

EWA STACHOWSKA
University of Warsaw
Institute of Social Prevention and Resocialisation
ZBIGNIEW STACHOWSKI
University of Rzeszów
Interfaculty Institute of Philosophy

Between religiosity and new spirituality, or a postmodern religious and cultural *mainstream*

The contemporary discourse in which one attempts to describe and define both spirituality and religiosity, is enmeshed in many cultural, philosophical and religious contexts, revealing a full range of diverse interpretations, schools and trends, as well as “irrefutable” assumptions, rules or canonical assertions that one would want to be respected and acknowledged by the spokespersons of these stances. Taking the Euro-Atlantic culture into consideration, the manner in which these issues are now understood and interpreted was undoubtedly influenced by the ideas of both Greek and Roman philosophy, as well as by the doctrine of Christianity, which in its peculiar manner developed and established the understanding of the categories of “spirit” and “spirituality” in our culture, especially with regard to Christian spirituality.

Contemporary science, which does not distance itself from describing and interpreting these categories, more willingly refers to the concept of human nature, taking up the effort to agree on and regulate the relations between nature and culture in the field of the theory of evolution¹, simultaneously disregarding spirituality. Prof. Tadeusz Bielicki, a biologist, during his lecture delivered in 2004 at the 102nd Session of the General Assembly of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), entitled *O pewnych niesamowitych właściwościach człowieka jako gatunku*² (*On some extraordinary properties of humans as a species*), specified four peculiarities of *homo sapiens*, which in his opinion entail some consequences for our world view (in fact, the list of peculiarities is considerably longer) and, as a matter of fact, exclude the need to refer to divine intervention when explaining the issue of hu-

¹ See: S. Pinker, *Tabula rasa. Spory o naturę ludzką*, Gdańsk 2005.

² See: T. Bielicki, *O pewnych niesamowitych właściwościach człowieka jako gatunku*, “Nauka”, 2004, no. 1, pp. 57-63.

manity. These are: "the system of communication", that is, articulate speech; the cognitive power of the mind; self-awareness, understood as "the ability to contemplate one's own existence", including one's own end; and finally, "the ability to refuse obedience to the so-called rule of maximising one's Darwinian fitness"³.

Elucidating the human peculiarity related to self-awareness, the author explains that the problem is that "in the representations and actions of humans a new and completely super-animal sphere of *sacrum* appears: the faith that the natural, everyday world order has been deeply permeated by some underlying supernatural order, in which deities or demons, or even some non-personified cosmic forces are active"⁴, which one can influence by using some magical and religious practices. Prof. T. Bielicki adds that the sphere of the *sacrum* has always accompanied humankind since "the dawn of the Palaeolithic period"⁵, i.e. since about 1 million years BC.

If one accepts this interpretation of "self-awareness" as a peculiarity that distinguishes humans from other living organisms, it befits one to agree that it concerns a broadly defined contemplative sphere related to human existence. Therefore, "spirituality", including "Christian spirituality", is an extraordinarily dynamic process that refers to our existence, both individual and collective, and changes as radically as our reality, in which we exist, changes itself.

The most general relations and patterns between the new spirituality and religiosity understood in the traditional manner, which are outlined in this article, attempt to show the dynamism and changeability of our contemporary references to what contributes to human existence at present. The traditional Christian spirituality, which prefers a contemplative life related to a flight from the world and its problems into the sphere of mysticism and the calm of cloisters or sanctuaries⁶, is now being supplanted by an impetuous manifestation of expression, as well as by the exhibitionism of feelings and emotions. The sociological research and surveys presented in the current article show the most general framework of this phenomenon.

The main trends of transformations taking place in the contemporary sphere of culture and religion are related to the consequences of the influence of secularisation, pluralism, individualisation and privatisation, as well as commercialisation and consumerism, which both abate the role of traditional religious systems and deconstruct the traditional division of sociocultural space into the *sacrum* and the *profanum*. This is because the forms of religious manifestation and the scope of significance of religion with its institutional, as well as axio-normative correlates in social systems, undergo changes, and thus a relativisation of the traditional structures of credibility takes place. Therefore, contemporary believers cease to perceive religion as an unchangeable and generally applicable rule that legitimises the sphere of their lives and experience. Instead,

³ Ibidem, pp. 58-60.

⁴ Ibidem, pp. 59-60.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 60.

