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Cultural Dictate of Christianity

Introduction

At least a few hundreds of definitions attempting to capture the essence of culture reveal the complexity of this phenomenon as well as the multitude and diversity of its perceptions and research perspectives. In very general terms, culture can be described as the entirety of human creations and behaviours, but also a dynamic relation between human 'mentality and action'. Culture may also be perceived as an efficient tool of exclusion. Before, the values of other than the European, and today the Euro-Atlantic origin could not count on cultural recognition. More and more protests against multiculturalism and theses announcing the end of this idea seem to confirm the validity of the model, in which a dominant culture plays an excluding role. But culture can also be discussed as a symbolic order, which we attempt to protect and pass on to next generations to ensure the preservation of our identity. It is in this dimension that the cultural dictate, a dictate of a specific symbolic order seems to be the most conspicuous¹, as the defence of one order usually endangers another.

Culture and its constant transformations, especially at the turn of centuries, is constantly shocking us and triggering either a radical negation of the former, traditional perspectives on the surrounding world, both in the macro- and micro- scale, or a consistent defence of all cultural values destined to be forgotten. These processes are facilitated by the surprising and astonishing pace of changes which worries and amazes the same time. People are either fascinated or completely indifferent to the mass of information and technological changes. Globalisation processes and postmodernist ideas stimulate contemporary culture by generating radically different opinions and adequate attitudes. The very much desired stability is replaced by the ubiquitous category of an innovative

¹ See R. Konersmann, *Filozofia kultury. Wprowadzenie*, Warszawa 2009; in: *Czy klęska wielokulturowości*, H. Mamzer (ed.), Poznań 2008.

change. At the same time order gives way to comprehensible chaos, while all stabilizing systems are subject to the test of programmed deconstruction, accompanied by irony and sarcasm, rebellion and protest, alliance and integration.

The New York tragedy of 9/11, experiences from Iraq and Afghanistan may also be perceived as a shriek of despair of the dominated cultures. These experiences force the humanity not only to reflect, but to radically review the fundamental rules governing the coexistence of different civilisations, values and cultures in the contemporary world. The incessant terrorist and war confrontations seem to become the major way in which the total and imperial western culture associated with dictate, exclusion and arrogance receives the arguments of fundamentalist ideologies. The democratic system and its Talmudic values have not only been attacked, but subjected to a spectacular verification (if not falsification). Have the foundations of the western world, its culture and axiology been shaken? Is democracy triggering destabilisation? Is the anti-globalisation movement uniting all the rejected, defeated and frustrated?

Spasms of the western civilisation and its trauma after 9/11, Iraq and Afghanistan require us to limit our optimism and review the Euro-Atlantic strategy involving economic dictate and cultural hegemony. It is simply impossible to keep implementing it any longer not considering the reasons behind the ideological motivations of both the instigators and the perpetrators of the global act of terror in New York. It is also simply impossible not to review the ideological assumptions of the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan completely. Or we can regard the western culture as the most subtle and ingenious human creation, a tool useful for gaining dominance over others, which is at the same time deprived of humility, tolerance, freedom and equality i.e. the ideas that used to lay its very foundations. The repressiveness of our Euro-Atlantic culture against the rebellious and culturally unsubdued is alarming.

In the Polish reality the phenomenon can be observed in a slightly different dimension and form, but also encourages a deep reflection. People aspiring to contribute to the Polish culture, in fact, constrain us with their intellectual poverty, economic infantilism, political incompetence and both political and doctrinal arrogance. This has been the case of all political factions that wielded power in Poland after 1989 and imposed their own vision of hegemony and eternal happiness.

The multitude of cultural dilemmas, which in their worldwide, regional and local dimension the contemporary human has to face, inspires the reflections that this paper attempts to review and present as the dictate of the Christian culture originating in the ruthless and bloody history of Christianity.

Cultural confrontation in the 20th century

Since the dawn of time, Christianity has always treated culture, on the one hand, purely instrumentally, as a useful tool for the dissemination of religious values and a me-

dium that has to be dominated and subordinated to serve its goals. On the other, it was clear that culture needs special attention and all Christianising experiments conducted with the use of culture had to be carefully crafted to correspond to its special character. The history of Christianity saw these two tendencies existing simultaneously, excluding or fighting one another. However, the strategic goal of these actions has always been (and still is) the attempt to ensure the cultural hegemony of the Church, which makes the Christian culture one of hegemony and dictate.

Pope Leon XIII (1878-1903) started the search for *modus vivendi* between the world and contemporary culture and managed to define the strategy for critical assimilation of culture and its Christianisation. This strategy has been continued by his successors with more or less satisfying results. His immediate successor, Pius X (1903-1914) was too busy fighting with modernism and far from accepting even moderate reformism. His attitude to the world of culture, liberalism, progressive trends in the Church and any social movements with radical inclinations was so negative, that he ruined all the advancements made by his predecessor. The pontificate of Benedict XV (1914-1922) was marked by WWI, the October Revolution in Russia, the fall of monarchy and the rise of parliamentary democracies. This pontificate was, however mostly assessed with reference to WWI fought between Christians, who believing in one God represented different values, interests and attitudes. His pontificate was seen and evaluated from very different perspectives resulting in even mutually exclusive assessments. He was at the same time accused of being a Germanophile by some, and a Francophile by others. The opinions about this pontificate are very much mired in national histories, influenced by stereotypes characteristic of every nation and qualifying the actions of the Pope mostly in line with national interests.

