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SPIRITUALITY IN THE DIALOGUE OF THE FAITHFUL  
WITH ATHEISTS, AGNOSTICS,  
AND RELIGIOUSLY AMBIVALENT IN THE CONTEXT  
OF “COURTYARD OF THE GENTILES”

**Abstract.** Pluralism of contemporary worldviews makes it challenging for Christianity to enter into a dialogue with different opinions, especially those relating to (non)existence of God and foundations of man's life. Such a discussion is also difficult with the atheist, agnostic and religiously ambivalent circles. The source of this discourse lays in the human nature, which strives for unity with others, and in Christ's Great Commission. Moreover, the evolution of contemporary world, a peculiar spiritual crisis of many and effectively a crisis of human identity, rules, priorities and values demands a firm voice on the supernatural dimension of human's life, on the authentic and healthy humanism and on the value of universal virtues, especially when it comes to life, health, mutual respect and culture.

Thus, the Church is called to accommodate people that are outside of its moral or formal structures. This results from the nature of its mission and prevents it from becoming a marginal group seen as a cult, as a historic relic or as an organisation limiting man's freedom. Therefore, it becomes necessary to organise various meetings relating to the “Courtyard of Gentiles” or “Courtyard Dialogue.” This is also an opportunity to pick up healthy Christian apologetic, which is necessary because of the nature of faith itself, and to confront the dogmatic atheism which is more and more aggressive towards religion, especially towards Catholicism.

Dialogue of the faithful with the gentiles is necessary. It also encourages exploring of the world and facilitates common existence in the society. For the baptised the perspective of evangelisation and the true respect for their interlocutors are equally important.

**Key words:** Christian spirituality; atheist spirituality; dialogue of worldviews; apologetic; universal values.

The Great Commission of Christianity — “GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES” — makes the Church oriented towards the world, including people who do not share

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Christian faith or worldview. This applies not only to cooperation on the basis of charity and social issues, but also of philosophy and theology. Only this makes it possible to give a clear testimony of the power of the Gospel. In addition, the spiritual and social condition of the modern world leads individuals, genuinely concerned about the fate of the world and humanity, to a dialogue, cognition, coexistence. Believers, atheists, agnostics and religiously indifferent people are called to enter into the dialogue. It is based on mutual respect and openness to differently-minded people. However, one should think about the limits of this dialogue, which depends on the identity of the interlocutors.

Christians believe in the Triune God, and the basis of their understanding of reality is the Christological dogma—the Word became flesh. The closeness of God leads to living in relation to Him and in relationship with Him. This sets the direction for spirituality—man becomes fully himself when he is immersed in Jesus resurrected and says: “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20), which has a significant impact on morality and all activities of the baptized.

Atheists believe that God does not exist. For agnostics God is unknowable. “Agnosticism is like a negative atheism, or an atheism by default.”<sup>1</sup> There is a focus on temporal and empirical experience of reality. As Emile Faguet points out, “science excludes metaphysics, it goes beyond it and must go beyond it. This is not to say that it denies it; it merely resists the right to enter it. But minds intoxicated by scientific certitude, by the fact that science could prove God, conclude that it proved he did not exist. It would be as ridiculous for science to claim to prove the nonexistence of God as it would be to claim his existence...”<sup>2</sup> In this context, one must still remember the difference between agnosticism and atheism.<sup>3</sup>

Positivism is in a similar position. Although it tries to go beyond atheism, it criticizes the idea of God treating it as vain, incoherent and blocking human development. This is particularly true of monotheism, which—according to

<sup>1</sup> André COMTE-SPONVILLE, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, trans. Nancy Huston (New York: Viking, Penguin Group, 2007), 74.

<sup>2</sup> Henri de LUBAC, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950), 160. “If the death of God means his final death in the minds of men, the persistent vitality of atheism constitutes for atheism its most serious difficulty. God will really be dead when no one will think of denying his existence. Until then, the death of God remains an unconfirmed rumor.” Étienne GILSON, “The Idea of God and the Difficulties of Atheism,” in *The Great Ideas Today 1969*, ed. Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler ([Chicago:] W. Benton, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> “[...] one must distinguish between agnosticism and atheism. [...] I recognize that unbelief has its limits, and even I will argue that faith is in some sense such a limit. This does not mean, however, that non-believers believe in a religious way, even if they deny it, because faith as a limit of unbelief does not necessarily have to be a religious faith. [...] So you have to believe in something, but not necessarily in a religious sense.” Jan WOLEŃSKI, *Granice niewiary* [Limits of unbelief] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004), 7–8.

August Comte—gives rise to incomprehension, fanaticism, various injustices, and in the dimension of the progress of humanity leads to a backwardness. In view of this, there is a postulate of a new religion that will bring an authentic object of adoration—Humanity. In this way, the transition from being a *slave to God* to the status of *servants of Humanity*, who will be a real Providence for people, will take place.<sup>4</sup> Mankind itself should instead be put in place of the Absolute, although criminals and those who destroy human harmony are excluded from this group.

Going further, one must keep in mind the people seeking God, the truth, the deeper foundations of life. Benedict XVI defined the identity of such people as follows: “[...] people to whom the gift of faith has not been given, but who are nevertheless on the lookout for truth, searching for God. [...] They suffer from his absence and yet are inwardly making their way towards him, inasmuch as they seek truth and goodness.”<sup>5</sup> They are particularly open to the voice of Christians.

Therefore, the question arises about the role of spirituality as the space of meeting and dialogue of these groups of world-view discussion. In order to find a solution to this issue, it is necessary to define the concepts of “Christian spirituality” and “non-theistic (atheistic) spirituality,” indication of the premise and course of dialogue, and recognition of common and divergent dimensions of spirituality that are currently experiencing a true renaissance.<sup>6</sup> However, the condition for dialogue is that faith or non-faith should not be treated ideologically, but as an existential choice of man.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> “In contrast to the title “servants of Humanity”, the designation “slaves of God” was then intended to indicate a decisive antagonism between true positivists and any kind of theologians [...] The relative Being, to whom the first group dedicated themselves, has only a limited power, though one that is always superior to our strength, individual or collective; its impulses are always regulated by laws that are completely open to appraisal. The second group, on the other hand, worship an absolute Being, whose power is boundless, so that its wishes necessarily remain arbitrary. [...] Positivism alone can make us systematically free.” H. de LUBAC, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, 172–3.