⁶ L. Boriello, G. della Croce, B. Secondin, *Duchowość chrześcijańska czasów współczesnych*, vol. VI, Kraków 1998.

religion becomes an element of choice that can possibly inscribe itself – in a more or less explicit manner – into the offer, or palette, of different lifestyles.

Trends related to secularisation, namely, the manifestations of the abatement of the influence and significance of traditional religious systems, mainly (though not exclusively) in their institutional dimension, can be seen particularly in Europe, where the individualisation of preferences in the sphere of the *sacrum* is quite explicitly marked. This is because not only do affiliation and practices become subject to choice, but also selectiveness and subjective liking interfere with the dimension of beliefs. These processes can be exemplified by the European Values Study data from 1999/2000 and 2008 for selected countries, concerning practices and faith⁷. Weekly religious practices in Europe take extraordinarily diverse forms because they have been shaped from a rather symbolic level. Let us take, for instance, Denmark (2.6%), Sweden (4.9%), Finland (4.3%), Estonia (4.3%), Bulgaria (5.6%), Russia (5.9%), Latvia (6.2%), Germany (6.4%), Belarus (6.8%), France (6.9%), the Czech Republic (8.9%) or Belgium (10%), to moderate forms in such countries as Slovenia (17.7%), Spain (18.5%), Greece (21.1%), Romania (30.3%), and Portugal (32.3%), to the significant forms of activity present in the following countries: Slovakia (40%), Northern Ireland (44.7%), Ireland (44.3%), and Poland (52.7%)⁸. A downward trend can be observed in the majority of the analysed countries with respect to the years mentioned above. However, this trend is of a non-uniform character. There are countries where these declines take an insignificant form, as is the case with: Lithuania, where 14.6% of respondents declared participation in weekly practices in 1999 compared to 12.3% in 2008, or with Hungary, where the following distribution of answers was observed: 10.6% in 1999 and 8.4% in 2008, or with the United Kingdom: 14.5% in 1999 and 13.3% in 2008⁹. In other countries, however, the dynamics of the abatement of the level of “interest” expressed in the regular form of religious activity is somewhat higher, which can be exemplified by such countries as: Luxembourg, where 20% of respondents declared participation in weekly religious practices in 1999 compared to 10.5% in 2008, that is, a decline of 9.5 pp; Belgium, where the proportion of persons taking part in this form of activity looked in the following manner: 18.7% in 1999 and 10% in 2008 (-8.7 pp); Italy, where the distribution of declarations was as follows: 40.5% in 1999 and 32% in 2008 (-8.5 pp); Austria: 22.9% in 1999 and 15.9% in 2008 (-7 pp); and Poland – 59.2% and 52.7% respectively (-6.5 pp) or Ireland, where changes in this respect seem particularly visible, for

⁷ The following countries were taken into consideration in the analysis: Austria, Belgium, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Greece, Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Hungary, the United Kingdom, and Italy.

⁸ European Values Study 1999/2000 and 2008, source: www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu, ZACAT database. The comparison involved totalling the answers “several times a week” and “once a week” and using data that disregarded the answer “I do not know”. All answers were totalled.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

the percentage of practising believers in 1999 amounted to 65.4%, whereas in 2008 it dropped to 44.3%, which means a decline of 21.1 pp¹⁰.

Transformations taking place in the sphere of the *sacrum* of the lives of Europeans include – what has already been indicated – both the trends of distancing oneself from religious institutions in the sphere of practice and the trends that are brought to light in the realm of convictions, where the abatement of certain religious ideas or content becomes increasingly clear. This is because a decline in the faith in God can be observed, which is more typical of the countries of Western rather than Eastern Europe. The above can be exemplified by such countries as: Belgium, where this declaration dropped by 11.5 pp, for 71.9% of respondents who declared their faith in God in 1999 compared to 60.4% in 2008; Finland (80.9% in 1999 and 69.6% in 2008); Spain (86.7% in 1999 and 78% in 2008); Austria (87.4% in 1999 and 79.6% in 2008); Luxembourg (72.8% in 1999 and 65.9% in 2008); and Germany (54% in 1999 and 47.1% in 2008)¹¹. A similar trend occurs in the case of declarations concerning the faith in life after death, for in the majority of countries a downward trend is visible, which, admittedly not being as significant as the one indicated with reference to the faith in God, defines the nature of the transformations taking place in Europe¹².

