

REV. WIESŁAW PRZYGODA

MODELS OF SALVIFIC ACTIVITY OF THE CHURCH. THE STATE OF RESEARCH AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Abstract. The main objective of pastoral theologians is to develop theologically accurate and practically effective models of salvific activity of the Church, known as pastoral care. A pastoral model is a simplified, descriptive, graphical reflection of the whole or a part of the complex salvific activity of the Church, embracing both a normative and practical element of the activity, which makes it possible to analyze and evaluate it, as well as to offer some predictions for the future (N. Hepp). The aim of this article is to present the state of research concerning the current models of salvific activity of the Church within the scope of pastoral theology and to direct us towards a need to develop new models that will take the socio-cultural context into account. Nowadays, we can talk of three such models that have been scientifically discussed on a global scale (the human-divine model by F. X. Arnold, the community model by F. Klostermann, and the preferential option for the poor). It seems, then, that there is a space for a new model of salvific activity of the Church, centered on the principle of love, or alternatively, the model of dialogue.

Key words: pastoral theology; pastoral care model; F. X. Arnold; F. Klostermann; option for the poor; pastoral love.

The main objective of pastoral theologians is to develop theologically accurate and practically effective models of salvific activity of the Church, known as pastoral care. A pastoral model is a simplified, descriptive, graphical reflection of the whole or a part of the complex salvific activity of the Church, embracing both a normative and practical element of the activity, which makes it possible to analyze and evaluate it, as well as to offer some predictions for the future. The aim of such pastoral models is the continuation

Rev. Prof. WIESŁAW PRZYGODA, head of the Department of Social Pastoral Theology in the Institute of Pastoral Theology and Catechetic KUL; address for correspondence: ul. Radziszewskiego 7, 20-039 Lublin; e-mail: przygoda@kul.pl

and extension of their use in the Church service, whereas new models are aimed at being affirmed and brought into the Church. Key factors behind pastoral models are time and space; therefore, there is no place for universal models which would be relevant in all contexts on a permanent basis. Socio-cultural changes and technological development require for pastoral models employed in the pastoral care of the local Churches to be constantly updated. Pastoral models play an important role in developing pastoral theology and in forming the clergy, the consecrated, and secular Catholics.

The aim of this article is to present the state of research concerning the current models of salvific activity of the Church within the scope of pastoral theology and to direct us towards a need to develop new models that will take the socio-cultural context into account. Nowadays, we can talk of three such models that have been scientifically discussed on a global scale (the human-divine model by F. X. Arnold, the community model by F. Klostermann, and the preferential option for the poor). It seems, then, that there is a space for a new model of salvific activity of the Church, centered on the principle of love, or alternatively, the model of dialogue.

1. THE HUMAN-DIVINE MODEL BY FRANZ XAVER ARNOLD

The first universal model of life and salvific activity of the Church was developed by a German preacher of the Tübingen School, Franz Xavier Arnold (d. 1969). He put forward his idea and theory of pastoral care, i.e. pastoral theology based on the human-divine principle, in two works: *Grundsätzliches und Geschichtliches zur Theologie der Seelsorge. Das Prinzip des Gott-menschlichen* (Freiburg, 1949); *Pastoraltheologische Durchblicke. Das Prinzip des Gott-menschlichen und der geschichtliche Weg der Pastoraltheologie* (Freiburg, 1965). F. X. Arnold, referring to the ecclesial theory of A. Graf from the 19th century, deduced the term “pastoral theology” and its subject from the essence of the Church. He claimed that the Church has to carry out a scientific reflection not only over Her past and invariable core, but also over presence, which is a bridge to the future. In his research, Arnold focused on the formation of a formal principle of pastoral theology and pastoral care. In his view, this principle was human-divine in nature. Arnold defined its importance within three aspects:

a) personal aspect touches the principle of a meeting between God and a human being in Christ. In this sense, the salvific activity of the Church

must respect the personal and dialogical structure of the salvific process of the faithful;

b) the principles point to a balance between a divine and human element for the salvific mediation of the Church. Studies performed by Arnold showed that pastoral theology and pastoral care were always faced with the risk of theocentrism or anthropocentrism. Therefore, he made others sensitive to striving for balance between the elements, and he conditioned the development of pastoral theology and pastoral care on the balance;

c) the human-divine principle points to the roots of pastoral care in Christology. This means that Christ, God-Human should be considered a prototype of salvific mediation of the Church. Such a human-divine principle requires pastoral theology to be constantly human-oriented and Christ-oriented.

Franz Xaver Arnold's views on the human-divine principle were subject to a critical analysis by F. Blachnicki. He suggested that the principle should be complemented and replaced by "a personal-Christological principle." The foundation of this principle was an analysis of the salvific process between people and God. The process has a structure of a personal and interpersonal dialog. The principle is formulated by F. Blachnicki in a following formula, "The salvific mediation of the Church must be realized in order to share God in Christ by means of the word and sacrament, and in order to condition the acceptance of God in the Holy Spirit through faith and love for the growth of the Church."