Yet, it must be stressed that his actions were driven by the attempts to keep peace, however unsuccessful they might be. On the positive note, as regards culture, which remains the focus of this paper, with his bull *Providentissima Mater Ecclesia* of 27th May 1917 Benedict XV promulgated the *Code of Canon Law* and on 4th November 1915 extended the scope of the Congregation of Studies created by Sixtus V in 1588 and gave it a new name i.e. the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities of Studies (now Congregation for Catholic Education – *Congregazione per L'Educazione Cattolica*). Such a change sought the harmonisation of Catholic studies and the quality of priests' education after the years of integrism². In 1917 by virtue of *motu proprio Orientis catholici* (15th October 1917) the Pope established the Pontifical Oriental Institute, which ensued after the foundation of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches formed under the provisions of *motu proprio Dei Providentis* (1st May 1917). These decisions reflected the hope that the Eastern churches would return to the Catholic Church.

The Pope accomplished more than that. To a certain extent he also managed to calm the waters inside the Catholic Church ruffled by the attitude of many Catholics

² *Historia Kościoła*, R. Aubert (ed.), V. 5, Warszawa 1985, p. 403.

to modernism. More obsequious biographers of this pontificate have been inclined to claim that the experiences during the WWI and a clear political ostracism of the Vatican (which was excluded from the formation of the League of Nations) makes it a prologue to the programme described by John XXIII as *aggiornamento*. Although, it is not a predominant opinion, such an assessment is at least partially justified by his contribution to the missionary activity of the Church. An encyclical *Maximum illud* announced on 30th November 1919 has been deemed the cornerstone of the contemporary Catholic missiology and earned Benedict XV the title of a 'missionary Pope'.

The attitude of the Church towards culture has been significantly influenced by the encyclical *Divini illius Magistri* issued by Pius XI (1922-1939) at the beginning of the 20th century (31st December 1929). Following the motto *Pax Christi in Regno Christi*, the encyclical proposed a programme 'subordinating all fields of culture to the Church'³ also to ensure a greater impact of faith on upbringing. The Church wished to expand its influence also to the latter by reaching to families, schools and the state to pave the way to its monopoly in culture. The encyclical reads that the Church fully 'supports literature, school and education, as far as they are indispensable or useful for Christian upbringing and the entire Catholic activity – the salvation of souls'⁴. Pius XI convinced of the special mission of the Church in this respect preaches that 'all minds free of prejudice find it impossible to understand any motive that could contradict or hinder Church's interventions in this area'⁵.

Such a focus on upbringing and the expansion of the Catholic education system translating into a greater influence on culture through enculturation i.e. the process of absorbing culture and 'learning' it aimed at preventing deculturation of the catholic cultural system and its partial decomposition under the influence of the 20th century trends. The Church was fully aware that 'cultural molding can serve as a base for influencing people in all remaining domains: religious, moral, social and apostolic'⁶. 'Thus the encyclical reads that 'the new times require a broader and more thorough watch due to increasing dangers of moral and religious downfall awaiting the inexperienced youth in the form of godless and obscene books sold for nothing in a truly devilish fashion'⁷.

In his encyclical, while appreciating the role of the modern mass media, such as the press, radio and television, which 'might benefit education and upbringing' the Pope perceives them also as potential dangers for faith and morality, unless the media are governed by healthy, Christian rules'. Fearing that the cinema, which the Pope believed to be the most influential medium, could escape the Catholic influence, Pius XI issues another encyclical *Vigilanti cura* (29th June 1936). The objective of the document devoted entirely to film was to include the cinema in the integrist system of rules and norms of the

³ M. Nowaczyk, *Kościół wobec kultury*, „Studia Religioznawcze”, 1987, no. 21, p. 175.

⁴ Pius XI, *O chrześcijańskim wychowaniu młodzieży*, Drukarnia Watykańska Polyglotta 1929, p. 8.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ L. Civardi, *Podręcznik Akcji Katolickiej. Praktyka*, Poznań 1935, p. 145.

⁷ Pius XI, *O chrześcijańskim wychowaniu*, op.cit., p. 29.

Christian doctrine, which should in the end guarantee that newly produced films would meet 'completely new demands'⁸. Therefore bishops were now obliged to 'unite in supervising this ubiquitous and powerful educational tool and a leisurely pursuit so that they could openly criticize all films offending religious and moral beliefs and contradicting the spirit of Christianity and its ethical values'⁹.