<sup>5</sup> [BENEDICT XVI,] “Day of Reflection, Dialogue and Prayer for Peace and Justice in the World, *Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace*, Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI at the Meeting for Peace in Assisi. Assisi, Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels, Thursday, 27 October 2011.” The Holy See. Benedict XVI. Speeches. Accessed 15 June 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/october/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20111027\\_assisi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20111027_assisi.html).

<sup>6</sup> “[...] for the reflective and sensitive mind [...] the alternative may well lie between atheism and contemplation.” Michael J. BUCKLEY, *Denying and Disclosing God: The Ambiguous Progress of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 119.

<sup>7</sup> Sawomir ZATWARDNICKI, *Ateizm urojony. Chrześcijańska odpowiedź na negację Boga* [Imaginary atheism: Christian answer to God’s negation] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2013), 106.

## 1. SPIRITUALITY AND ITS TYPES (CHRISTIAN AND NON-THEISTIC)

At the beginning, it is necessary to define the notion of spirituality, and its types — “Christian” and “non-theistic (atheistic).” Thanks to this, we can discover their real impact on the shape of the vision of the world and human life, and determine the prospects for dialogue.

### 1.1. THE CONCEPT OF SPIRITUALITY

The term “spirituality” is ambiguous, therefore its general meaning should be defined, and then it should be made more specific in the Christian and non-religious aspects. The matter is important because today the concept of “spirituality” is related to various forms of human activity and often used without a deeper meaning as a synonym of internal aspirations or desires.

Simply put, “spirituality is a set of attitudes that have intellectual-cognitive, emotional-valuing and behavioral reference.”<sup>8</sup> It is about focusing on objective or subjective values, based on the properties of human nature. Aristotle distinguished three factors shaping man: *physis* (biological nature), *ethos* (traits acquired as a result of social contacts) and *logos* (reason). Nowadays, this tripartite is expanded and made more specific by indicating endogenous factors (heredity, innate traits, somatic states), exogenous factors (environmental and resulting from upbringing) and personal factors (through which man develops according to species traits). The latter are of particular importance because they show that one cannot speak about biological or social determinism in the internal development of a human being, although of course all the elements have a concrete influence.<sup>9</sup> This personal activity is the full development of humanity towards its fullness. Christian spirituality places this fullness outside of man, in God. In consequence, human development is targeted on transcendent goals (though one cannot diminish the perfection of man himself). On the contrary, non-theistic spirituality places this fullness within man and the world.

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<sup>8</sup> Marek CHMIELEWSKI, “Duchowość [Spirituality],” in *Leksykon duchowości katolickiej* [Lexicon of Catholic spirituality], ed. Marek Chmielewski (Lublin, Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2002), 229.

<sup>9</sup> Gerard BERNACKI, “Religijne życie wewnętrzne jako czynnik współkształtujący światopogląd [Religious internal life as a factor co-shaping the worldview],” in *Jaki światopogląd odpowiada rzeczywistości? Agnostycy w drodze do poznania Stwórcy* [What worldview corresponds to reality? Agnostics on the way to getting to know the Creator], ed. Jerzy J. Knappik (Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka, 1993), 140–1.

Regardless of the worldview, one can distinguish the essential features of human spirituality: reasonableness, the ability to evaluate experiences, and activity and creativity, which is associated with responsibility for oneself and for others. The way to achieve this is to expand freedom. This implies another feature of human spirituality — action, because a person who develops properly does not want to be only a consumer of goods, but wants to ennoble matter and influence reality. Finally, human spirituality is metaphysically addressed to the Absolute and what is associated with Him.<sup>10</sup> Any fully human spirituality should also lead to the development of personalism manifesting itself in respect for human dignity.

It is also possible to indicate the essential components of human spiritual development. These are openness to values and internal progress. What matters is self-education (asceticism), that is, exercise in virtues and good experiences. As Gerard Bernacki notes, “as a continuous and methodical internal work on inhibiting bad tendencies, fighting against temptations and improving the human person's power to acquire virtues, self-educating asceticism aims at the superiority of spirituality over corporeality.”<sup>11</sup> It is possible to separate the negative aspect (some form of resignation, renunciation) and the positive aspect (activities that bring joy and provide human development). In this process, authority-makers are necessary because they influence a person through appropriate developmental patterns, inspirations or strengthening in a chosen way on the conscious, subconscious and intuitive level. For Christian spirituality, saints, witnesses of faith and fellow believers can perform this function. In the case of non-theistic spirituality, the educative role can be attributed to philosophers, people important to the individual or society and people of culture.

Moreover, the factors that support spiritual development are important. These are: conversation about experiences, analysis of the internal state of feelings, emotions, intellectual cognition, level of identification with values, a record of one's thoughts. Therefore, regular reflection on the level of one's development is needed. In the secular dimension, various calendar and personal events may serve this purpose. For believers, it takes the form of an examination of conscience.

## 1.2. BASICS OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

There is no Christian spirituality without faith, which — as Joseph Ratzinger explains — “is a human way of taking up a stand in the totality of reality, a way that cannot be reduced to knowledge and is incommensurable with knowledge; it

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 144–5.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 153–4.

is the bestowal of meaning without which the totality of man would remain homeless, on which man's calculations and actions are based."<sup>12</sup>

Christian spirituality is founded on the fact of accepting the existence of the Holy Trinity and the truth about the true Divinity and true humanity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. These two dogmas, Trinitarian and Christological, define the proper space of all thinking and actions of the baptized. They also set the direction of Christian anthropology, and thus the vision of any human activity—“Divine” and “human” are not in opposition to each other, but coexist with each other. The truth about Jesus Christ, God-Man, makes the creation more valuable and it is unwise to reject the body or the world. It is expressed by the Church in the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. [...] Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too.”<sup>13</sup> This generates a Christian understanding of the autonomy of the spiritual and temporal realm, which is not opposition, but coexistence. Therefore, any anthropological Nestorianism (separation of “what is spiritual” and “what is physical”) or monophysitism (confusion of orders), social-ecclesiastical Nestorianism (the gap between the world and the Church) and monophysitism (Caesarapism, political messianism) should be rejected. The same can be said about the Church—it is incorrect to see the Church as only a human or divine reality. Therefore, incarnational spirituality is necessary.<sup>14</sup> In this way, spirituality is shaped as a lifestyle.