Despite the criticism, the divine-human model of the salvific activity of the Church was applied to pastoral theology and was appreciated by a number of priests. Nowadays none of the theoreticians or pastoral practitioners questions the fact that pastoral care should be of a Christological character, as its main subject is Jesus Christ, the only Savior among people (cf. Acts 4:12; Titus 2:11-14). Through Christ, God made His presence in history in order to unite in Christ (Eph 1:10) all that which was isolated by sin. It was only Christ, true God, and the man, who could unite people with God. Christ redeemed human sins through paschal mysteries. The Church, exemplifying this event in sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, makes Christ redeem the human population till the earthly world ends. We cannot speak about the Son of God without mentioning the Father, who sent Him into this world to redeem the human population (Jn 3:17). A gift from the Holy Father and Son is the Holy Spirit (Jn 15:26), who, being active within the Church, is also a subject of pastoral care.

The Church became present by the Holy Spirit and is constantly improved by Him, updating the salvific activity of Christ. The Holy Spirit protects the word of Jesus Christ against any obstacles and is the author of human sanctification. The missions of Christ and of the Holy Spirit are complementary, leading the salvific history to its full realization during the eschatological times. Therefore, nowadays, the human-divine model of pastoral care should be upgraded by acknowledging the role of the Holy Spirit in salvific mediation. As a result, it is legitimate to talk about a model of pastoral care based on a Trinitarian concept of love.

2. THE COMMUNITY MODEL BY FERDINAND KLOSTERMANN

Ferdinand Klostermann (d.1982), for many years head of the Faculty of Pastoral Theology at the University of Vienna, developed a model of the salvific activity of the Church and pastoral theology based on a universal principle of community. In his flagship work *Prinzip Gemeinde. Gemeinde als Prinzip des kirchlichen Lebens und der Pastoraltheologie als der Theologie dieses Lebens* (Wien, 1965), and in many other publications, Klostermann showed that the Church realized its mission through Christ and that is why its fulfillment in particular communities should be an appropriate subject of pastoral theology and pastoral care.

F. Klostermann was inspired by the ecclesiology of the Tübingen School, as well as by the ruling of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, which present the Church community as the responsibility of all Christians. Although community as an element of life and salvific activity of the Church had been appreciated much earlier, it was Klostermann who put it to the forefront of pastoral theology. Klostermann believed that it is the community that occupies the central place in realization of the Church mission and forms the uniting principle of pastoral theology as the theology of the Church.

By formulating a thesis that the Church either embodies a particular community or does not fulfill its goals, F. Klostermann defined the subject matter of pastoral theology, which is life, development and growth of the Church as a community. Klostermann described the particular elements, structure, rules, and stages of development of a community, basing his research on the New Testament, which shows the life of the first Christian community in Jerusalem. Among the elements shaping the Christian community, F. Klostermann mentioned “God’s Spirit” through which God is present in a community and

which sends divine gifts to humankind, above all the gift of unity and love. The second element of a community is “the Word of God,” which constitutes a community of listeners, and consequently a community of the faithful. The Word of God not only leads to faith, but also to conversion, the metanoia, and Christian testimony. The third element is “the cult of Lord”, the pivotal element of which is the Eucharist, the foundation of any relationship with God and other community members. The fourth constitutive element is “fraternal love,” which is of an ecclesial character. It relies on baptism which makes it possible to enter a fraternal relationship with Christ and other faithful community members. This kind of love is expressed through mutual help and charity, which build and strengthen the community.

The model of pastoral care proposed by F. Klostermann is coherent and consistent. He deduced, in a similar way as A. Graf and F. X. Arnold, the essence, tasks, and structure of pastoral care, as well as pastoral theology out of one principle. The community principle adopted by Klostermann was presented in a lively way, which was accepted by pastoral theologians and priests. What needs to face criticism is an ambiguous presentation of the relationship between an individual and a community when it comes to realization of the mission of the Church. According to Rev. Ryszard Kamiński, an eminent representative of pastoral theology, “F. Klostermann, by choosing a phenomenological description of the Revelation, was not always precise in his phrasing. In this light, his analyses should be complemented with speculative and deductive elements, by presenting the facts rooted in the Trinitarian mystery.”

