the model. The lowest one was in the significant other factor (item 1). However, the possibility of finding out which other persons in addition to family and friends are a source of social support (especially for such a specific group as adolescents) is considered to be very important. In several studies cited, this factor appears worthy of further investigation.⁵⁶

The authors are aware of the existence of limitations in the research conducted. One of them includes the measured reliability of the research instrument. We are aware that for the reliability of the research instrument to be sufficient, the correlations must be high enough, ideally at least .70. However, in the analysis of various studies, it has been confirmed that when assessing the adequacy of reliability, it is necessary to strongly consider the specific conditions of a particular piece of research (type of instrument, conditions in which it is implemented, characteristics of the research sample...).⁵⁷ In our case, it was a short research instrument, while lower reliability may be observed with shorter instruments. Another limitation of the research may lie in the fact that the research population is overrepresented by girls (60.6%), which may affect the results

54 Zimet et al., 'The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', 30–41.

55 Luize A. G. Amorim et al., 'Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale: psychometrics evidence in the Brazilian northeast', *Ciencias Psicológicas July-December 2019* 13, no. 2 (2019): 283–295. <https://doi.org/10.22235/cp.v13i2.1885>, Jose Tomás et al., 'Loneliness and social support: Differential predictive power on depression and satisfaction in senior citizens', *Journal of Community Psychology* 47, no. 5 (2019): 1225–1234, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22184>.

56 For example, De Maria, Vellone, Durante, Biagioli, and Matarese, 'Psychometric evaluation of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) in people with chronic diseases', 308–315; Edwards, 'Measuring Perceived Social Support in Mexican American Youth: Psychometric Properties of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support', 187–194; Rizwan and Aftab, 'Psychometric properties of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support in Pakistan young adults', 51–65.

57 Peter Gavora, 'Validita a reliabilita výskumných nástrojov: princípy a reálna prax', *Pedagogická orientace* 23, no. 4 (2013): 511–534, <https://doi.org/10.5817/PedOr2013-4-511>.

of the research. However, the selection of the research population was random, carried out using a lottery technique that ensured that each element of the population had an equal opportunity to be included in the selection. However, this reflects the actual structure in schools in the Slovak context. The index of femininity, as one of the demographic indicators in Slovakia, reflecting the ratio of the number of females to the number of males in the population, is an indicator of such a gender structure of the population. It declares the predominance of women in the Slovak population. Similarly, the 2021 Slovak population census⁵⁸ highlights the predominance of the female component of the population. The proportion of women in the Slovak population was 51.09% at the beginning of 2021, which corresponds to the predominance of girls in this research population. Another limitation may be that there is a dimension in the questionnaire that ascertains the perception of social support from an 'exceptional person'. This can be interpreted in different ways, for example, as a partner, teacher, counsellor, etc. An exceptional person may be one with whom the respondent has a romantic or other particularly close relationship.⁵⁹ It should be borne in mind that the person we refer to as special may vary according to the culture in which the research is conducted.⁶⁰ However, the use of a more specific term could weaken the instrument, for example, the use of the term partner would refer to the existence of a romantic relationship.⁶¹ In studies where the questionnaire shows two dimensions, there is a conflation of the exceptional person dimension with the family dimension or the friends dimension.⁶² For the future, it might be useful to include an open-ended question in the questionnaire where respondents are asked to add who they consider to be an exceptional person.

Conclusion

MSPSS is a quickly implemented and internationally recognised instrument for measuring social support. The factor analysis of its Slovak version, MSPSS-SK, confirmed the three-factor model used in most countries, which focuses on three sources: significant other, family, and friends. The results confirmed that it was reliable for use with adolescents as a target group. Although the presented study provided sufficient evidence about the psychometric properties of the Slovak version of the research instrument, the 'significant other' factor may be ambiguous and decrease homogeneity when applied to adolescents in comparison to adult population as it can be understood in different ways. Therefore, further research should focus on identifying who the adolescents consider to be their significant other.

