

REV. SŁAWOMIR NOWOSAD

MORAL THEOLOGY ECUMENICALLY ORIENTED

A b s t r a c t. Ecumenical dialogue only occasionally attempted a thorough analysis of the Christian moral vision in its various traditions. Moral theology (Christian ethics), too, needs to adopt a more ecumenical stance and become more willing to enter in a mutually enriching common study of moral life. Encouraging examples of such comparative and sincere endeavours can be found in theologians like J. M. Gustafson (Protestant), J. T. Bretzke (Catholic), B. Petrà (Catholic), S. S. Harakas (Orthodox) and others. John Paul II's major pronouncements on Christian morality (*Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae*) also provoked worthwhile discussions among Catholic and non-Catholic moral theologians. The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, with its Chair of Ecumenical Moral Theology, has also had its different and promising contributions to create a more ecumenically oriented moral theology.

Key words: moral theology, Christian ethics, ecumenism, ecumenical dialogue.

God as Creator and Redeemer of mankind has not left His creatures alone but in His only Son bestowed on them His truth. When receiving God's gift with his mind and heart, man finds in it the light for his life. He not only finds out who he is and who God is, but also discerns his ultimate destiny: "Those who believe, see; they see with a light that illumines their entire journey, for it comes from the risen Christ, the morning star which never sets"¹. This revealed truth, illumining all life, is a gift to be shared with others. The task of moral theology is to discern that moral truth, to explain and systematically describe and then to proclaim. Thus Christian moral teaching is unveiled as part of the treasure of the Church and as such needs to become a subject of the ecumenical dialogue among various traditions of

Rev. dr hab. SŁAWOMIR NOWOSAD, prof. KUL – Head of Department of Ecumenic Moral Theology; address for correspondence: Al. Raławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin; e-mail: xsn@kul.pl

¹ F r a n c i s. Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*. The Vatican: LEV 2013 n. 1.

Christianity. Only Divine truth can enlighten man's intelligence and shape his freedom, and consequently it can lead all to know and love the Lord².

I. ECUMENICAL ENDEAVOUR AS AN IMPERATIVE FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury and a great protagonist of ecumenism in the 20th century post-Reformation Christianity, was convinced that a broken and divided church bears poor witness to a broken and divided world. It took a long time before deeply divided Christians of various traditions realized that they continue to be unfaithful to the will of the Lord. In his *Letter to the Ephesians* St Paul keeps reminding all Christ's disciples that "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all" (4:5-6). The word of God is a continuous appeal to the hearts of those who believe that they can never live in comfort as long as they remain divided. Christians must be ready to admit their "ecclesial communion has been painfully wounded" by divisions in the course of history and those wounds as "sins of the past unfortunately still burden us and remain every present temptations". The Christian community, when crossing the threshold of the third millennium, is still marked by "the sad heritage" of its past³.

Amidst many ecumenical initiatives, undertaken particularly in recent decades, a theological dialogue constitutes a singular role in an effort of mutual understanding and finding the common ground. Numerous agreed statements have been produced so far by ecumenical theological commissions which make all sides more aware how much they have in common and at the same time where their paths diverge. It can be easily noticed, however, that while those theological discussions cover all sorts of theological, historical or pastoral subjects, rather rarely they take up moral issues. This fact calls for a renewed interest in Christian moral vision which ought to become part of ecumenical endeavour and discussions. The Church's deepest conviction encourages her not only to preserve the treasure of truth and grace but also to share it as the "very nature of the gifts which Christ has given the Church

² Cf. J o h n P a u l I I. Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*. The Vatican: LEV 1993 [Blessing].

³ Cf. respectively: J o h n P a u l I I. Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*. The Vatican: LEV 1994 n. 34; J o h n P a u l I I. Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. The Vatican: LEV 2001 n. 48.

demands that they be extended to others and shared with others”⁴. Therefore the Church and all her members, having accepted an obligation to enter into dialogue with the world, must also be ready to develop a constant dialogue among themselves.