An important element of Christian spirituality is grace. This gift of God Himself is addressed in a special way to personality factors, thanks to which man can consciously and voluntarily receive God's help and presence, and thus grow internally. This is also accomplished in what Søren Kierkegaard said that “the really serious part does not begin until man, equipped with the necessary experience, finds himself forced by a higher power to undertake something that goes against the grain.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 72.

<sup>13</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Przemysław SAWA, “Duchowość inkarnacyjna i jej chrystologiczne podstawy [Incarnational spirituality and its Christological foundations],” *Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne* 2011, no. 1 (44): 109–25. See IDEM, *Misterium Wcielenia. Rzeczywistość, inspiracje, nadzieje* [Mystery of the Incarnation. Reality, inspiration, hopes] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo EMMANUEL, 2009), 325–47.

<sup>15</sup> H. de LUBAC, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, 96.

### 1.3. THE REALITY OF NON-THEISTIC (ATHEISTIC AND ANTI-THEISTIC) SPIRITUALITY

Atheistic philosophies<sup>16</sup> have developed in opposition to religion, false images of God, religious abuse and unsatisfactory answers to life questions.<sup>17</sup> Depending on the type of atheism—materialism, existentialism or Marxism—a worldview, and thus a specific form of spirituality, are formed, based on history and philosophy.<sup>18</sup> The common denominator of atheist conceptions is the radical postulate of rejecting belief in the existence of God. More broadly speaking, as Étienne Borne claims, “atheism seeks in the negation of God the total confirmation of man and, calling himself with satisfaction of humanism, he will submit to himself evidence that he led man to the end of his own abilities. Hence the assumption that faith in God is something like dehumanizing.”<sup>19</sup>

A special form of non-theistic worldview (and spirituality) is the concept of the initiator of positivism, August Comte, who postulated the conversion of theistic religion into a specific religion of reason and science; this, however, significantly limits the opportunity to learn and experience.<sup>20</sup> Although Comte did not consider himself to be an atheist, and the interpreters include him in the group of agnostics, a careful analysis of his texts makes one see a limitation of cognitive interest in the terrestrial and experimental sphere, without deciding what may be outside this sphere.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting, however, that in this case it is difficult to go

<sup>16</sup> On the types of atheism see: Jan SOCHOŃ, *Ateizm* [Atheism] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kard. Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Johannes Baptist LOTZ, *Bóg we współczesnym świecie* [God in the modern world], [no translator] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 1992), 8–15.

<sup>18</sup> See Robert COFFY, *Bóg niewierzących* [God of atheists], trans. Paweł Zdziechowski (Paris: Société d'Éditions Internationales, 1968), 35–94, 125–42; Michel LELONG, *O dialogu z niewierzącymi* [About a dialogue with unbelievers], trans. Olga Scherer (Paris: Société d'Éditions Internationales, 1967), 35–65.

<sup>19</sup> R. COFFY, *Bóg niewierzących*, 20.

<sup>20</sup> “In the theological stage, the human mind, in its search for the primary and final causes of phenomena, explains the apparent anomalies in the universe as interventions of supernatural agents. The second stage is only a simple modification of the first: the questions remain the same, but in the answers supernatural agents are replaced by abstract entities. In the positive state, the mind stops looking for causes of phenomena, and limits itself strictly to laws governing them; likewise, absolute notions are replaced by relative ones.” See Michel BOURDEAU, “Auguste Comte,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed 15 June 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comte/>. On phases of human thinking according to positivism, see Auguste COMTE, *A Discourse on the Positive Spirit*, trans. Edward Spencer Beesly (London: Reeves, 1903), 165 ff.

<sup>21</sup> Writing about Comte’s philosophy, Raymond de Boyer de Sainte-Suzanne states: “Man has long wanted to know the universe in its origins and its ends. It is impossible for him today to hope to shed light on these questions. It is very clear, in fact, that we cannot hope for a positive certitude in what concerns God. Comte professes on this point a radical agnosticism. That is an *inaccessible mystery* [...]

beyond a mentality based on Christianity. Comte created the foundations for a new religion, and although he tried to be beyond the experience of Catholicism or other denominations, he remained under their influence. It pushed him to create a system of positivist religion in parallel to Catholicism. One can indicate its following factors: humanity is created by living, dead and future people, positivist faith in immortality in overcoming the social element over the individual one, home worship focused on home life, the existence of “angels,” or the ministry of women, priestly function of scholars as those who know the laws of the world, being an *encyclopedic mind* (in contrast to erudite knowledge of a number of facts), a community of opinions based on topics tested by positive theories. This creates a new spirituality: trust in scholars, a real “conversion” based on what can be proved rationally, scientifically, elimination of kowtowing to God. The consequence is sociocracy<sup>22</sup> and a new vision of morality based on positive philosophy, especially in the social dimension (Humanity as a real subject).<sup>23</sup>

When it comes to modern times, André Comte-Sponville, a philosopher, a member of the National Consultative Committee on Ethics in France, who promoted the existence of non-religious internal life, contributes to the concept of non-theistic (atheistic) spirituality. By rejecting radical antitheism and anti-

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which must be left aside, since neither the present state of our knowledge nor probably the nature of our intelligence permits us to study it fruitfully. We can deny nothing and affirm nothing in this order of ideas. Henceforth, we do not have to be preoccupied with these questions.” H. de LUBAC, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, 160.