The encyclical shows how important it was for the Church that no fields of social activity, no sphere of human creativity remained outside the scope of the Catholic influence, especially while the Church was fighting intensely to restore the Catholic way of life. The expansive character of the Vatican's policy in this area had a global dimension. The Church has already actively used the new medium to spread Christianity and the word of God all around the world. It was Pius XI, who in 1929 initiated the first Vatican radio station by consulting with G. Marconi, the father of the radio, the possibility of utilising the new medium for the needs of the Church. Several months later, on 12th February 1931, the Pope broadcast his first radio speech addressed to the world.

Another encyclicals in line with this policy were entitled *Casti connubii* (31st December 1930) and *Quadragesimo anno* (15th May 1931). The former discussed the matters of marriage and family – the integral elements of the Christian system of upbringing, while the latter focused on the Christian concept of socio-economic relations.

The programme, introduced by Pius XI, aimed at shaping the Catholic cultural offer and functioning as an alternative to the secular-liberal culture was continued by Pius XII (1939-1956). This Pope fully appreciated the role of Catholic culture in the life of Christians and its importance in the confrontation with the secular alternative. In his many speeches the Pope commented on almost all cultural domains and creations stressing its vital ancillary role for religion. He also frequently emphasised how important it was to fill culture with Christian values. In *Miranda prorsus* (8th November 1957), the encyclical devoted to film, radio and television, Pius XII openly states that if 'the technological developments in mass media appealing to hearing and vision would not be subject to the 'sweet yoke of Jesus' it may become a source of overwhelming evil'¹⁰.

Saturating culture with Evangelical inspirations remains the major premise behind the cultural programme at that time, the programme that aimed at clericalisation of culture and the multiplication of media-centric patterns. The Church has always been nostalgic about the cultural model prevalent in the Middle Ages, although these dreams have been reflected in reality in various ways, sometimes blatantly contradicting the medieval ideal. These actions aiming at the implementation of the Catholic cultural programme should be presented against a broader scope of the concordat, the missionary activity of the Church, its attitude to liberalism, modernism, communism, socialism, fascism etc. and its approach to and consistency of promotion of the Eucharistic cult. This paper will only

⁸ Pius XI, *Encyklika o należytych użyciu i nadużyciu filmu (Vigilanti cura)*, London 1945, p. 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰ Pius XII, *Encyklika o kinematografii, radiu i telewizji*, Tipografia Polyglotta Vaticana 1957, p. 6-7.

touch upon the missionary activity of the Church, which, as it will be argued, had and still does impact its attitude to culture.

Missionary activity

The effects of the Catholic programme aiming at greater cultural dominance, driven by a strong belief in the superiority of Christian culture over all other cultures, were noticeable mostly in the missionary areas. The first Pope to show caution and understanding for native culture in the missionary areas was Gregory I, better known as Gregory the Great (590-604). In the letter of 18th July 601 addressed to Abbot Mellitius (who was in 604 appointed Bishop of London), Gregory I orders him to advise Augustine, the Bishop of the Angles (later known as Augustine of Canterbury), to handle the native cult and customs wisely. The letter from Gregory I read: 'When Almighty God shall bring you to the most reverend Bishop Augustine, our brother, tell him what I have, after mature deliberation on the affairs of the English, determined upon, namely, that the temples of the idols in that nation ought not to be destroyed, but let the idols that are in them be destroyed; let holy water be made and sprinkled in the said temples – let altars be erected, and relics placed. For if those temples are well built, it is requisite that they be converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God; that the nation, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may remove error from their hearts and, knowing and adoring the true God, may the more familiarly resort to the places to which they have been accustomed. And because they have been used to slaughter many oxen in the sacrifices to devils, some solemnity must be substituted for them on this account, as, for instance, that on the day of the dedication, or of the natiivities of the holy martyrs whose relics are there deposited, they may build themselves huts of the boughs of trees about those churches which have been turned to that use from temples, and celebrate the solemnity with religious feasting (...). For there is no doubt that it is impossible to efface every thing at once from their obdurate minds, because he who endeavours to ascend to the highest place rises by degrees or steps and not by leaps'¹¹.

In another letter addressed to Bishop Augustine also in July 601, Gregory I elaborated more on the issue of rituals and ceremonies to answer Augustine's questions regarding the stance of the Roman Church on other rituals. The letter reads: 'But I approve of your selecting carefully anything you have found that may be more pleasing to Almighty God, whether in the Roman Church or that of Gaul, or in any Church whatever, and introducing in the Church of the Angli, which is as yet new in the faith (...). For we ought not to love things for places, but places for things. Wherefore choose from each several Church such things as are pious, religious, and right, and, collecting them as it were into a bundle, plant them in the minds of the Angli for their use'¹².