On many occasions did John Paul II underline his belief, expressed clearly in his encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint*, that there is “much room for dialogue concerning the moral principles of the Gospel and their implications”. The Vatican II Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, when explaining the method and content of ecumenism, did not overlook the ethical dimension of Christian life nor did it limit itself to its spiritual, moral and cultural aspects. Since so many Christians do not understand the Gospel and its moral message in the same way, while a vast number of questions of ethical character become increasingly urgent nowadays – all this confirms how important and vital is the ecumenical dialogue on moral issues⁵. The Catholic Church believes that Divine truth, including moral truth, is not confined to her own ecclesial boundaries. Paraphrasing John Paul II, it can be said that all Christians should be ready to admit that beyond the boundaries of their own communities there is no moral theological vacuum⁶. On the contrary, each Church and each community, when entering into a sincere and creative dialogue with other Christian partners, can learn about the life in Christ as the ideal of evangelical living according to the mind of the Lord. As the whole ecumenical endeavour is an indispensable imperative so too is ecumenical dialogue concerning a common Christian moral vision.

While a lot of theological dialogues and ecumenical commissions have managed to agree on numerous significant documents over recent decades, only a couple of them chose to take up Christian morality as the subject of their discussions in a comprehensive manner. One is *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* signed in 1993 and then published by Anglican

⁴ P a u l VI. Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam*. The Vatican: LEV 1964 n. 64.

⁵ Cf. J o h n P a u l II. Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*. The Vatican: LEV 1995 n. 68. “[...] the need for an ecumenical discussion of ethics and ethical questions is ever more important, both because of the need for the church to give a common moral witness and because of the appearance of new, potentially church-dividing or communion-hindering ethical disputes between and within the churches”. M. R o o t. *Ethics in Ecumenical Dialogues: A Survey and Analysis*. “Journal of Ecumenical Studies” 45:2010 n. 3 p. 357.

⁶ “It is not that beyond the boundaries of the Catholic community there is an ecclesial vacuum. Many elements of great value (*eximia*), which in the Catholic Church are part of the fullness of the means of salvation and of the gifts of grace which make up the Church, are also found in the other Christian Communities”. *Ut Unum Sint* n. 13.

Roman Catholic International Commission II (ARCIC II), the other is *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions* prepared and signed in 1995 by the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches⁷. Apart from these two complete agreed statements, only selected individual questions of moral or moral-pastoral character were addressed to some degree in some of other ecumenical documents⁸.

The members of ARCIC were fully aware that their attempt was the first to directly take up the subject of Christian morals. Despite a different popular belief, they expressed their conviction that “Anglicans and Roman Catholics derive from the Scriptures and Tradition the same controlling vision of the nature and destiny of humanity and share the same fundamental moral values”⁹. This substantial area of common conviction is accompanied by an urgent need for a shared witness to the Gospel whose proclamation cannot be divorced from the Christian daily life. Christian doctrine and Christian morals are closely inter-connected. Archbishop of Canterbury R. Williams has stressed that it is crucial to perceive Christian ethics as rooted in the doctrine of creation and salvation, i.e. in the theological understanding of God and His purpose for all men and women. Thus, “Christian ethics is about the character of the Body of Christ. [...] This is part of the common heritage of Anglicans and Roman Catholics, as heirs together of both biblical and pre-modern theological concerns”¹⁰. ARCIC’s document highlights the fundamental areas of shared vision which include: an understanding of Christian moral life as “a response in the Holy Spirit to God’s self-giving in Jesus Christ”, of the true goal of the moral life as “the flourishing and fulfilment of that humanity for which all men and women have been created”, of Christian freedom as “a freedom of responsiveness and interdependence”, of the new life in Christ

⁷ See respectively: ARCIC II. *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*. London: CHT-CTS 1994 and in “The Ecumenical Review” 48:1996 n. 2 p. 143-154.

⁸ A useful and interesting list of dialogues as well as of ethical topics addressed cf. R o o t. *Ethics in Ecumenical Dialogues* p. 371-375. Root’s whole text (p. 357-370) is in fact a survey of the discussions of ethics in various ecumenical dialogues which almost persuades the reader that in no way can ethics be regarded as absent in those dialogues. Nevertheless, ethics continues to be perceived in this field as an evidently lesser issue after doctrine.

⁹ ARCIC II. *Life in Christ* n. 1. For a broader review of the document cf. S. N o w o s a d. *Życie w Chrystusie. ARCIC II na temat zagadnień moralnych*. “Ethos” 8:1995 n. 2-3 p. 369-377.

¹⁰ R. W i l l i a m s. *Life in Christ: Considerations for Synod Group Discussions* [26.06.2009] n. 1-2 (www.churchofengland.org, access: 4.12.2013).

as “entrusted to the Church for the good of the whole world”, of natural justice and natural law as not denied but “renewed, transfigured and perfected” in Jesus Christ, of Christian morality as “the fruit of the faith in God’s Word, the grace of the sacraments and the appropriation, in a life of forgiveness, of the gifts of the Spirit for work in God’s service”¹¹.