The declining power of the influence of the religion of Christian provenance – especially in its institutional dimension – is also marked in the fundamental element of this tradition, that is, the one concerning the very concept of God. This is because a downward trend within the scope of declarations expressing the faith in a personal God is visible in the majority of the analysed countries¹³, where an increase in the faith in a supernatural power can simultaneously be observed. This trend indicates that although a significant percentage of Europeans declare their faith in God, they reject the Christian concept in favour of some supernatural power or transcendence.

Selectively presented data indicate the abatement of the significance of religious institutions in Europe, which manifests itself both in the realm of dechurching measured

¹⁰ European Values Study 1999/2000, European Values Study 2008, source: *ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibidem.* The scope of changes observed in the declarations concerning the faith in God is rather diverse, for some manifestations of upward trends are also visible, apart from the downward trend indicated above. Let us take the example of Bulgaria, where this conviction was expressed by 65.6% of respondents in 1999, whereas in 2008 this proportion increased to 76%, or Russia, where the distribution of answers was as follows: 71.3% in 1999 and 78.8% in 2008. *Ibidem.*

¹² Some of the countries where a significant difference in the level of declarations occurred in the years mentioned above, are: Croatia (67.7% in 1999 and 59.3% in 2008); Ireland (81.8% in 1999 and 74.2% in 2008); Lithuania (76.3% in 1999 and 69% in 2008); Luxembourg (53.5% in 1999 and 47.7% in 2008); Finland (55% in 1999 and 49.6% in 2008); and the United Kingdom (59.9% in 1999 and 54.7% in 2008). *Ibid.* At the same time, in the majority of the analysed countries it is possible to observe an upward trend in declarations concerning the faith in heaven and hell. On the other hand, the countries where a decline in the faith in all the mentioned respects occurred are: Croatia, Finland, Spain, Luxembourg, Ireland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. See: *ibidem.*

¹³ Some of the countries where a significant difference in declarations related to the faith in a personal God occurred, are: Belarus (63.6% in 1999 and 26.1% in 2008), Germany (29.8% in 1999 and 17.9% in 2008), and Italy (70.7% in 1999 and 60.6% in 2008). See: *ibidem.*

with the rates of participation in religious practices and in the realm of transformations in the sphere of beliefs. Therefore, religious institutions lose their ability to control the attitudes of believers, who introduce free choice, private preferences and individualistic orientation, disregarding the traditional models of conduct and ideas to the aspect of their lives and experience related to the sphere of the *sacrum*. As a result, the European religious landscape appears secularised: traditional religious systems have ceased to maintain the same status of universal and generally applicable semantic systems as they used to have, thus becoming symbolic resources, from which individuals can draw their inspiration for private, and often idiosyncratic, eschatological projects if need be. In spite of these transformations that attest to a significant slump in the monopoly that religious institutions used to have on distributing content related to the sphere of the *sacrum*, as well as on the models of beliefs and conduct, Europe appears a place of spiritual sensitiveness and spiritual search¹⁴.

In the context of the indicated trends that are present in Europe, the nature of the cultural and religious aspect of the USA is slightly different, for it seems impervious, to some extent, to the influences of secularisation. After all, it appears to be extraordinarily dynamic and animate. This is because not only do American religious institutions take up various initiatives and activities aimed at awakening the spiritual needs of believers, as well as their activity and commitment to the sphere of the *sacrum*, which can be particularly exemplified by the strategies adopted by the so-called mega-churches, but also the historically shaped model of the presence of the sphere of the *sacrum* in the public dimension of life, that is, of the so-called civic religion, determines – as one may suppose – a canon of religiosity different from the European one and, what follows, the nature of the convictions and conduct of believers as well. After all, nearly half of the American society (46%) acknowledges the creationist interpretation of the origin of humankind¹⁵, almost one third of them (30%) interpret the Bible literally¹⁶, and 40% describe themselves as highly religious persons¹⁷. Moreover, the significantly pluralised

¹⁴ This is because an interest in the issue of the supernatural or spirituality is noticeable in the majority of countries, whereas this trend seems more explicit in Eastern rather than Western Europe. See: EVS data from 2008.