<sup>22</sup> Auguste Comte was fascinated by the universality of Catholicism and its ability to embrace all spheres of human life. That is why in his vision of a positive society one can see an analogy to Christian thought. Comte absolutizes Humanity, to which he assigns a role analogous to the role of God in Christianity. In his parareligious vision of society, he subordinates the individual to the general. Humanity consists of living units, but also of those who have died and those who are to be born. Individuals are exchanged like cells in the body. Individuals are products of Humanity, which is to be worshiped, as pagan deities used to be worshiped. The new dogmas of the new society are positive philosophy and scientific laws.

Comte was convinced that these new dogmas required new missionaries who would spread them. To this end, Comte postulated the need for secular *baptisms*, *confirmation*, and even the need for a secular rite of *anointing the sick*. He attributed the role of guardian angel to a woman, although she was called a *kind of continuous state of childhood*. He proposed to name months after the figures important for the new positive religion (for example, Prometheus), and the days of the week — after the names of particular positive sciences. He treated scientific institutions as secular equivalents of religious temples. He assumed the establishment of a function analogous to the Pope in order to coordinate the development of science. He also assumed the subordination of young people to the elderly and the complete elimination of divorce. The specific *Holy Trinity* of positive religion is — according to Comte — Humanity (Great Being), Space (Great Environment) and Earth (Great God).” Magdalena KORZEKWA, “Pozytywizm Comte’a i współczesny kult nauki [Comte’s positivism and the contemporary cult of science],” *Opoka.org.pl*, Biblioteka, accessed 25 November 2016, [www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/F/FG/mk\\_comte.html](http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/F/FG/mk_comte.html).

<sup>23</sup> A. COMTE, *A Discourse on the Positive Spirit*, 141 ff.



religiousness, Comte-Sponville shows the perspective of an alternative spirituality, which, though it is not compatible with the assumptions and forms of existing religions, defends a constructively developed human life, distancing itself from shallow materialism. Comte-Sponville does not cut himself off from his Catholic upbringing (he was religious until he reached the age of majority), one can even notice a certain sentiment towards the old religiosity in his thought, although he stands in the position of unambiguous atheism. Looking for arguments for the existence and non-existence of God, he says: "To be an atheist is not necessarily to be against God. Why would I be against what does not exist? Personally, I would go even further and admit that I would definitely prefer that there be a God. [...] Why should I prefer for God to exist? Because he would fulfill my deepest longings"<sup>24</sup> This, in his opinion, discredits religion, because there is a fear of creating a religion in order to satisfy the deepest human expectations.

Therefore, André Comte-Sponville proposes a non-religious spirituality. As an example, he mentions the experience of the Far East, where Buddhism, Taoism or Confucianism refer not to faith and religious community, but to schools of life or wisdom. Comte-Sponville notes that there are non-religious societies with stable morality.<sup>25</sup> However, there is no society without a spiritual unity that is expressed in deep communication between members of the society and the lack of internal divisions. What binds community members are various common values: love for the homeland, justice, freedom, solidarity.<sup>26</sup> Faithfulness on which morality and social life are based is a binder of such a society; in the case of European civilization, this is fidelity to the Greek-Roman and Judeo-Christian sources. Therefore, the secularity cannot mean amnesia, denial of the roots or rejection of Jesus as the greatest philosopher (as Spinoza wrote).<sup>27</sup> At the same time, love is necessary which is the third component of social identity.<sup>28</sup> This does not mean, a postulate to fight religion, to which man has the right, as well as to live without religion. Both of these realities need protection, not to impose any of them by force. According to Comte-Sponville, this is what secularity is all about, which is the main achievement of the Enlightenment, although it is currently fragile.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> A. COMTE-SPONVILLE, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, 124. The author further notes that this fear is connected with the danger of illusion, that is, faith born of human desires, which leads to the identification of desires with reality.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 18–22.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–89.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 94–6.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 125. "Atheism is neither a duty nor a requirement. The same is true of religion. It remains for us to accept our differences. When the question is considered in this light, tolerance is the only satisfying answer." *Ibid.*, 22.

## 1.4. LIFE CONSEQUENCES OF ATHEISTIC PHILOSOPHY

However, it is difficult to fully agree with the above thesis. It can be seen that secularity in many countries is a tool for fighting religion, especially its external manifestations and social repercussions. This process even leads to a change in the social structure or proper anthropology. This is shown by liberal legislation and moral destruction associated with the ever more bold promotion of inappropriate attitudes. The postulate of great freedom and affirmation of man destroys the basis of human identity. The absence of God requires Him to be replaced by His substitutes. In a sense, one must agree with Friedrich Nietzsche that the “death of God” has deplorable consequences for humanity. Based on the assumption of Nietzsche’s philosophy of man’s basic pursuit of greatness and dominion and acknowledgment of the world, it becomes impossible to accept the Absolute. This, however, has implications that may not be seen at first: no limits for human thoughts, intentions and deeds; lack of guilt and having an unclean conscience; loss of a sense of security, which leads to deep loneliness; the loss of a strong orientation of the will to the good and the search for the truth; the loss of a man’s place in the world. Consequently, life can be torment, and the world becomes chaos and everything is ruled by unreasonable necessity.<sup>30</sup> As noted by Benedict XVI, “The desire for happiness degenerates, for example, into an unbridled, inhuman craving, [...] Force comes to be taken for granted [...] peace is destroyed and man destroys himself in this peace vacuum. The absence of God leads to the decline of man and of humanity. [...] the denial of God corrupts man, robs him of his criteria and leads him to violence.”<sup>31</sup> Roman Rożdżeński lists the following consequences of atheism: accepting that the existence of man is similar to the existence of other living creatures, which leads to the loss of the ultimate goal of life, the lack of hierarchical (moral) order, the postulate that there is no unchanging (sexually diverse) human nature, lack of authority (Absolute) that is the ultimate source of truth, the acceptance of the universe as a kind of absolute, which leads to the rejection of the spiritual sphere.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Hans PFEIL, “The Modern Denial of God: Its Origin and Tragedy,” *Philosophy Today* 3 (1959): 19–26.