In the context of resolving difficult life situations of the adolescent, it is necessary to consider not only the individual factors, but also the whole social environment, which supports the individual in dealing with a variety of life events. Social support represents one of these sources; as a part of the adolescent's environment, it is highly important and beneficial in dealing with specific negative situations. The role of social workers and other helping professionals from different fields is also to identify a multidimensional context in which the relationship between individuals and

58 Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. *Population – Basic Results*. <https://www.scitanie.sk/obyvatelia/zakladne-vysledky/pocet-obyvatelov/SR/SK0/SR>.

59 Aroian, Templin, and Ramaswamy, 'Adaptation and Psychometric Evaluation of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support for Arab Immigrant Women', 153–169.

60 Başol, 'Validity and Reliability of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support-Revised, with a Turkish Sample', 1303–1314.

61 Bagherian-Sararoudi et al., 'Psychometric properties of the persian version of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support in Iran', 1277–1281.

62 Ho and Chan, 'Modification and validation of the multidimensional scale of perceived social support for Chinese school teachers', 1–11.

their environment is activated and maintained in order to meet their needs.⁶³ It is of major importance especially in the context of adolescence as a developmental period, which is characterised by ongoing changes, identity development, separation from parents, and establishing important relationships with peers as well as adults outside the family. The results confirmed that MSPSS is reliable for use with adolescents as the target group, therefore, it can be concluded that it can be used by helping professionals (such as teachers, school psychologists, or school social workers) to measure the social support of high school students.

Contact:***Assoc Prof. PhDr. Katarína Šišanská, PhD.***

Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice Faculty of Arts
Department of Social Work
Moyzesova 9, 040 59 Košice, Slovakia
katarina.sinanska@upjs.sk

Magdaléna Hovanová, PhD.

Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice Faculty of Arts
Department of Social Work
Moyzesova 9, 040 59 Košice, Slovakia
magdalena.hovanova@gmail.com

Lucia Tóthová, PhD.

Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice Faculty of Arts
Department of Social Work
Moyzesova 9, 040 59 Košice, Slovakia
lucia.istvanova@gmail.com

63 Michael K. Zapf, 'Social Work and the Environment: Understanding People and Place', 30–46.

Recenze, články

Eric B. Shiraev, David A. Levy. *Mezikulturní psychologie. Kriticky a aplikovaně*. Praha: Academia, 2020, 612 s., ISBN: 978-80-200-3112-9.

V české literatuře jsme doposud neměli žádné takto rozsáhlé dílo o „mekulturní“ (srovnávací) psychologii kultury, a proto je překlad obsáhlého díla dvou amerických univerzitních profesorů, kteří oba disponují rozsáhlou publikační činností a druhý z nich je zároveň činný i v psychoterapii, chvályhodný a potřebný. Téma této publikace je velmi aktuální, přinášené poznatky jsou skutečně užitečné – zejména pro teorii a praxi v oblasti aplikované sociální psychologie, neboť oba tyto vědní obory mají četné styčné body, např. v oblasti politické psychologie, v níž je činný první z obou uvedených autorů. Ostatně podtitul předmětné knihy slibuje, že její obsah bude také aplikovatelný. Kulturní a sociální podmínky lidského života jsou podstatnými činiteli utváření a projevů lidské psychiky.

Předmět kulturní psychologie je v této knize vymezován jako vědní obor, který „se zabývá psychologickou rozmanitostí a skrytými příčinami této rozmanitosti“. Je to strohé vymezení, avšak pokud by nenásledovalo doplňující pokračování, bylo by nepřesné, neboť také vývojová psychologie se zabývá psychologickou rozmanitostí, a to v souvislosti s věkem. Ono pokračování přesněji objasňující tento obor zní: „*Mezikulturní psychologie, mimo jiné studuje – z komparativní perspektivy – vztahy mezi sociálními normami a chováním, a také způsoby, kterými různé společenské a kulturní vlivy (Segall et al., 1990) působí na určité lidské činnosti*“; např. jak jsou příslušníci různých kultur psychicky odolní vůči přírodním katastrofám. Důležité je, že mezikulturní psychologie neobjevuje jen odlišnosti, nýbrž „*také odhaluje obecně platné principy a fenomény, které jsou univerzální pro všechny jedince a (kulturní) skupiny*“. Klíčový pojem kultury je pak v dané knize definován jako: „*soubor postojů, chování a symbolů, které jsou sdílené velkým množstvím lidí a zpravidla předávané z jedné generace na druhou*“. Problematický je v tomto vymezení ovšem pojem množství, neboť existují také kultury reprezentované jen několika sty příslušníky.