¹⁵ See: F. Newport, In U.S., 46% Hold a Creationist View of Human Origins, 1 June 2012, www.gallup.com. In this survey, respondents were offered the following alternatives apart from the creationist concept of the origin of humankind: "humanity evolved with the help of God", which was declared by 32% of respondents, and "humanity evolved without the participation of God" (15%). This question has been asked since 1982, when the distribution of declarations among particular approaches was as follows: the creationist vision – 44%, evolution with the participation of God – 38%, and evolution without the help of God – 9%. Cf. *ibidem*.

¹⁶ J. M. Jones, In U.S., 3 in 10 Say They Take the Bible Literally, 8 July 2011, www.gallup.com. The highest percentage of declarations of this type was observed in 1980 and 1984, amounting to 40%, whereas the lowest one occurred in 2001, when 27% of respondents interpreted the Bible literally. Furthermore, 49% of respondents deemed the Bible a collection of legends in 2011. Cf. *ibid*.

¹⁷ See: F. Newport, Seven in 10 Americans Are Very or Moderately Religious, 4 December 2012, source: www.gallup.com.

religious sphere, with its market orientation of religious entities, stimulates the believers' conduct and in so doing it determines the specific character of the American religiosity¹⁸.

In spite of the American society being rather significantly saturated with the elements of the sphere of the *sacrum*, which implicates its perception as being extraordinarily awakened or religiously committed, some changes taking place in this sphere can, nevertheless, be noticed after all. This is because, according to the data collected by the Pew Research Center, the percentage of persons declaring their affiliation to various churches and denominations of Christian provenance is dropping, but the proportion of declarations expressing lack of affiliation, within the scope of which atheists and agnostics are included among others, is rising at the same time¹⁹. In 2007, an affiliation to Christianity was declared by 78% of respondents, whereas in 2012 this proportion was 73%²⁰. This downward trend is more typical of Protestantism than of Roman Catholicism, for the Protestants constituted 53% of the society in 2007 and 48% in 2012, whereas Roman Catholics constituted 23% and 22% respectively²¹. In the same period, the percentage of "the unaffiliated" increased by 4.3 pp, for it amounted to 15.5% in 2007, whereas in 2012 it was 19.6%²². In addition, the defining factor for the changes taking place in the sphere of religion in the USA can be the increase in the percentage of non-practising or

¹⁸ See: R. Stark, W. S. Bainbridge, *Teoria religii*, Kraków 2000; R. Stark, R. Finke, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990. Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*, New Brunswick – New Jersey 2000; R. Stark, R. Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*, Berkeley – Los Angeles 2000; R. Stark, R. Finke, L. R. Iannaccone, *Deregulating Religion: The Economics of Church and State*, "Economic Inquiry", 1997, vol. 35, pp. 350-364.

¹⁹ The Pew Research Center introduced the category of the unaffiliated, or, to put it more precisely, of the religiously unaffiliated as being more accurate and adequate for the American requirements than the category of "nones", which was traditionally used in the research. Cf. "Nones" on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation, 9 October 2012, Pew Research Center, p. 7, www.pewforum.org (accessed 4 November 2012).

²⁰ See: *ibid.*, p. 13.

²¹ See: *ibid.* Although the level of declared affiliation to Roman Catholicism in the USA is stable, the dynamics inside this denomination is slightly different compared to Protestantism. This is because in 2007 Roman Catholicism was the religion of birth for 31.4% of respondents, whereas 23.9% declared their affiliation to this denomination. The percentage of conversion to this denomination was 2.6%, whereas 10.1% of respondents left Roman Catholicism. In the case of Protestantism, one can observe a slightly higher evangelising efficiency, for it was the religion of birth for 53.9% of respondents and 51.3% of respondents declared their affiliation to this denomination. The percentage of conversion to Protestantism amounted to 8.4% and 11% of respondents abandoned this religious tradition. See: U.S. Religious Landscape Survey – Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic, February 2008, pp. 23-26, source: www.pewforum.org. In addition, descent is the factor that differentiates these two denominations, for among the immigrants – mainly the ones coming from Latin America – 46% declare their affiliation to Roman Catholicism and 24% to Protestantism respectively (*ibid.*, p. 19), which, at least partially, determines the ethnic structures of both religious traditions. This is because in 2006 Latinos used to constitute 67.6% in Roman Catholicism and 19.6% in Protestantism. Cf. *Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion*, 2007, p. 7, source: www.pewforum.org; U.S. Religious Landscape Survey – Religious Affiliation: Diverse and Dynamic, *op. cit.*