<sup>31</sup> [BENEDICT XVI,] “Day of Reflection, Dialogue and Prayer for Peace and Justice in the World, *Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace*, Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI at the Meeting for Peace in Assisi, Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels, Thursday, 27 October 2011.” The Holy See. Benedict XVI. Speeches. Accessed 15 June 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/october/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20111027\\_assisi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20111027_assisi.html).

<sup>32</sup> Roman ROŻDŻEŃSKI, *Ateizm, czyli wiara negatywna* [Atheism, or negative faith] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 2016), 145–75.

Marxism also tried to shape a specific reality, which left a significant mark on anthropology and related spirituality. Essentially, the only category describing man are social relations. Everything else is an abstraction;<sup>33</sup> this deprives man of the depth.<sup>34</sup> The consequence is the claim that “there is nothing to prevent his [man] being used as material or as a tool either for the preparation of some future society or for ensuring, here and now, the dominance of one privileged group. There is not even anything to prevent his being cast aside as useless. [...] In reality there is no longer any man because there is no longer anything that is greater than man.”<sup>35</sup>

Nowadays, however, one can notice a new form of dogmatic atheism (“new atheists”) which radically rejects God, fights against Him, even despises the Judaeo-Christian God.<sup>36</sup> This is an authentic struggle against religion, especially Christianity, aimed at the eradication of religion from people’s lives, rather than an intellectual discourse. Representatives of new atheism are Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens.<sup>37</sup> Paradoxically, one can notice a certain convergence of this trend with the American fundamentalism of some Protestant groups. Both circles take for granted a literal understanding of the biblical text. Christian fundamentalists in this way provide arguments related to faith, and “new atheists” use it to ridicule faith and prove its absurdity. In this context, the Church (with sound theology) must once again defend reason—originally against mythological mentality, and now against atheism, which more closely resembles ideology and unreasonable beliefs. As Sławomir Zatywardnicki notes, “today believers defend atheists against imaginary atheism, or else: they protect atheism from the atheists themselves.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> “Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory astray into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.” Karl MARX, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in Friedrich ENGELS, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), 64.

<sup>34</sup> “Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man. [...] The proletariat of today takes the side of socialism, which enlists science in the battle against the fog of religion, and frees the workers from their belief in life after death by welding them together to fight in the present for a better life on earth.” Vladimir Ilyich LENIN, “Socialism and Religion,” in IDEM, *Collected Works*, vol. 10 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 83.

<sup>35</sup> H. de LUBAC, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, 66.

<sup>36</sup> “He hates God so much one wonders how he cannot believe in Him.” Michael NOVAK, *No One Sees God: The Dark Night of Atheists and Believers* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 58.

<sup>37</sup> See Marek SKIERKOWSKI, “Anty-teizm Richarda Dawkinsa i Christophera Hitchensa [Anti-theism of Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens],” in *Wobec nowego ateizmu* [In the face of new atheism], ed. Ignacy Bokwa and Marek Jagodziński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kard. Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2011), 39–57.

<sup>38</sup> S. ZATWARDNICKI, *Ateizm urojony*, 131–2.

## 2. THE INITIATIVE OF THE “COURTYARD OF THE GENTILES” (“COURTYARD OF DIALOGUE”) FOR DIALOGUE

The Catholic Church enters into a dialogue with non-Christians in a special way since the Second Vatican Council. Talks are ongoing with representatives of various religions, as evidenced by the meetings in Assisi, initiated by John Paul II. The dialogue also includes those who do not engage in religious practices and non-believers. On the basis of Catholic teaching about moving towards the world, an initiative called the “Courtyard of the Gentiles” was taken, and on its example, further projects of joint meetings and reflections of various communities have been launched to recognize the state of the world and create a better future.

### 2.1. MAIN ASSUMPTIONS OF THE “COURTYARD OF THE GENTILES” PROJECT

Benedict XVI did much for intercultural dialogue, and by continuing the work of the new evangelization and giving it the theological and structural foundations, he strongly directed the Church’s view of non-believers and people indifferent to the religious dimension. In a speech to the Roman Curia on December 21, 2009, he mentioned that believers must care for atheists and agnostics, which is expressed by maintaining the attitude of searching.<sup>39</sup> Referring to Jesus concern for the courtyard of the gentiles in the Jerusalem temple, from which he expelled the traders, so as not to block the gentiles’ access to prayer, he called Catholics to dialogue with the unbelievers: “the Church should open a sort of *Court of the Gentiles* in which people might in some way latch on to God, without knowing him and before gaining access to his mystery, at whose service the inner life of the Church stands.”<sup>40</sup>

“Courtyard of the Gentiles” is a series of meetings taking place on the initiative of Benedict XVI, which have been organized since 2011 by the Pontifical Council for Culture, creating a space for dialogue between believers and atheists, agnostics and religiously indifferent people. The meetings took place, among others in Paris, Barcelona, Stockholm, Assisi, and Washington. The evaluation of this initiative is positive on the part of various circles and parties of the dialogue. This fits into the new evangelization in the broad sense of that term, although it

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<sup>39</sup> [BENEDICT XVI.] “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Members of the Roman Curia and Papal Representatives for the Traditional Exchange of Christmas Greetings, Clementine Hall, Monday, 21 December 2009.” The Holy See. Benedict XVI. Speeches. Accessed 15 June 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/december/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20091221\\_curia-auguri.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20091221_curia-auguri.html).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

does not explicitly call for the recognition of Jesus as Lord. Nevertheless, it brings these differing worlds closer together and in the longer term it can bring fruit to the experience of God by non-believers or indifferent people, and in the case of believers, it can lead to even greater openness to the world without the loss of their Christian identity.