Důležitým aspektem hodnoty této knihy je především objem přehledně uspořádaných empirických dat (poznatků) provázených dobrými příklady, vhodně uvedenými v graficky dobře vyčleněných (opticky vystupujících) rámečcích. Kromě metodologických témat a kritických diskurzů tvoří bohatý obsah knihy získané sociálně psychologické utříděné poznatky v oblastech: vnímání, inteligence, emoce, motivace a chování. Následuje problematika lidského vývoje a socializace, psychických poruch, sociální percepce, kognice a interakce (jejímž základem jsou postoje a hodnoty), osobnost a „Self“. Kniha je ukončena vybranými tématy z aplikované mezikulturní psychologie, např. v oblasti práce s imigranty a uprchlíky, vzdělávání a v dalších oborech, z nichž čtenáře jistě zaujme aktuální tematika spirituality, vědy a zdraví. Kniha je

nepochybně užitečným příspěvkem ke studiu zajímavého oboru mezikulturní psychologie.

Milan Nakonečný
(*M.Nakonecny@seznam.cz*)

Stanislav Komárek. *Jungovské eseje z devadesátých let*. Praha: Academia, 2022, 632 s., ISBN 978-80-200-3330-7.

Téma filosofické antropologie jako problém vztahu biologických a kulturních determinant v činnosti a bytí člověka bylo intenzivně diskutováno na přelomu 19. a 20. stol., v období prosazujícího se pozitivismu a naturalismu v přírodních vědách (viz dále). Nejvýraznějším představitelem současné filosofické antropologie u nás je prof. RNDr. Stanislav Komárek (nar. 1955), významný český přírodovědec (biolog), ale i filosof, esejista, autor beletrie i poezie, tvůrce rozsáhlého díla zasahujícího do mnoha dílčích biologických oborů, v biologii např. *O dějinách biologického myšlení* (1997; r. 2008 publikováno v Akademii pod názvem *Obraz člověka a přírody v zrcadle dějin*), dále *Příroda a společnost* (vydáno v anglickém překladu r. 2009), máme-li jmenovat některé z množství jeho knižních vědeckých pojednání a filosofických esejů; kromě této publikační činnosti přispíval i do mnoha časopisů, jako jsou např. Tvar, Vesmír atd.

Od roku 2001 je Komárek profesorem filosofie a dějin přírodních věd na Přírodovědecké fakultě UK v Praze. Z množství jeho děl zde chceme stručně pojednat o dvou svazcích jeho pozoruhodných studií, shrnujících jeho analýzu nejvýznamnějších antropologických teorií člověka v dílech biologů a C. G. Junga: 1. *Jungovské eseje z devadesátých let* (Academia, 2022), 2. *Darwin, Wilson, Portmann, Lorenz – Obraz člověka v dílech biologů* (Academia, 2021).

Obě díla s jungovskou tematikou, zavádějící do biologie metafyzická/spirituální hlediska (osobnost člověka jako transcendentní subjekt apod.), jsou gigantickým přehledem krátkých, kritických pojednání, z nichž jeden svazek obnáší sto padesát článků přispívajících k dané problematice.