²² See: "Nones" on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation, *op. cit.*, p. 13. The research conducted by the Gallup Organization shows a similar trend within the scope of the increase in the percentage of unaffiliated persons. This is because in 2008 14.6% of respondents declared their lack of affiliation compared to 17.8% in 2012. Cf. In U.S., Rise in Religious "Nones" Slows in 2012, www.gallup.com.

incidentally practising persons, for there were 25% of such declarations in 2003 compared to 29% in 2012²³. Furthermore, the level of declarations expressing the conviction of certainty, or, to put it more precisely, of the lack of doubts as to the existence of God, is dropping, for 88% of respondents agreed on such a statement in 1987, but this percentage was 80% in 2012²⁴.

Selectively presented data reveal that the quite impetuous and dynamic religious sphere in the USA, which somewhat traditionally used to escape the influences identified as the consequences of secularisation, especially compared to Europe, is marked by symptoms of distancing oneself from religious institutions and some slight signs of an abatement of certain convictions appear there as well. Moreover, the percentage of persons who do not consider religion an important part of their lives has increased since 1952, for such declarations reached the level of 5% in the said year, whereas in 2011 this proportion was 19%²⁵. At the same time, the level of declarations expressing a conviction that religion is a very important part of life has decreased considerably since the 1950s (by 20 pp), for such an opinion was expressed by 75% of respondents in 1952 compared to 55% in 2011²⁶.

The abatement of both the influence and the role of institutional religion opens up – or it is assumed to do so at least – the space for the development of spirituality, or rather new spirituality or holistic spirituality²⁷, the distinctive features of which are the affirmation of ideas and axiologies that present-day culture interferes with, where individualism, a democratic character and tolerance are nurtured alongside self-fulfilment and the care for one's own needs, but also alongside a particular care for the sphere of experience²⁸. Postmodern culture thus legitimises a privatised formula for defining or determining the strategies to achieve happiness, also including the creation of destiny and possible projects that substitute traditional eschatology. In this context, the new spirituality appears to be coherent with the mainstream of postmodern culture, where individualistic orientation favours the search for sources of pleasure, satisfaction and contentment, as well as for harmony and self-improvement.

In spite of this coherence indicated above, however, the new spirituality seems to be a trend *in statu nascendi*, which is particularly visible in America, where the percentage

²³ See: "Nones" on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation, op. cit., p. 17.

²⁴ See: *ibid.*, p. 18. Although the faith in God or in a supernatural power is kept at a high level in the USA, a slight downward trend can also be observed in this respect. This can be exemplified by the research conducted by the Gallup Organization, according to which 96% of respondents declared their faith in God in 1944 compared to 92% in 2011. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, the percentage of such declarations was slightly higher, amounting to 98%. Since the beginning of the 1970s onwards, the research has included a question taking the faith in God or in a supernatural power into consideration. As a result, the percentage of such declarations in 1976 amounted to 94% compared to 91% in 2011. F. Newport, More Than 9 in 10 Americans Continue to Believe in God, www.gallup.com

²⁵ F. Newport, *Christianity Remains Dominant Religion in the United States*, 23 December 2011, source: www.gallup.com.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ See: K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp, *A Sociology of Spirituality*, Aldershot 2007, p. 6.

²⁸ See: *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

of persons identifying themselves as spiritual is slightly higher than that of persons who are indifferent to transcendence or even sceptical about it. In 2012, 65% of respondents described themselves as religious, 18% – as spiritual, and 15% – as indifferent²⁹. Spirituality is more often a distinctive feature of persons who do not describe themselves as affiliated to any Church or denomination than of affiliated persons, for 37% among this first group have described themselves as the “spiritual irreligious” and 42% have taken an indifferent attitude³⁰.