Despite some critical remarks from pastoral theologians, the community model of life and the salvific activity of the Church developed by F. Klostermann shaped theology and the theological-pastoral thought after the Second Vatican Council. Some documents dated from that time, especially during the time of the pontificate of John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, e.g. *Magisterium Ecclesiae*, supported the view of life and the salvific activity of the Church revolving around the principle of community (*Latin communio*). Both the objective of the activity (*communio in Christo*), and its subject (*tria munera pastorale*), not to mention the subject of pastoral care, are understood in a communal way. Klostermann’s model also led to a deep divide between Church hierarchy and laity that could be observed in the Church and its ministerial service beginning in the Middle Ages (*Codex Gratiani*). Values which dominate in the context of the current socio-cultural reality, at least in the Western civilization, are individualism, subjectivism and specialization. This makes the principle of community less and less popular in

pastoral care, which gradually takes the form of individual counseling, guidance and assistance in religious development of the faithful. Under such circumstances, the salvific activity of the Church seems to be even more adequate and needed than ever.

3. THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR (LIBERATION THEOLOGY)

Liberation theology was brought to life in Latin America in the second half of the 20th century and it has had a lasting effect on the shaping of a model of life and the salvific activity of the Church, especially within the environment of the local Churches. In the Southern American context, a challenge for theology was not related to people losing faith, but rather people not being treated in a fair and humanitarian way. Traditional theology has its origins in the Revelation, and liberation theology hinges on the following assumptions:

a) most of the Latin American population lives in poor conditions and suffers from social injustice; b) the current state of affairs is “a sinful situation,” which is maintained by institutionalized violence together with socio-economic and political factors; c) the practice of liberation was born out of a dramatic situation and an appeal to the conscience of the Christians and the Church to defend those in need. Liberation theology defined a new type of spirituality, its new content, and a new approach toward the sinners and the poor. Contemplation became the source of the practice and service of liberating. Christian love, in a society full of conflicts, became tantamount to solidarity with the oppressed. Hope is a perspective of the advent of the eschatological Church, the liberating value of which could be understood through liberating work. Liberation theology aims to be a theological reflection on the practice of liberation. It strives for a change of the social situation and liberation of people from oppression, violence and injustice.

Liberation theology, thanks to common efforts of both bishops and Latin American theologians, led to the birth of a model of realization of the mission of the Church known as the “preferential option for the poor.” The model came to fruition as a result of the discussion of the ways of overcoming poverty and social injustice in Latin America. It was also shaped by the CELAM General Conferences in Medellin (1968) and Puebla (1979). Its final form was determined by the social documents written by John Paul II

and two pastoral instructions by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith concerning liberation theology (1984 and 1986). The experience of poverty is the testament of value and timeliness of this option in pastoral care. However, its theological value may be understood only along some normative criteria derived from God's Revelation. The pastoral model of the preferential option for the poor raises expectations not only for the faithful, but also for the whole Church, which needs to face the reality and offer adequate pastoral service; She needs to become united and helpful to the poor.

The pastoral model for the poor is also known to Pope Francis. Before he was elected the Pope, he had worked as main editor of the final document at 5th CELAM General Conference in Aparecida in 2007. The document offers an entire chapter devoted to the preferential option for the poor and excluded. It points to biblical and Christological attitudes directed at the poor and calls for a radical change in the general modern attitude towards this group. "Only togetherness, which makes us friends, allows us to deeply appreciate the values of the contemporary poor, their desires and ways of experiencing faith" (sec. 398). In the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis confirmed the privileged place of the poor in the divine community. The Gospel is clear in this regard and does not require dubious explanations. "The Church understands the option for the poor understood as 'a special form of privilege when it comes to the practice of Christian love, attested by the Church traditions'" (EG, 198). Pope Francis borrowed the definition of the option for the poor from John Paul II (SRS, 42), simultaneously stressing the importance of showing love to others. Only disinterested love "differentiates the Christian option for the poor from any other ideology, or any other attempt of using the poor for some private goals" (EG, 199).

Even though the option for the poor started in the context of a burning need to solve the problems of Latin American countries, it is of a universal character, as it relies on some unquestionable theological foundations. It is derived from the divine-human contact. God-sent dignity of the poor, the excluded is at risk. God takes their side and defends them, which is confirmed in the Bible. Therefore, it is also the Church, an heir of the salvific mission started by Jesus Christ, that has to take care of the dignity of the poor. Poverty itself does not contain any positive content. It is like a vessel that needs to be filled with water. Only pastoral care, through modesty and simplicity directed at love of God and fellow human beings, can be effective in this respect. Experiencing the love of Jesus Christ among God's community, and consequently experiencing the love of fellow human beings, seems to be the

most reliable way of evangelization directed not only at the poor and excluded, but also to those who cannot actively participate in the community of love, i.e. the Church. Hence, the option for the poor requires some improvement in the model of life and salvific activity of the Church based on the principle of love.