Jak již bylo naznačeno výše, k polemice na téma filosofické antropologie došlo v době vrcholného pozitivismu na přelomu 19. a 20. století, kdy lékař R. L. K. Virchow a nejvýznamnější fyziolog té doby H. L. von Helmholtz prohlásili, že biologické jevy lze vysvětlit jazykem fyziky a chemie. Proti tomu se o něco později vymezili vitalisté a neovitalisté (v první řadě H. Bergson s pojmem „élan vital“ a H. Driesch s konceptem „entelechie“), u nás to byl zejména protestant prof. M. Rádl a dále významný profesor fyziologie, dvojnásobný rektor UK a katolicky orientovaný filosof a vědec F. Mareš ve svém vynikajícím díle *Idealism a realism v přírodní vědě* (1901) a rovněž ve spisech *Život – tvůrčí síla* (1913) a *Životní účelnost* (1917). Proti pozitivismu, který Mareš nazýval masarykovským termínem „realismus“ (Masaryka pokládal za „skrytého pozitivistu“), byl postaven termín idealismus jako označení pro „duchovní činitele“. Později, již ve 20. století, následovala polemika s pozitivistickým naturalismem, a to zejména v dílech švýcarského antropologa, zoologa a filosofa prof. Adolfa Portmanna (*Biologie und Geist*, 1956), Henri Bergsona (*Évolution créatrice*, 1900; česky *Vývoj tvořivý*, 1901). Mezi neodarwinisty 20. stol. patřili především obhájce instinktivismu Konrád Lorenz (*Die sogenannte Böse*, 1963; česky 2003), Edward O. Wilson, americký zoolog a reprezentant „sociobiologie“, a Hans Driesch (*Der Mensch und die Welt*, 1927; česky *Člověk a svět*, 1933, *Die Grundlagen der Psychologie*, 1929; česky *Základní problémy psychologie*, 1933). Filosoficko-antropologické dílo prof. Komárka lze věcně zhodnotit jen s obtížemi pro jeho obsahové bohatství, nové podněty, objektivisticky polemický přístup, pozoruhodné postřehy a hloubku i šířku pohledu. Je především významným podnětem k problematice filosofické antropologie, do které vnáší nové vzrušující aspekty, jako např. estetická hlediska kreseb na křídlech motýlů (krása jako biologická funkce?). V Komárkově díle *O obrazu člověka v dílech biologů* (2021, s. 179 n. a s. 181), v pojednání o „přirozenosti člověka“ a v konfrontaci s fyzickými a kulturními aspekty

jedincova života, resp. problematiky společensky kulturního a „animálního“ aspektu lidského bytí se uvádí, že: V pohledu na lidskou přirozenost nelze proti sobě ostře stavět animální a duchovní projevy v jeho činnosti a bytí, neboť „neexistuje žádná mimokulturní, „divoká“ lidská přirozenost“ ... „Lidská přirozenost se tudíž může uskutečnit pouze v sociálním prostředí, které výchovně působí od samého počátku. Za značně rizikový faktor zde lze pokládat moderní „nukleární“ rodinu, navíc často nekompletní, kde je osekána řada širších sociálních vztahů, které se dítě musí později vědomě učit zvládat – tradiční velkorodiny či kmenová společenství tento problém řešily prakticky automaticky. Zcela zavádějící je představa, že pro formování (už ta mechanická metafora) lidského vztahování se ke světu má podstatný význam škola – rodinné zázemí a další vlivy (médiu, dnes výlučně digitální) mají nesrovnatelně významnější vliv. Vzhledem k dědičně fixované komponentě lidské přirozenosti je velmi ilusorní domnívat se, že strukturu osobnosti kteréhokoli člověka lze radikálním způsobem ovlivnit jinak než destruktivně. Samozřejmě lze vyvolané kapacity řečové, paměťové, zvykové atd. plnit obsahy odpovídajícími místu, době a sociálnímu zařazení, ale podstatné ovlivnění povahy, osobního tempa, zálib atd. je záležitostí v zásadě téměř nemožnou“.

Komárkovo předmětné dílo je přímo pokladnicí podnětů k dalším diskuzím nad danou, stále diskutovanou a diskutabilní problematikou filosofické antropologie.

Milan Nakonečný
(M.Nakonecny@seznam.cz)

Caritas et veritas

Časopis pro reflexi křesťanských souvislostí v sociálních a humanitních oborech

Cílem časopisu je publikovat původní odborné a populární články specialistů pracujících v těchto oblastech a představovat důstojnou platformu pro komunikaci o interakci v uvedených směrech. Časopis je zařazen do databáze Scopus a do Seznamu recenzovaných neimpaktovaných periodik vydávaných v České republice.