The initiative is part of the universalism of Christianity and the acceptance of Jesus' words, "for whoever is not against you is for you" (Luke 9:50). At the same time, as noted by Tomáš Halík, a highly regarded Czech pastor, theologian and philosopher, "Christ does not remain far from anyone who really is on his way. I am deeply convinced that a sincere meeting of pilgrims is the chosen place of Christophania, the revelation of the Risen Lord."<sup>41</sup>

## 2.2. POLISH EDITIONS OF THE "COURTYARD OF THE GENTILES"

In Poland, the first "Courtyard of the Gentiles" was held on June 20, 2012 in Cracow in the courtyard of the Jagiellonian University, and was organized by the Archdiocese of Cracow, the Jagiellonian University and the John Paul II Intercultural Dialogue Institute. Subsequent editions took place on December 20, 2012 ("On values prior to policy making"), on October 29, 2013 ("Universitas"), on March 19, 2014 ("Man between nature and culture"), and on December 3, 2015 ("Message of the Merciful God"). Eventually, the initiative was adopted as the "Courtyard of Dialogue." As noted by Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz in the letter of the Courtyard of Dialogue, "We seek out tangent points in the spaces of faith, science, culture and public life. Through a common conversation, we want to create a peculiar map of the concepts that unite us, as well as issues that divide us. We do not aim to reach a compromise or convince the other party that we are right. It is about meeting people. It is by meeting with another human being that we get to know each other and understand our ways of reading reality, and finally learning about the experience that speaks for their adoption."<sup>42</sup>

There were similar initiatives. For example, the Gaudeamus Catholic University Association at the University of Economics in Katowice organized the "Square of the Gentiles." The following debates were held: yoga and Christian meditation (September 30, 2012), religious symbols in public space (January 9, 2013), music and spiritual threats (November 20, 2013), bioenergotherapy and miracles (December 3, 2014).

<sup>41</sup> Tomáš HALÍK, "Chrześcijaństwo na dziedzińcu pogan [Christianity in the courtyard of the gentiles]," trans. Tomasz Dostatni, *Znak* 2010, no. 11 (666): 86.

<sup>42</sup> Dziedziniac Dialogu, accessed 27 November 2016, [www.dziedziniacdialogu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/SXERO-3P15061610510.pdf](http://www.dziedziniacdialogu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/SXERO-3P15061610510.pdf).

### 3. MAIN POINTS OF DIALOGUE ON THE GROUND OF SPIRITUALITY

In the light of what has been said so far, it is necessary to define the common features of Christian and non-theistic spirituality and the space for further exploration. What is important here is awareness of the limits of the meeting, which is especially important for Christians not to enter the area of apostasy through dialogue.

#### 3.1. CARE FOR HUMAN TRANSCENDENCE

The basis of truly human existence is, as said by Martin Heidegger, the awareness of one's own being and mode of existence. However, one can notice the confusion of modern people who no longer ask about the basis of their existence. This leads to the impoverishment of life, closure in the area of temporality and transience, the present not considered in a broader perspective, even non-religious one. In this way, man deprives himself of his internal wealth, supernaturalness, becoming one of the elements of reality. It affects the whole of his existence.

Therefore, this crisis is a challenge for contemporary spirituality. Reflection on humanity and its depth, and directing man towards what is beyond him is a common service of philosophy and theology for the preservation of a fully human world. One must clearly postulate the necessity of maintaining the power of the spiritual, that is, using the language of Søren Kierkegaard, a *paradox* that transcends temporality and understanding.<sup>43</sup> The result will be a fuller and deeper existence—a truly human life, not just a life of man.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, it opens the space for seeking God and universal values.

#### 3.2. AFFIRMATION OF HUMANISM

The proper understanding of man is related to the development of humanism, which is a set of views “about the superior role of man to the whole nature, his distinctiveness and superiority to the creatures surrounding him. The consequence

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<sup>43</sup> “And as, in the campaign he [Søren Kierkegaard] conducted, toward the end of his life, against the established Church of his county, he wanted to save that *shoking* element which is essential to Christianity, so in his struggle against Hegelianism he wanted to save the element of *paradox* which is no less essential.” H. de LUBAC, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, p. 107.

<sup>44</sup> Moral theology distinguishes between human acts (*actus humanus*) and the acts of man (*actus hominis*). A human act is a rational act—for example, a person suffers and is aware of suffering, loves and knows that he is loved, exists and is aware of his existence.

of recognition of this superiority is the postulate of affirmation of the human person, recognition of his subjectivity and striving to provide him with appropriate living and development conditions.”<sup>45</sup> Believers find the deepest embedding of this uniqueness in God and in His gift of creation, and non-believers find it in the implementation of interpersonal relations, the greatness of reason, will and the entire personality of man. In such a system, cooperation between (Christian) theism and atheism is possible. In the basic issues of human existence, such as life, health, peace, culture, relationships and interpersonal relations, various philosophies and worldviews need to talk with one voice, which is necessary to keep the world more and more technical, virtual and hostile to the human being as genuinely human.

### 3.3. THE PRESERVATION OF VALUES

Spirituality does not exist separately from values; sound spirituality encourages their preservation, identification with them and their promotion. This is particularly important today, when it seems that humanity, at least from the Euro-Atlantic sphere, loses its roots. Benedict XVI diagnosed it correctly when he spoke to the Roman Curia on December 22, 2011: “even if such values as solidarity, commitment to one’s neighbour and responsibility towards the poor and suffering are largely uncontroversial, still the motivation is often lacking for individuals and large sectors of society to practise renunciation and make sacrifices.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to stimulate the human spirit to assimilate values more deeply, especially those that are fundamental ones, such as protection of life, health, property, honor, sexual sphere, and products of culture.<sup>47</sup>

For Christians, this is an important space of testimony about the morals of free persons, building life on Christ. As Henri de Lubac remarked, “gentleness and goodness, considerateness toward the lowly, pity for those who suffer, rejection of perverse methods, protection of the oppressed, unostentatious self-sacrifice, resistance to lies, the courage to call evil by its proper name, love of justice, the spirit of peace and concord, open-heartedness, mindfulness of heaven...”<sup>48</sup> However, the positioning of moral norms is different. For believers, moral norms must

<sup>45</sup> W. SEREMAK, *Humanizm*, in: *Leksykon duchowości katolickiej*, p. 341.