When it comes to common heritage, strongly underlined by ARCIC, it covers a shared tradition of over fifteen hundred years which continues to nourish their respective theological and moral visions. Both Anglicans and Catholics believe in a common Christian life which is based on love, centred in the Eucharist and worship and expressed in service. Drawing their vision from the revealed Scriptures taught and interpreted over two millennia, they treasure, for instance, an example of discipleship manifested in the saints and acknowledged by devotion and piety. A missionary imperative and the spirit of openness to the world together with a Christian engagement with culture are also attitudes both partners regard as part of their shared tradition. As its basic motive the document takes the mind of Christ which has to be discerned, accepted, followed and grown into by all those who decide to live in the service of the Lord. Both individual believers and the Church as a community have to live in the fidelity to the mind of Christ. In the continuous process of prayer and reflection the mind of Christ can be discerned and thus Christian moral life will find its most authentic expression in the new life in the Holy Spirit¹².

Clearly, the above presented agreement on the fundamental vision and basic moral values did not prevent both Communion from diverging in moral teaching on different elements of individual and social life. *Life in Christ* affirms, however, that both sides believe the disagreements originated not so much from the sources of moral authority but rather from different emphases as regards elements of moral life. It is the structures of authority and the formation of moral judgement that paved the way to eventual disagreements in moral teaching. In the context of structures and institutions of the teaching ministry of the Church Anglicans and Roman Catholics diverged and developed their own ways “in which authority is most fruitfully exercised and the common good best promoted. Anglicans affirm that authority needs to be dispersed rather than centralised [...] and that therefore official moral teaching should as far as possible be commendatory rather than prescriptive and binding. Roman Catholics, on

¹¹ ARCIC II. *Life in Christ* n. 4-10.

¹² Cf. *ibidem* n. 12-35.

the other hand, have, for the sake of the common good, emphasised the need for a central authority to preserve unity and to give clear and binding teaching”¹³. Two specific issues have been treated more broadly in *Life in Christ* to show where both traditions clearly diverge. They are remarriage after divorce and contraception, explained here in the wider context of human sexuality and of marriage and family life¹⁴. Though these disagreements are at present real, all members of ARCIC believe those conflicting opinions “need not constitute an insuperable barrier to progress towards fuller communion”¹⁵. Notwithstanding various opinions and viewpoints have been formulated after *Life in Christ* was signed and published, including a somewhat critical voice from Rowan Williams, it should be seen as a serious and much needed attempt to better understand, express and clarify the Christian moral vision as proclaimed by the two traditions¹⁶.

Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues is of a different character as it does not intend to discuss specific issues in order to arrive at norms but rather to describe the contemporary context of moral life and to show possible ways of dialogue rather than its results. In its two parts the Joint Working Group first turns attention to moral areas and issues of potential common witness or discord, and subsequently offers some guidelines for such an ecumenical

¹³ Ibidem n. 49.

¹⁴ For comments on this part of the document see S. N o w o s a d. *Życie w Chrystusie. Moralność, komunia i Kościół* n. 59-77 /komentarz/ [*Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church* n. 59-77 /comments/]. „Forum Teologiczne” 13:2012 p. 201-219.

¹⁵ ARCIC II. *Life in Christ* n. 101. “Continuing study is needed of the differences between us, real or apparent, especially in our understanding and use of the notion of law. A clearer understanding is required of the relation of the concept of law to the concepts of moral order and the common good, and the relation of all these concepts to the vision of human happiness and fulfilment as persons-in-community that we have been given in and through Jesus Christ. [...] We are convinced, therefore, that further exchange between our two traditions on moral questions will serve both the cause of Christian unity and the good of that larger society of which we are all part”. Ibidem n. 102.