Časopis Caritas et veritas se v rámci svého zaměření na křesťanské souvislosti v humanitních a sociálních oborech věnuje zejména praktickým otázkám spojeným s etikou, pomáhajícími profesemi a pedagogikou. Proto je záměrem redakce zachovat celý časopis dobře přístupný pro odborníky z praxe v Česku a na Slovensku. Odborné a popularizační části časopisu, stejně jako recenze na česky a slovensky vydané publikace, proto vycházejí v češtině. Zároveň redakce usiluje o to, aby odborné studie publikované v časopise zohledňovaly mezinárodní diskurz a byly pro něj přístupné. Editorial a vědecké studie proto vycházejí také v anglickém překladu, resp. odborné studie napsané původně v angličtině nebo jiném světovém jazyce jsou takto i publikovány.

vydavatel:

Teologická fakulta
Jihočeské univerzity v Českých Budějovicích
číslo a ročník: 1 (2024)
předplatné: zdarma, volně přístupné

kontaktní adresa:

Caritas et veritas
Teologická fakulta JU
Kněžská 8
370 01 České Budějovice
Tel. +420 387 773 501
Fax +420 386 354 994
e-mail: cetv@tf.jcu.cz
www.caritasetveritas.cz

objednávky pro zasílání mailem:

cetv@tf.jcu.cz

design a layout:

Ing. František Ettler
info@ettler.net

ISSN 1805-0948

redakční rada

Dr. Elaine R. Wright, *Brescia University, Marilyn Younger Conley School of Social Work, Owensboro 717 Frederica Street, Owensboro, KY, USA, elaine.wright@brescia.edu*

Dr. Daniela Blank, *TF ALU, D-79085 Freiburg im Breisgau, Německo, daniela.blank@theol.uni-freiburg.de*

Josef Nota, Ph.D., *TF JU, České Budějovice, Kněžská 8, 370 01 České Budějovice, jnota@tf.jcu.cz*

PhDr. Mirka Nečasová, Ph.D., *FSS MU, Joštova 10, 602 00 Brno, necasova@fss.muni.cz*

Doc. Michal Opatrný, Dr. theol., *TF JU, Kněžská 8, 370 01 České Budějovice, mopatrný@tf.jcu.cz*

Doc. PhDr. Helena Zbudilová, Ph.D., *TF JU, Kněžská 8, 370 01 České Budějovice, hzbudilova@tf.jcu.cz*

Mgr. Karel Šimr, Ph.D., *TF JU, Kněžská 8, 370 01 České Budějovice, simr@tf.jcu.cz*

Mgr. Bc. Jan Kaňák, Ph.D., *HTF UK, Pacovská 4, 140 01 Praha 4, honza.k@mail.muni.cz*

ThLic. Petr František Burda, Th.D., *PdF UHK, Rokitanského 62, 500 03 Hradec Králové III, frantisek.burda@uhk.cz*

ThLic. David Bouma, Th.D., *PdF UHK, Rokitanského 62, 500 03 Hradec Králové III, david.bouma@uhk.cz*

Prof. Dr. Rainer Gerig, *Diecézní úřad Odenwald-Tauber, Kirchenstraße 11, 74722 Buchen-Hainstadt, Německo, rainergerig5@gmail.com*

Dr. Emily DeMoor, *Vedoucí Caritas centra, Brescia University, Owensboro 717 Frederica Street, Owensboro, KY, USA, emily.demoor@brescia.edu*

prof. dr. Monique van Dijk-Groeneboer, *Faculteit Katholieke Theologie, Universiteit van Tilburg, Nieuwegracht 61, Utrecht, M.C.H.vanDijk@tilburguniversity.edu*

redakce**výkonná redaktorka**

Mgr. Hana Donéeová

Katedra sociální a charitativní práce TF JU

doneeova@tf.jcu.cz

koeditor čísla

Mgr. Lucie Kolářová, Dr. theol.

Katedra teologických věd TF JU

kolarova@tf.jcu.cz

předseda redakční rady

doc. Michal Opatrný, Dr. theol.

Katedra sociální a charitativní práce TF JU

mopatrný@tf.jcu.cz

+420 389033542

č. dv. 206 b

překlady z a do anglického jazyka

Mgr. Helena Lustová, Stuart Nicolson, Ph.D.