<sup>46</sup> [BENEDICT XVI,] “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI on the Occasion of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia, Clementine Hall, Thursday, 22 December 2011,” The Holy See, Benedict XVI, Speeches. Accessed 15 June, 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/december/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20111222\\_auguri-curia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20111222_auguri-curia.html).

<sup>47</sup> J. WOLEŃSKI, *Granice niewiary*, p. 207

<sup>48</sup> H. de LUBAC, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*, p. 129.

be based outside of man, on God,<sup>49</sup> for atheists—on man himself. However, the negation of the Absolute gives rise to axiarchism (the view that the world is ruled by value), and especially its extreme form, according to which ethical needs have creative power.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.4. WAYS OF DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUALITY OF DIALOGUE

Christian spirituality and atheist spirituality can meet in several points relevant to the deeply and responsibly lived humanity. The aforementioned components of internal life—human transcendence, sound humanism and values—demand, according to André Comte-Sponville, the spirituality of fidelity, action and love, not the religiously rooted spirituality of faith, hope and subordination.<sup>51</sup>

Undoubtedly, the essential way for spiritual growth is mystical experience, which is also available to non-believers. It is about the feeling of an all-encompassing whole; it belongs rather to the realm of experience than to the realm of reason, thought, logic. It is about the internal entrance into the depths of the existing reality, a kind of freezing of logic and perceiving the world not with the senses, but with the heart, which of course does not contradict the intellect but transcends it. American psychologists call this the *altered state of consciousness*<sup>52</sup>—a sense of unity with everything that exists. It is in a sense a mystical experience—in a way, a stoppage of time, the continuation of the present and experiencing—as written by Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza—that “we feel and know by experience that we are eternal.”<sup>53</sup> Then there is indifference to previous shortages or future fears, which is manifested in at least a momentary release from frustration, difficulties and tensions. This may occur during contact with nature or at any particular moment of a personal or social event, for example the experience of grief, joy, reflection associated with a specific situation from the past or present.

<sup>49</sup> Conscience “does not repose on itself, but vaguely reaches forward to something beyond self, and dimly discerns a sanction higher than self for its decisions, as evidenced in that keen sense of obligation and responsibility which informs them.” John Henry NEWMAN, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (New York: The Catholic Publication Society, 1870), 103.

<sup>50</sup> John Leslie MACKIE, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 150–53.

<sup>51</sup> A. COMTE-SPONVILLE, *The Little Book of Atheist Spirituality*, 136–41.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>53</sup> Benedict SPINOZA, *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order*, trans. Jonathan Bennett (Early Modern Texts, 2004), 131. “If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present.” Ludwig WITTGENSTEIN, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. Charles Kay Ogden (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, Inc. 1922), 88.



The experience of silence is necessary for this. The Judeo-Christian tradition sees here the fulfillment of God's call: "By repentance and rest you would be saved; your strength would lie in quiet confidence" (Isaiah 30:15) and "Therefore, behold, I will allure her and lead her to the wilderness, and speak to her tenderly" (Hosea 2:16). For philosophy, silence is simply a response to moments that are difficult to describe conceptually or accurately in a confrontation with a mystery or an incomprehensible event. Ludwig Wittgenstein expressed it simply, saying that "whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent."<sup>54</sup> However, this is not only about a negative dimension, a kind of helplessness in the face of life matters. In the deepest and most positive dimension, it is possible to think and speak, but it is unnecessary, when people experience truth, fullness, and freedom. So if there is a lack of silence, degradation of humanity occurs. In an ever more technical world, the joint testimony of believers and non-believers of the importance of silence, detention and reflection can contribute to the reconstruction of the depths of societies, and thus should aim for greater respect for the neighbor and openness to genuine dialogue.

Moreover, atheistic spirituality does not suspend morality, but it makes it based on human freedom, which he discovers not in the Absolute, but in himself, in his identity. That is why it is important to oppose all forms of nihilism and to introduce a man into the experience of peace, which means life and action without fear, accepting the reality in which man lives. However, one can doubt the possibility of such a world. Ultimately, this is likely to lead to man's focus on himself. André Comte-Sponville expressed the essence of such a path as follows: "This is the spirit of Buddha: no Self, neither atman nor Brahman. It is a spirituality that open onto the world, onto other people, onto everything. Such is the spirit of Spinoza—no freedom within me other than the truth, which is all. Such is the spirit, period."<sup>55</sup> This liberation is the awakening, the experience of what is universal and true.<sup>56</sup> Christians should respond to this with the testimony of freedom in Christ and the development of their own humanity and the experience of fullness. Nevertheless, a shared belief about the necessity of going beyond temporality is extremely desired by the world closed in shallow temporality, temporariness, technology, economy and transitoriness.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>55</sup> A. COMTE-SPONVILLE, *Duchowość ateistyczna*, p. 198.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

### 3.5. CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A MESSENGER OF SPIRITUALITY

A special expression of the spiritual orientation of humanity is the culture in which the thoughts, desires, anxieties, hopes and aspirations of the human being are reflected. The church cannot distance itself from the contemporary broadly defined culture. Its vocation is dialogue with culture, “purifying, healing and elevating the best features of the new languages and the new forms of communication.”<sup>57</sup> This is sometimes difficult because of widespread admiration for the achievements of technology, which often leads to a paradoxical belief in the almost limitless possibilities of the human mind. As a result, it is easy to lose sensitivity to the *sacred*. There is also another danger—the transition from faith (religion) to idolatry. That is why Blaise Pascal was right to say that “atheism is a mark of strength of mind, but only to a certain degree.”<sup>58</sup> This also applies to culture and art, which, apart from religious content, becomes not only secular, but also atheistic and even anti-theistic.<sup>59</sup>

In this context, sound theology, philosophy and spirituality, regardless of provenance, is designed to defend a truly human culture, so that it does not become a caricature of human activity or devalue it by referring to social, ethical, historical or religious provocation. The way to this is to try to understand the silence of God and the presence of metaphysics in everyday life, develop wisdom philosophy and guard the religious sense of religiosity.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.6. CHALLENGES FOR CHRISTIANITY

Religious and philosophical dialogue brings fruit to Christianity itself. It is necessary to undertake certain challenges that properly set priorities in the lives of believers. Hence, the Church must face the crisis of faith in the world and the loss

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<sup>57</sup> BENEDICT XVI. “Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture, Clementine Hall, Saturday, 13 November 2010.” The Holy See. Benedict XVI. Speeches. Accessed 15 June 2018. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/november/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20101113\\_pc-cultura.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20101113_pc-cultura.html).