¹¹ J. H. Robinson, *Readings in European History*, Ginn & Company 1904, p. 100-101.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

The same Pope, although showing great care about the native culture, was not particularly enthusiastic about school. It became clear in his letter to Desiderius of Vienne, in which he reprimanded the addressee on teaching Latin grammar: "what we cannot mention without shame, that thy Fraternity is in the habit of expounding grammar to certain persons. This thing we took so much amiss, and so strongly disapproved it, that we changed what had been said before into groaning and sadness, since the praises of Christ cannot find room in one mouth with the praises of Jupiter. And consider thyself what a grave and heinous offence it is for bishops to sing what is not becoming even for a religious layman. (...) Whence, if hereafter what has been reported to us should prove evidently to be false, and it should be clear that you do not apply yourself to trifles and secular literature, we shall give thanks to our God, who has not permitted your heart to be stained with the blasphemous praises of the abominable..."¹³.

The suggestions of Gregory I regarding cultural accommodation were not seriously considered by his successors in the years to come. In his *Dilectis Filiis* OFM of 21st March 1245 addressed to the Franciscans embarking on missionary trips, Innocent IV preaches that they should contribute to the eradication of anything that contradicts the holy Christian traditions¹⁴.

Both the policy proposed by Gregory I and the completely opposite line of Innocent IV coexisted until 17th century, which showed especially when the attitude to the cultures of the Far East divided the Church and triggered the adaptation controversy. One of the arguments involved the Jesuit missionaries in India and the Malabar rites (heavily influenced by native traditions). *Omnium sollicitudinum* of 12th September 1744 issued by Benedict XIV closed the two hundred year period of controversies and disputes definitely forbidding the practice of local rites and customs in Catholic churches. Having settled the fundamental issues the Pope asked all bishops and missionaries to spare no effort to eradicate and destroy all traces of the old human and remove all pagan symbols, paintings or images, all shadows and scents of the pagan superstitions¹⁵.

A similar strategy solved the Chinese Rites controversy over the rites accepted by Jesuits and practiced by the local Christians manifested in the worshipping of Confucius and their own ancestors, introducing Chinese terminology to the liturgy, religious instructions and the prayers. On top of that, the Chinese avoided public appearances with Christian religious symbols (as a cross with naked Christ offended their morality). The attitude of Rome to the Chinese experiment changed extensively over time: banned in 1645 by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and the Holy Office the Jesuit ceremonies acknowledging the secular cult of Confucius and the worship of ancestors were temporarily accepted in 1656. In 1659 the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith instructed apostolic vicars arriving in Chinese provinces like

¹³ J. C. Ayer, *A Source Book for Ancient Church History*, C. Scribner's Sons 1922

¹⁴ *Breviarium missionum. Wybór dokumentów Kościoła dotyczących Dzieła Misyjnego*, part. I, Warszawa 1979, p. 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

Tonkin or Cochin not to encourage indigenous people to change their rites, customs and traditions as long as they do not openly contradict the Catholic religion and moral standards. The instructions of 1659 read: 'What would be more absurd than to bring France, Spain, Italy or any other European country to the Chinese? Do not bring to them our countries, but instead bring to them the Faith, a Faith that does not reject or hurt the rites, nor the usages of any people, provided that these are not distasteful, but that instead keeps and protects them'¹⁶. It was also explained that the nature of all human beings tells them to attach the greatest value to their own people and own values and nothing provokes greater hatred and puts off more than others imposing a change of traditions and rites, especially the ones nurtured for centuries. Therefore apostolic vicars were advised never to compare the customs and moralities of the new converts to the ones characteristic of Europe but to get acquainted with the local ones.

This tolerance of other cultures was deemed almost heretical and all disputes relating to the rites controversy were once and for all settled by Benedict XIV, who ultimately ruined all previous Catholic achievements in this area. In papal bull entitled *Ex quo singulari* published on 5th July 1742 he announced all previous permissions null and void and said that their practice should be condemned and considered groundless. Benedict XIV proclaimed the everlasting validity of the bull, in which each and all previous permissions were revoked and nullified, considered without any legal force and effect¹⁷. Similar faith awaited the so-called Jesuit reductions established in Paraguay, Latin America among Guarani peoples¹⁸.

The decisions announced by Benedict XIV in the bulls of 1742 and 1744 ruined all opportunities for the vicars to establish any dialogue or partnership relations with the indigenous peoples in the missionary areas. The Catholic Church became an ally of the colonizers and even too eagerly approved of the rich temporal means in the process of evangelisation of the world. Such unfavourable attitude of the Catholic Church towards other cultures was caused by a belief, common at the time, that religion is relatively independent from culture and that Catholicism as the only true religion is superior to any culture and any civilisation. It followed that no other religions or cultures could be considered on the par with Christianity. Moreover, the belief in superiority of religion over culture did not prevent their mutual relations, especially one of them to be conditioned by the other: the impact of religion on culture was considered a blessing – of course when it was the most valuable and optimal Catholic religion. Thus the tendency to transplant Christianity in the missionary areas and the lack of approval or understanding for any lower, primitive i.e. nonchristian cultures and their values prevailed in the Catholic Church until the beginning of the global trend for decolonisation.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 82-83. See also A. Kurek, *Inkulturation misyjna w Chinach w XVII i XVIII w.*, in: *Inkulturation. Nowe religie*, W. Kowalak (ed.), „Zeszyty Misjologiczne ATK”, V. VII, Warszawa 1986, p. 144-145; F. Zapłata, *Akomodacyjny spór*, w: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, V. 1, Lublin 1973, p. 253-254.