4. A NEED TO DEVELOP A PASTORAL CARE MODEL CENTERED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE

The abovementioned three models of life and the salvific activity of the Church are not fully adequate to the modern socio-cultural needs that the Church needs to face. The divine-human model of pastoral care developed by F. X. Arnold was designed before the Second Vatican Council and it does not acknowledge many important parameters of the conciliar renovation of the Church, together with its salvific activity. On the one hand, God is present in the Christian life and the salvific service through the Son and the Holy Spirit. God's grace is necessary for salvation. On the other hand, God respects human nature, which reflects God. God's grace does not rule out or limit human rationality, freedom or creativity. Just as God is present and active through the Trinity, so too every individual is a being whose salvation is achieved through an interpersonal dialogue. Therefore, both the Christian life and salvific activity of the Church, which initiates, sustains and improves the life, should take a personal form. It is the form that F. X. Arnold highlighted while presenting the divine-human principle of pastoral care. It should be stated that the principle should be updated by acknowledging the Father and the Holy Spirit in the process of salvation of a particular person and in the process of salvific activity of the Church. Christ the Savior does not work on His own, but He is sent by the Father and lets His will be done. The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son in order to sanctify humanity. That is why the human-divine model should adopt Trinitarian love as its starting point. God is love and it is in this love that all beings are created and it is this love that all beings pursue. Human beings are made to love, and they can learn how to love, how to experience love, and how to offer love to others within the Church. Finally, they can find themselves in the human-divine family of endless and eternal love. The model of pastoral care based on love can help achieve this goal.

The model developed by F. Klostermann is undoubtedly an extension of the model proposed by F. X. Arnold. The Christian life and the salvific activity of the Church are of a social character and are rooted in the Trinitarian community of God and strive for this community. It was this aspect that brought attention of the fathers during the Second Vatican Council, i.e. that God wants to redeem people as a community, not individuals (*Lumen Gentium*, sec. 9). Therefore, the objective of the salvific service is building a community of people with God and His disciples. Klostermann stressed the importance of building a community as a task through which the Church realizes Her mission. However, he did not highlight the significance of the Trinitarian love, evident in the Church through Christ in the Holy Spirit. This aspect of the Christian life and the salvific service is expressed in the pastoral principle of love. What is more, in the light of the era of individualism, opposition to marriage and family and popularity of the culture of singles, the Trinitarian model love should be presented as an example to follow and a source of Christian life.

The practice of liberation, on the other hand, and the correlated option for the poor are strongly interlinked with the Church in Latin America and have never been common in the Church in general. Freedom is a value necessary for the development of Christian life. Christ started His public activity from a call for reformation and liberation from sins. It is a common and still up-to-date pastoral task, which requires building a relationship of love with God's disciples and other people. The objective of salvation is not poverty, but the wealth of life in love with God. The clean vessel of human heart shall be filled in with God's gift of love. Hence, the practice of liberation, even liberation without violence, will not suffice as a model of life and the salvific service of the Church. A critical analysis of the option for the poor leads to the same conclusion-that it is reasonable to develop a new, love-centered model that would be complete and more adequate to the needs of the modern world. Love should be understood here as God's agape and as love realized through human relationships, starting with married couples and finishing with love as a principle of social life. Furthermore, the principle of love expresses continuity of living close to God, eternally, from the moment of baptism, as "love never fails" (1 Cor 13:8). This constitutes the rationale for a love-centered model of the Christian life and the salvific activity of the Church.

The Church does not have any tools for developing civilization of love apart from the Gospel of love, and its experience in the liturgy, especially the liturgy of the Eucharist, and charity. In his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*,

John Paul II put forward a thesis that the human beings are “the only beings that God wanted for themselves” (*Gaudium et Spes*, sec. 24). The image of God and similarity to God, being an intrinsic part of every human being, are the foundations of the dignity of a one-and-only kind (*Redemptor Hominis*, sec. 13). The internal, natural relation between God and Love “makes it impossible for people to live without love. [...] We cannot understand ourselves, our lives are meaningless unless we see Love, we experience it, and make it ours, we participate in it (Ibid., sec. 10). The Church tries to meet this demand as She cannot be indifferent to the threats to the good, and cannot be insensitive to what contributes to the good. That is why, it is the human being, who is “the first and fundamental road to the Church,” together with all the spiritual wealth and bodily needs (Ibid., sec. 14). Twenty centuries of Christianity and 1050 years of Polish history confirm that the Church contributed extensively to the development of culture and civilization of love.

The main objective of pastoral theologians is to develop theologically accurate and practically effective models of the salvific activity of the Church, known as pastoral care. Any model must be linked with real conditions of life within the Church and must meet the religious needs at a given time and place. Currently, bearing in mind the socio-cultural diversity of the religious life within the Church around the world, it is difficult to develop a universal model of pastoral care. What is offered instead are models which are adequate to the religious needs of the faithful within smaller and more close-knit ecclesial communities. It does not rule out a possibility to develop some universal models that could be adjusted to the specific requirements of the spatial and timely contexts. The author of this article claims that a love-centered pastoral model meets the requirements of a universal model.

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