Caritas et veritas

A journal for Christian reflections in the context of the social sciences and humanities

The aim of the journal is to publish original scholarly and popular articles written by specialists working in these areas and to provide a quality platform for communication about the interaction between these fields of study. The journal is listed in the database Scopus and is on the list of peer-reviewed non-impacted periodicals published in the Czech Republic.

Within its orientation on Christian reflections in the context of the social sciences and humanities the journal Caritas et veritas is devoted primarily to practical matters related to ethics, the assisting professions, and pedagogy. This is why it is the editorial board's aim to keep the entire journal easily accessible for practitioners in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The scholarly and popular sections of the journal as well as reviews of publications in the Czech and Slovak languages are therefore published in Czech. At the same time the editorial board strives to ensure that the scholarly studies published in the journal take account of international discourse and are accessible to it. The editorial and scholarly studies are therefore published also in English translation, and scholarly studies written originally in English or another world language are also published in this way.

publisher:

Faculty of Theology
University of South Bohemia
České Budějovice
issue & year: 1 (2024)
price: free of charge, open access

contact address:

Caritas et veritas
Faculty of Theology
University of South Bohemia
České Budějovice
Kněžská 8
370 01 České Budějovice
Tel. +420 387 773 501
Fax +420 386 354 994
e-mail: cetv@tf.jcu.cz
www.caritasetveritas.cz

orders for email delivery:

cetv@tf.jcu.cz

design and layout:

František Ettler, MSc.
info@ettler.net

editorial board:

Dr Elaine R. Wright, *Brescia University, Marilyn Younger Conley School of Social Work, Owensboro 717 Frederica Street, Owensboro, KY, USA, elaine.wright@brescia.edu*

Dr Daniela Blank, *Faculty of Theology, University of Freiburg, D-79085 Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, daniela.blank@theol.uni-freiburg.de*

Dr Josef Nota, *Faculty of Theology, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Kněžská 8, 370 01 České Budějovice, Czech Republic, jnota@tf.jcu.cz*

Dr Mirka Nečasová, *Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Joštova 10, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic, necasova@fss.muni.cz*

Assoc. Prof. Dr Michal Opatrný, *Faculty of Theology, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Kněžská 8, 370 01 České Budějovice, Czech Republic, mopatrný@tf.jcu.cz*

Assoc. Prof. Dr Helena Zbudilová, *Faculty of Theology, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Kněžská 8, 370 01 České Budějovice, Czech Republic, hzbudilova@tf.jcu.cz*

Dr Karel Šimr, *Faculty of Theology, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, Kněžská 8, 370 01 České Budějovice, Czech Republic, simr@tf.jcu.cz*

Dr Jan Kaňák, *Hussite Theological Faculty, Charles University, Pacovská 4, 140 01 Praha 4, Czech Republic, jan.kanak@htf.cuni.cz*

Dr Petr František Burda, *Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, Rokitanského 62, 500 03 Hradec Králové III, Czech Republic, frantisek.burda@uhk.cz*

Dr David Bouma, *Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, Rokitanského 62, 500 03 Hradec Králové III, Czech Republic, david.bouma@uhk.cz*

Prof. Dr Rainer Gerig, *Diözesanstelle Odenwald-Tauber, Kirchenstraße 11, 74722 Buchen-Hainstadt, Germany, rainergehrig5@gmail.com*

Dr Emily DeMoor, *Director of the Caritas Center, Brescia University, Owensboro 717 Frederica Street, Owensboro, KY, USA, emily.demoor@brescia.edu*

Prof. Dr. Monique van Dijk-Groeneboer, *Faculteit Katholieke Theologie, Universiteit van Tilburg, Nieuwegracht 61 Utrecht, M.C.H.vanDijk@tilburguniversity.edu*

executive editor

Hana Donéiová MA

Department of Social Work and Caritas Studies

Faculty of Theology, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice

doneeiova@tf.jcu.cz

co-editor of issue

Dr Lucie Kolářová

Faculty of Theology, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice

kolarova@tf.jcu.cz

chairman of the editorial board

Assoc. Prof. Dr Michal Opatrný

Department of Social and Charity Work

mopatrný@tf.jcu.cz

+420 389 033 542

translations from and to the English language

Helena Lustová MA, Dr Stuart Nicolson