¹⁸ See. E. Lugon, *Chrześcijańska komunistyczna Republika Guaranów*, Warszawa 1971.

The lack of tolerance for any non-Catholic values and culture reflected the social relations of the colonisation period enforcing the idea of dominance over other cultures, which finished only with the end of the 19th century. This period perceived the missionaries following the colonizers in the newly conquered territories as the people who should reinforce the European imperialism with Christianity¹⁹.

The Pope who first realized the limitations of this policy and saw the need to create the *native* Church was Leon XIII (1878-1903). In his letter *Ad extremas orientis oras* issued on 24th June 1893 to celebrate the establishment of priest seminary in Kandy (now Poona) in India, the Pope argued that the dissemination of the Catholic faith amongst the population of India would be unstable and doubtful as long as there were no native clergymen educated to assist foreign priests and handle religious matters on their own²⁰.

The ideas postulating the education of native clergymen are deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition. Such a need was first noticed in the Instructions provided by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith issued in 1659, which disapproved of the then prevalent methods in the Catholic Church. In 1627 Urban VIII (1623-1644) decided to enable the education of clergy among the native population of the missionary areas²¹, and found Urban College with the bull *Immortalis Dei Filius* (1st September 1627). The institution was transformed into the Missionary Institute in 1933 and again into the Pontifical Urbaniana University in 1962. In 1845 after the report by Felix Luquet (later the coadjutor of Pondicherry) prepared for the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, the Congregation issued a detailed instruction (23rd November 1845) obliging all the bishops in missionary locations to encourage autochthonic clergy. The instruction recommended even that they should be delegated to manage the missionary activities²². In his letter *Ad extremas*, Leon XIII commented on the concept of indigenous clergymen alluding to the ideas and arguments already existent in the history of the Catholic Church.

The concept was developed by Benedict XV with reference to the criticism of the colonial Church. He noticed that the experience the Church had gained in the missionary activity so far was not used properly. Neither *Inscrutabilis Divinae Providentias* the constitution issued by Gregory XV on 22nd June 1622 establishing the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, nor the appeals to the Catholic world for the material and moral support of the missionary activity of the Church did not bring satisfactory effects. A white missionary representing and incarnating the Christian culture associated by the indigenous people with colonialism was not always able to overcome the cultural barriers established by Rome. That is why in his apostolic letter *Maximum illud* of 30th

¹⁹ A. Krzesiński, *Problem misji katolickich na dalekim wschodzie*, Poznań 1939, p. 143.

²⁰ Leon XIII, *Ad extremas orientis oras* of 24th June 1893 r., in: *Breviarium missionum*, op.cit., p. 179; A. Krzesiński, *Problem misji katolickich...*, op.cit., p. 138; reports that in the thirties of the total population of the Far East estimated at 952 million, 8.636.019 were Catholic (i.e.0.9 percent).

²¹ See M. Nembro, *Teologia akomodacji misyjnej w świetle Soboru Watykańskiego II*, in: *Kościół na drodze spotkania z Trzecim Światem*, A. Gielata, F. Zapłata (ed.), Warszawa 1971, p. 150.

²² See. M. Horoszewicz, *Pope Leo and India*, "Catholic Herald", of 21st March 1980, p. 4.

November 1919 (deemed the magna carta of the missionary work) Pope Benedict XV emphasized the need of educating and supporting native clergymen, who are 'the greatest hope of the new churches. For the local priest, one with his people by birth, by nature, by his sympathies and his aspirations, is remarkably effective in appealing to their mentality and thus attracting them to the Faith. Far better than anyone else he knows the kind of argument they will listen to, and as a result, he often has easy access to places where a foreign priest would not be tolerated'²³. Thus local priests representing the same culture may help his people to 'absorb the Faith'. Benedict XV warned that 'the local clergy is not to be trained merely to perform the humbler duties of the ministry, acting as the assistants of foreign priests. On the contrary, they must take up God's work as equals, so that some day they will be able to enter upon the spiritual leadership of their people'²⁴. *Maximum illud* was an elaboration on, or even a specification of the ideas presented in *Allorche Fummo*, an apostolic exhortation of 18th July 1915 in which Benedict XV predicted decolonisation. The fall of the colonist system was also noticed by Pius XI in two of his letters *Lo sviluppo* (20th May 1923) and *Ab ipsis* (15th June 1926).