¹⁶ See for example: “There is a rather perfunctory air about the report’s treatment of Anglican moral theology, as several commentators have noted. [...] Given that [Bishop Joseph] Butler is arguably the most important moral thinker of Anglican history (and someone who had a substantial influence on John Henry Newman) it is strange to find no mention of him and of the world of reflection he represented. This lack of historical perspective explains (though it does not justify) the implication that notions of absolute moral law are somehow foreign to the Anglican ethos”. W i l l i a m s. *Life in Christ: Considerations for Synod Group Discussions* n. 3. For a broader examination of the Anglican-Roman Catholic theological dialogue cf. S. N o w o s a d. *Anglikanizm*. In: *Jan Paweł II. Encyklopedia dialogu i ekumenizmu*. Ed. E. Sakowicz. Radom: Polwen 2006 p. 33-60.

dialogue. It has to be stressed that particularly the present context of a rapid scientific and technological development provokes questioning of traditional moral values and convictions as well as raises new ethical problems. If Christian community is to offer moral guidance to its own members and to the world at large, Christians of all traditions must find ways of dealing with controversial ethical dilemmas. It is crucial for the common witness and mission of the Church if she is to remain faithful to God and to “discern how ethical beliefs and practices relate to that unity in moral life which is Christ’s will”¹⁷. Any serious dialogue demands not only an attitude of discipleship based on prayer and worship rooted in community life, but also a common understanding of basic notions like moral vision, virtue, value and obligation. Not disregarding differences among various traditions and churches, Christians believe they can “reach reasonable judgement and decisions” for their moral life by “prayerfully studying the Scriptures and the developing traditions of biblical interpretations, by reflecting on human experiences and by sharing insights within a community”¹⁸.

Since each Christian tradition developed its own vision of nature and structure of authority, which may vary even to a large degree in comparison with others, the formation of conscience and arriving at an ethical position may follow different pathways. Consequently, ecumenical dialogue on Christian moral life will need to take into account those different stances, different ways of determining moral norms of Christian life and acting upon them¹⁹. Such circumstances of the dialogue should be perceived as a challenge rather than a hurdle. They can undermine *koinonia* of faith and life, but they can also enhance it and become a reconciling factor in ecumenical relations. It is always necessary to agree that “the manner and the methods by which the churches publicly commend their own moral convictions must respect the integrity of others and their civic rights and liberties”²⁰.

With all this in mind, based on fundamental Christian convictions about the Triune God and man’s dependence upon Him, the Joint Working Group has

¹⁷ *Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues* n. I 4.

¹⁸ *Ibidem* n. III 1.

¹⁹ J. W. Crossin offers his own suggestion that virtue ethics as such could be a particularly useful instrument for discussions on ecumenical morality. Additionally, the contemporary revival of virtue ethics has found its ground in many ethicists of different Christian traditions. Cf. his *Prudence and the Future: An Ecumenically Shaped Ethic*. “*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*” 45:2010 n. 3 p. 426-432.

²⁰ *Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues* n. VI 3.

outlined useful guidelines for such ecumenical theological dialogue on moral issues that would promote the visible unity of all Christ's disciples in one faith and a common vision of personal and social moral life²¹. Those guidelines refer to the spirit of understanding and respect of mutual dialogues, to the necessary affirmation of specific ideals and practices of respective communities and to a common recognition of substantial unity among various traditions. There is a mutual acknowledgement that all communities find the basis of their moral teaching in the Scriptures, in moral traditions, liturgies, in the proclamation of the Gospel, pastoral practice and in common human experience. In some specific moral problems it is always vital to seek the best available knowledge from the empirical sciences before a moral position can be formulated. Any serious dialogue must take into account that some communities may be at variance with one another as regards, for instance, methodology of the Scriptures interpretation, the ways of identifying moral problems and their formulation, communication of values and moral discipline or the role of ministerial leadership in moral guidance. Every community must be clearly aware of its own moral convictions and be ready to admit disagreements with others where they occur. It is also essential that Christian communities do not neglect to stay in touch with non-Christian groups or societies in order to be able to know about their moral opinions. Even if moral differences between Christian communities seem irreconcilable, they all must believe that God never stops bestowing His gift of *koinonia* on His children²².

II. TOWARD A MORE ECUMENICALLY SENSITIVE MORAL THEOLOGY

Among moral theologians and Christian ethicists of various traditions a growing awareness has become visible that doing moral theology in isolation is not an option. Even if the subject of morals has not yet found its due place in official theological dialogue, theologians and ethicists engage in

²¹ "We assume that churches are seeking to be faithful to God in Christ, to be led by the Holy Spirit and to be a moral environment which helps all members in the formation of Christian conscience and practice. We affirm the responsibility of every church to provide moral guidance for its members and for society at large". Ibidem. *Guidelines for Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues* (Introduction).