<sup>58</sup> [Blaise PASCAL,] *The Thoughts of Blaise Pascal*, trans. Charles Kegan Paul (London: George Bell and Sons, 1901), 119.

<sup>59</sup> See Jan Stanisław WOJCIECHOWSKI, “Ateizm sztuki współczesnej (w perspektywie kulturoznawczej) [Atheism of contemporary art (in the perspective of cultural studies)],” in *Wobec nowego ateizmu*, 85–99.

<sup>60</sup> Krzysztof ŚNIEŻYŃSKI, “Od ateizmu do antyteizmu—idolatria jako zagrożenie dla współczesnej kultury [From atheism to anti-theism—idolatry as a threat to contemporary culture],” in *Wobec nowego ateizmu*, 156–66.

of the religious sense. The only cure for such a spiritual void is the renewal of faith; it is a principled task that must be undertaken with love for one's neighbor and the knowledge that knowing the truth is the fundamental right of the interlocutor.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, Tomáš Halík postulates the transition from self-understanding of the Church as the owner of Christ, truth and faith to understanding it as a community of pilgrims, because being on the way reveals Christ. This is the logic of Easter experiences.<sup>62</sup> As a result, only the Paschal Key is a real proposition of Christians to the world.<sup>63</sup>

For the Church, the primacy of being above activism, maintaining the faith and formation of the reason of faith, reading the signs of the times, and pointing to spiritual evolution, the purpose which is deification, become necessary. In view of the difficulties mentioned above, the priority of preevangelization and evangelization of societies becomes understandable, which must be accompanied by apologetics. Therefore, the rationality of faith cannot be eliminated, although it must be remembered that the main purpose of preaching is to turn to the will of man and focus on experience. Understanding comes with time.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

a) The dialogue between different worldviews is necessary. It is required by the very human nature striving for unity with others, but also by the transformation of the modern world, a specific spiritual crisis of many people, and hence the crisis of human identity, principles, priorities and values. Therefore, it is necessary to talk with one voice about the supermaterial dimension of human life, authentic and sound humanism, the importance of universal values, especially in terms of life, health, respect for one's neighbor, and culture. This includes both the individual and the social dimension.

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<sup>61</sup> [BENEDICT XVI,] "Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Participants in the Plenary Meeting of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Clementine Hall, Friday, 27 January 2012. The Holy See. Benedict XVI. Speeches. Accessed 15 June 2018. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/january/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20120127\\_dottrina-fede.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120127_dottrina-fede.html).

<sup>62</sup> Tomáš HALÍK, *Chrześcijaństwo na dziedzińcu pogan*, 78.

<sup>63</sup> "Luther's mystical tower experience gave rise to a theology of justification on the basis of a trusting faith; what has reminded church's memory from Therese's mystic experiences in the little path as one style of private spirituality, a personal path to spiritual maturity. Hasn't the time come for Therese's spiritual path, and particularly solidarity with unbelievers, to be an inspiration as a hermeneutic key toward new theological reflection on present-day society, its spiritual climate, and the Church's mission at the present time." See Tomáš HALÍK, *Patience with God: The Story of Zacchaeus Continuing In Us* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 36.

b) The Church is called to go towards people who are formally or morally outside its structures. This is due to its very mission, entrusted to it by Christ, but also due to the fact that the Church does not become a marginal group, perceived as a sect, a relic of the past or a formation that limits human freedom. Therefore, it becomes necessary to organize various types of meetings within the “Courtyard of the Gentiles” or “Courtyard of Dialogue.” It is also an opportunity to make sound Christian apologetics, necessary by the very nature of faith (*fides quaerens intellectum*), but also as a confrontation with dogmatic atheism, more and more aggressive towards religion, especially Catholicism. As Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi commented on the initiative of the Cortyard of the Gentiles, “Let us think of the refined epistemological statute of theology as a discipline endowed with its own coherence, of the Christian vision of man elaborated down the centuries, of the investigation of the ultimate themes of life, death and the afterlife, of transcendence and history, of morals and truth, of evil and suffering, of the individual, of love and of freedom; let us think also of the crucial contribution made by the faith to the arts, to culture and to the ethos of the West itself.”<sup>64</sup>

c) The dialogue between believers and non-believers is necessary. It promotes the knowledge of the world and better arrangement of mutual existence in society. For the baptized, however, it is important to focus on evangelization, bearing in mind what John Paul II said in Toronto on August 4, 2002: “The greatest deception, and the deepest source of unhappiness, is the illusion of finding life by excluding God, of finding freedom by excluding moral truths and personal responsibility.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Gianfranco RAVASI, “An ethical position shared by ‘atheists’ like Zinoviev should serve as a model for emulation for true Christians.” Zinoviev. info. Accessed 15 June 2018. <http://zinoviev.info/wps/archives/3010>.

<sup>65</sup> [JOHN PAUL II.] “Apostolic Visit to Toronto, to Ciudad de Guatemala and to Ciudad de México, 17<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day, Solemn Mass, Homily of the Holy Father John Paul II, Toronto, Downsview Park, Sunday July 28, 2002,” The Holy See, John Paul II, Homilies, accessed 15 June 2018. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2002/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_20020728\\_xvii-wyd.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20020728_xvii-wyd.html).

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