The next step of the Church made in the direction of the gradual retreat and increasing the distance to the colonial system – though one cannot really speak of anticolonialism – was the missionary encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* issued by Pius XI on 22nd February 1926. The document was inspired by the concern about the possible loss of influence among indigenous people in the missionary areas. It reads that the most difficult situation would be when 'the inhabitants of a particular territory, having reached a fairly high degree of civilization and at the same time a corresponding development in civic and social life, and desiring to become free and independent, should drive away from their country the governor, the soldiers, the missionaries of the foreign nation to whose rule they are subject. All this, of course, cannot be done without violence. Everyone can see what great harm would accrue to the Church in that land in the circumstances, unless a native clergy had been spread beforehand throughout the country like a network and were, by consequence, in a position to provide adequately for the population which had been converted to Christ'²⁵.

As a result, in his encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* Pius XI finally states that the proposed policy 'We sincerely wish, nay, We command, shall be followed likewise by the Superiors of all missions, so that it cannot be said that any native youth has ever been kept out of the

²³ *Breviarium missionum*, op.cit., p. 205.

²⁴ *Ibid.* It must be remembered that the process of transferring authority to non-European peoples was significantly delayed. If the first bishops were ordained in 1926 (M. Felinek in W. Kowalaka, *Inkulturacyja...*, op. cit., p. 52 reports that the first Chinese bishop, a Black Friar Lo Wen-Tsao was ordained in 1675, and the first Japanese as late in 1927, two Indians in 1928, a Vietnamese in 1933, while an African in 1518 (not including an episodic case of ordinating the son of the King of Congo). Cardinals of indigenous origins appeared even later e.g. the first Chinese became a cardinal in 1946, Indian in 1953, Indonesian in 1967. The indigenous clergymen in the American Church gained more independence slightly earlier: the first Indian was ordained a bishop in 1912, a Chinese in 1918, two Japanese in 1922. Data provided by M. Horoszewicz.

²⁵ Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, in: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, www.vatican.va [date of access: 20 II 2013].

priesthood and the apostolate, provided, of course, he exhibits the mark of a true vocation and is a young man of genuine promise²⁶. Justifying the needs to educate native clergy – in the case of stronger decolonisation tendencies – the Pope praised the intellectual properties of the indigenous people stating that ‘the inhabitants of those remote regions of the East and of the South frequently are not inferior to us at all, and are capable of holding their own with us, even in mental ability’²⁷ advising at the same time that ‘there should exist no discrimination of any kind between priests, be they European missionaries or natives, there must be no line of demarcation marking one off from the other’²⁸. He also recommended the foundation of native orders, both male and female.

Processes aimed at indigenisation, africanisation and sinicisation started by Pius XI in the twenties of the 20th century cannot, however, be identified with a dialogue or partnership relation between the Church and indigenous cultures. The Church was still predominantly ethnocentric and the maintenance of the Catholic hegemony turned to be more important than allowing indigenous people to the upper strata of the Church hierarchy. The encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* clearly states that since ‘the first ages of Christianity, the especial care and solicitude of the Roman Pontiffs have been directed to the end that they, undeterred by difficulties and obstacles, might spread the light of the Gospel and the benefits of Christian culture and civilization to the peoples who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death’²⁹, and pave the only way to Redemption available for the pagan peoples³⁰ to decrease the number of people ‘all who are still without the Fold’³¹.

The atmosphere of relative understanding and autonomy of nonchristian cultures, albeit only the secular ones, which are no alternative to the Catholic Church started to emerge only in the thirties of the 20th century. The first sign of this trend was seen in the letter *Excellentia Vestra* addressed on 28th May 1935 by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to bishop Gaspais, an apostolic vicar in Kirin, in which the Catholics from Manchuria were officially allowed to participate in the rites worshipping Confucius and in other public ceremonies recommended by the authorities³². The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith made a similar decision regarding Japan and announced it in *Pluries instantanterque* of 26th May 1936. The document permitted Japanese Catholics to partake in state ceremonies around Jinja monuments, in funerals and marriages organised in traditionally Japanese way. The instruction *Plane compertum* issued by the Congregation on 8th December 1939 allowing Catholics to worship Confucius and their ancestors and cancelling the ‘anti-accommodation oath’ obligatory for the missionaries after *Ex quo singulari* issued by Benedict XIV on 11th August 1742 finishes

²⁶ Ibid., p. 247.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 248.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 249.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 235.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 236.

³¹ Ibid., p. 240.

³² Ibid., p. 271.

the period of the Chinese rites controversy. A completely new approach to culture based on a new cultural policy of the Church was first demonstrated by Pius XII, who in 1944 addressed the organizers of the Pontifical Missionary Societies.