In addition, that part of the population identifying themselves as the “spiritual irreligious” shows some influences of the religious traditions, for these persons pray – 44% of them make it every day or more frequently, they believe in God or in a supernatural power (92%)³¹, are practising believers – 19% do it on a regular basis (once a week or more frequently)³², and 31% of them consider religion as very important³³. In the case of respondents describing themselves as religious, this kind of conduct seems to be a relatively integral element of the declared attitude, for the majority of them (52%) take part in weekly practices, 73% pray every day, almost all of them believe in God or in a supernatural power and 78% state that religion is very important³⁴. In this context, one could ascertain that although spirituality seems to elastically to inscribe itself in the postmodern sphere of religion and culture, it is rather difficult to treat it as fully independent from religion³⁵. Moreover, it seems to be slightly eclectic or intertextual, similarly to the religiosity of Americans after all³⁶, which appears to be a spectacular manifestation of the expectations of believers and simultaneously an emanation of the search in this respect. Indeed, the new spirituality, together with diverse quasi-religious manifestations, clearly correspond with the essence of postmodernity. However, they also reveal the spectacular, or even paradoxical nature of the transformations taking place at the moment³⁷. This is because postmodernity favours secularisation – and thus abates the role and the ability of religious institutions to control the dimension of needs identified as being related to the sphere of the *sacrum* – simultaneously supporting itself by the “axiology of consumption” and the pantheon of commercial idols and brands, which many people still perceive as insufficient, for they are only – or as much as – a reminiscence of ingredients coming from the sphere of the *sacrum*. Therefore, the trends of postmodernity have contributed to the erosion of traditional religious systems, yet simu-

²⁹ See: “Nones” on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation, op. cit., p. 43.

³⁰ See: *ibid.*

³¹ See: *ibid.*, pp. 43 and 77.

³² Participation in the practices on an irregular basis is declared by 34% of respondents and the proportion of respondents who never take part in these practices amounts to 47%. See: *ibid.*

³³ See: *ibid.*

³⁴ See: *ibid.*

³⁵ See: R. Stark, *What Americans Really Believe*, Waco 2008, p. 93.

³⁶ On the topic of eclectic preferences in the sphere of religion among Americans, see: Many Americans Mix Multiple Faiths, 9 December 2009, www.pewforum.org

³⁷ See: K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp, *A Sociology of Spirituality*, op. cit., pp. 2-4.

Itaneously release the potential of unsatisfied needs, which have been freed from the supremacy of the influences of religion and have begun the search for fulfilment in the trend of a new spirituality. What remains open to discussion, however, is the question of whether the new spirituality, together with its immanent attributes of eclecticism and the apotheosis of individualism, has sufficient instrumentation at its disposal in a substantial enough dimension so as to allow it to integrate the awakened epistemological expectations, aspirations and desires. Today, it appears as an attractive emblem of the postmodern era, where it is more likely to assume the form of "cultural commercialism"³⁸ or the production typical of pop culture rather than of a structured construct inscribing itself into the realm of the humanistic search for the sense and meaning.

* * *

The transformations of religiosity in the Christian world, which have been indicated in this article, herald the eclipse of the traditional model of spirituality, which until very recently has had a preference for prayer, asceticism, perfection, virtue, grace, deep faith, etc. Obviously, there are also other dimensions of this crisis, for we have observed a drop in the vocation for both priesthood and religious order for years. Some religious congregations, both monasteries and convents, "live out their days", the believers' distance towards the institutional Church grows, and faith is influenced by the so-called privatisation. The phenomena that are held responsible for this are: the processes of globalisation, rampant narcissism, scepticism, the promotion of collective illusions, and postmodernity, as well as the lack of prospects and hope.

Having analysed this situation, together with the symptoms of the secularising world, which also manifests itself in the form of the so-called new spirituality, Catholic intellectuals ascertain the following without any reservations: "The mission of the Church is to annihilate any human project – including knowledge itself as well – that bestows upon itself the meaning of ultimate messianism, simultaneously noticing every positive contribution made by these projects. This is because salvation has been contained rather in a promise and prophecy than in the very management or in the syntheses developed by other cultural contexts"³⁹.

This stance, decidedly distancing itself from what we refer to as the "new spirituality", indicates that culture will continue to be a sphere of confrontation and rivalry between various concepts of salvation and various meanings of existence, simultaneously and consistently appearing as an implication of human self-awareness.

³⁸ M. F. Brown, *The Channeling Zone: American Spirituality in an Anxious Age*, Cambridge 1997, as cited in: K. Flanagan, P. C. Jupp, *A Sociology of Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 7.

³⁹ L. Boriello, G. della Croce, B. Secondin, *Duchowość chrześcijańska czasów współczesnych*, op. cit., p. 485.