The new policy focused on such 'teaching' and 'molding' of the indigenous peoples that they agreed to convert to Christianity, practice Christian rituals and the way of life, at the same time adjusting them to any secular culture, as long as it was 'healthy and pure'³³, which in theory opened completely new opportunities for transculturation³⁴ and deculturation. Announcing the new encyclical *Evangelii praecones* on 2nd June 1951 Pius XII refers to the above message of 1944 and confirms the new rules by discussing them in a broader context of relations between the Church and culture. The encyclical states that the 'Church from the beginning down to our own time has always followed this wise practice: let not the Gospel on being introduced into any new land destroy or extinguish whatever its people possess that is naturally good, just or beautiful. For the Church, when she calls people to a higher culture and a better way of life, under the inspiration of the Christian religion, does not act like one who recklessly cuts down and uproots a thriving forest. No, she grafts a good scion upon the wild stock that it may bear a crop of more delicious fruit (...). [The Church] the Catholic Church has neither scorned nor rejected the pagan philosophies. Instead, after freeing them from error and all contamination she has perfected and completed them by Christian revelation. So likewise the Church has graciously made her own the native art and culture which in some countries is so highly developed. She has carefully encouraged them and has brought them to a point of aesthetic perfection that of themselves they probably would never have attained'³⁵.

In this light it is difficult to agree with the relatively arbitrary opinion of Pius XII that the Church always demonstrated an obsequious attitude to other cultures, as the history of the Catholic Church testifies against it. It may be assumed that the above propositions laid foundations for the cultural programme of the Church, which if respected, could be deemed an attempt to anticipate future fundamental problems for the Church and to determine the optimal framework for their solution.

During the pontificate of Pius XII and on his initiative the Church underwent the so-called deitalianisation and internationalisation at the highest ranks of its hierarchy. At the end of his reign the overseas missionary areas were deoccidentalised i.e. the clergy became increasingly autochthonous and detached from the Western culture.

In his encyclical *Princeps pastorum* (26th November 1959), John XIII, the successor of Pius XII, referred to his own speech addressed to the participants of the second Congress

³³ Ibid., p. 313.

³⁴ Transculturation or contrculturation involves extending the elements of one culture to the other, by means of takeover, borrowing or pressure aiming at the implementation of major changes in the target culture or its complete eradication. Deculturation is based on cultural regression resulting from taking over, borrowing or imposing elements of other culture. The process is also frequently defined as neoculturation. See 'Transkulturacja' [Transculturation], in: *Słownik etnologiczny. Terminy ogólne*, Warszawa 1987, p. 360.

³⁵ Pius XII, *Evangelii praecones*, in Libreria Editrice Vaticana, www.vatican.va [date of access: 20 II 2013].

of Black Writers and Artists that took place in 1959 by stating that the Church 'does not identify itself with any one culture, not even with European and Western civilization, although the history of the Church is closely intertwined with it; for the mission entrusted to the Church pertains chiefly to other matters, that is, to matters which are concerned with religion and the eternal salvation of men. The Church, however, which is so full of youthful vigour and is constantly renewed by the breath of the Holy Spirit, is willing, at all times, to recognize, welcome, and even assimilate anything that redounds to the honour of the human mind and heart, whether or not it originates in parts of the world washed by the Mediterranean Sea, which, from the beginning of time, had been destined by God's Providence to be the cradle of the Church'³⁶.

The discussed pontifical enunciations and documents of Roman dicasteries devoted to the relations between culture and the Church³⁷ clearly suggest a few major conclusions. Firstly, it took the Church relatively long to appreciate the value and significance of indigenous culture and to realize how futile were the attempts to 'baptize' it. Secondly, after countless failures to negate nonchristian cultures driven by very unilateral preferences for the European culture, the Church developed a new idea of its cultural presence in the world expressed in bidirectional assimilation of cultures. On the one hand, it would involve adapting the indigenous culture by the Church, but only to the extent that is feasible and allowed by the doctrine, and on the other, the Christian culture and religion would incarnate into other culture to 'purify' and 'refine' it. Thirdly, at the turn of the 19th and 20th century the Church aspired to ensure its impact on the shape of non-European cultures, which was in reality an attempt to discover new and more effective Christianisation methods. Fourthly, this, only initial draft of the concept would be developed over time and turned into reality. Increasingly detached from the experiences of the colonisation period, the new concept was more oriented at a longer perspective and interested in actions with many respects parallel to the postcolonial strategies of exploratory states. It was achieved mostly thanks to the Second Vatican Council which rightfully placed culture and the newly created theology of culture (with its new institutions) in the Catholic doctrine and emphasized their leading role in evangelisation – not of particular Churches, but on the global scale.

Attitude to Judaism

The relation between the Catholic Church and Judaism confirms the cultural dictate of Christianity. Already in the first centuries of Christianity Paul the Apostle allegedly warned the Thessalonians about Jews, accusing them of being unkind to God and of acting against all people. This event, however, was reported much later and bears the traces

³⁶ John XIII, *Princeps pastorum*, in Libreria Editrice Vaticana, www.vatican.va [date of access: 20 II 2013].

³⁷ For more information on missionary issues see: *Księga Pamiątkowa Międzynarodowego Akademickiego Kongresu Misyjnego* (Poznań, 28 IX 1927), Poznań 1928.

of the atmosphere of the 3rd and the 4th century created also by Origen, who claimed that Jews experienced misfortune as they committed the worst of crimes against the Saviour of humanity³⁸. The dissemination of Anti-Judaism contributed to the spread of contempt. The growing number of ghettos or customary slaps in the face aimed at Jews during Easter, as well as other forms of wrongdoing in Christian Europe, makes Christian anti-Semitism an undisputable fact. It developed spontaneously in its own religious environment inspired only to a limited extent by pagan anti-Semitism. Thus it may be considered a major support – though subconscious and unintended – to different later or parallel forms of anti-Semitism descending from, after all, Christian Europe³⁹ reflected in discrediting verses of the *New Testament*.

Starting from the 4th and the 5th century Christian culture armed itself with a peculiar ideological arsenal aimed against the Jews. They were pictured as demonic and cursed murderers of the prophets, the killers of gods and Christ. Even Jewish prayers and psalms were slandered and compared to grunting pigs and roaring donkeys⁴⁰. One of the most characteristic traits of this theological attack on Jews was the exploitation of the decide myth. For sixteen centuries it became a vital element of a comprehensive campaign focused on promoting contempt for the Jews and made it impossible for them to acquire Christian slaves (as of 384). In the end, the Jews gave up farming even in Palestine. All these measures laid foundations to Jewish pogroms.

The period between 11th to 16th centuries will be remembered mostly as the time of persecutions, ghettos, badges, absurd accusations, pogroms and mass executions. Jewish economic successes had an effect on the scale of the persecution. Jews respected the doctrines of rabbinic Judaism and treated it as a gospel of work utilising all God's gifts in an optimal way and perceiving wealth as a conspicuous sign of God's blessing.

The Papal State introduced badges for Jews, which were obligatory from 1257 to 1793. Men were supposed to wear yellow circles on their clothes (later a yellow hat), while two blue stripes on a veil were an obligatory element for women (later a yellow kerchief). At the beginning of the 15th century, the Church banned any regular contacts between Christians and Jews and forbid representatives of the two denominations to live together. The 16th century saw the demarcation of specifically Jewish districts – ghettos. In Papal Rome a ghetto was established in 1555 by the bull *Cum nimis absurdum* (14th July 1555), where Paul IV ordered that in Rome and other cities in the Papal States the Jews live separately from Christians, in designated districts or streets with only one entrance and one exit. Only one synagogue was allowed in the city⁴¹. The 13th century started a series of banishments of the Jews from European countries such as England (1290), France (1306), and Spain (1492). Pursuant to papal order Talmud was first publicly burnt

³⁸ M. Horoszewicz, *Przez dwa milenia do rzymskiej synagogi. Szkice o ewolucji postawy Kościoła katolickiego wobec Żydów i judaizmu*, Warszawa 2001, p. 59.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

in 1322, and later in 1553. The period between the 16th and 20th century saw a full spectrum confrontations between the Jews and Christians from stake burns, ostracism (caused by the Jews' unwillingness to convert to Christianity and accept the Christian God) to relative kindness that started with the pontificate of Benedict XV.

The war started Shoah, accompanied by a long period of silence in the Holy See, which, according to Horoszewicz, received at least two hundred different supplications relating the discrimination of Jews⁴². Today, years after the discreditable silence, the Holy See is still reluctant to show humility and explains that it has already commented on the defence of Jews and sees no point in doing that again. It provides a number of reasons that prevented any intervention, such as claims that all reports at this time were treated very suspiciously, or that any protest would only deteriorate the situation of the persecuted. Finally, the current and prospective situation of the German Catholicism had to be considered⁴³. The negligence of the Pope in this respect was far greater. When 1259 Jews were taken in Rome on 15th October 1943, the Pope did nothing to save them from the transfer to Auschwitz.

Even though John Paul II put much effort in improving the relations between the Catholic Church and the Jews, but the contemporary Church has still not delivered any proper analysis and reliable explanations of the sixteen centuries of contempt and humiliation of the elder brethren in faith. Anti-Semitism stems from Christian culture and this fact cannot be disregarded, deliberately or not, in the evaluation and analysis of its different incarnations in the contemporary world.

* * *

The Church has significantly changed its approach to culture since Vaticanum II and especially under the influence of John Paul II. Culture is now perceived as an autonomous area requiring special care and action. The Church has started to fight for culture clearly trying to reach not only to the 'culture of the future' but also to all existent cultures and infuse them with Gospel. Cardinal P. Poupard claims that the Church should prepare to the full confrontation of culture and science⁴⁴.

The hegemonic tendencies illustrating the attitude of the Church to culture in historical perspective, disclosing not always glorious actions, far from declarations of dialogue are still present in Catholic theory and practice aiming at salvation. They still determine the Churches' stance on culture and reveal the size of Christian ethnocentrism and its cultural dictate. It becomes even stronger with every signal from the world indicating distance and reluctance to the alleged superiority of the Christian culture over other cultures.

⁴² Ibid., p. 235.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 237-238.

⁴⁴ P. Poupard, *Wiara i kultura*, "L'Osservatore Romano", 1994, no. 9-10, p. 36 (in Polish).