²² "When the dialogue continues to reveal sincere but apparently irreconcilable moral positions, we affirm in faith that the fact of our belonging together in Christ is more fundamental than the fact of our moral differences". Ibidem n. 10.

making their own contribution to a deeper and comprehensive understanding of Christian moral life faithful to Divine Revelation. Publications of this character may examine methodological assumptions or fundamental convictions of a moral conception or may endeavour to describe and compare specific ways of moral reasoning or particular moral issues. It also happens that some international events or statements concerning urgent ethical issues, like the dignity of human life or environmental protection, provoke ethicists to get involved in public debates, often from an ecumenical perspective. Mutually enriching exchange of views and analyses can also evolve from official pronouncements on Christian morality by Church bodies, as it was the case with John Paul II's *Veritatis Splendor*.

In the English-speaking world a particular impact on ethical theological literature came from the Protestant ethicist James M. Gustafson. He has written a lot about Christian, theological and theocentric understanding of ethics where the central topic is often the role of Christ in man's moral life. His academic teaching and interest has also included research in possible mutual relations between Protestant and Roman Catholic perceptions of Christian ethics²³. His contribution to ecumenical discussions in ethics is still relevant though he himself was at times sceptical about authentic willingness of both parties to get involved in such debates: "there is no longer much interest in developing ecumenical consensus, per se, between Protestant and Roman Catholic ethics [...]. My impression is that no similarly concerted effort occurs [in ecumenical dialogue] on moral matters, on social-ethical issues, on matters of ethical method, and on theological aspects of ethics"²⁴.

James T. Bretzke SJ has been one of those few American Catholic moral theologians who would try to directly construct an ecumenical outlook on Christian morality. He used to lecture on ecumenical ethics at the Graduate Theological Union and the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley and at the University of San Francisco. He is now professor of moral theology at Bo-

²³ Gustafson's major work on a Protestant-Catholic understanding of ethics is *Protestant and Roman Catholic Ethics: Prospects for Rapprochement* (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press 1978). His other books include: *Can Ethics Be Christian?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1975), *Christ and the Moral Life* [with a new preface by the author] (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2009), *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective* (vol. 1-2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1981-1984), *Theology and Christian Ethics* (Philadelphia: United Church Press 1974), *Moral Discernment in the Christian Life: Essays in Theological Ethics* (Eds. T. A. Boer, P. A. Capetz. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2007).

²⁴ J. M. G u s t a f s o n. *Roman Catholic and Protestant Interaction in Ethics: An Interpretation* "Theological Studies" 50:1989 n. 1 p. 57-58.

ston College as well as at Ateneo de Manila in the Philippines. Mainly from the Roman Catholic perspective in his teaching on ecumenical ethics he looks into a Vatican II paradigm shift towards ecumenism and thus describes post-Vatican possibilities in developing ecumenical Christian ethics. Interesting and often more detailed analyses of leading figures in Christian ethics, both Protestant and Catholic, are included. Bretzke shows examples of mutual misunderstanding as well as of polemics before the Council and then the change of atmosphere and growing awareness in favour of ecumenical collaboration after Vatican II. He also points out to the attempts at avoiding the so-called progress or superficial harmony. In his conviction “any viable model for ethics must also meet the basic formal and substantive criteria of internal coherence, comprehensiveness, and overall credibility consonant with lived experience. Christian ethics in turn must demonstrate fidelity to the Scriptures, Tradition (even if conceived differently), expressed religious authorities as well as the larger ecclesial community of believers and practitioners”²⁵. Bretzke has compiled extensive bibliographies on many compelling moral problems, including the issue of ecumenical Christian ethics.

Rufus Black, now a minister in the Uniting Church in Australia and a practising lawyer as well as an academic teacher at Melbourne Law School, did his doctorate at the University of Oxford under prof. Oliver O’Donovan. His dissertation was a bold ecumenical undertaking: *Towards an Ecumenical Ethics: Reconciling the Work of Germain Grisez, Stanley Hauerwas and Oliver O’Donovan*²⁶. This book is an interesting attempt to compare and to some extent reconcile three visions of Christian morality – Catholic, Methodist and Anglican. The aim was to show how these different views all present a realistic character of Christian ethics, thus excluding its subjectivism or voluntarism. All three authors perceive Christian ethics always in the context of Christian worship which results in highlighting its ecclesial, pneumatological and sacramental dimensions. For Catholic moral theology, for instance, it should be a promising challenge to appreciate O’Donovan’s strong emphasis on Christ’s resurrection in moral life and Hauerwas’s stress on liturgy as

²⁵ Cf. J. T. Bretzke. *Ecumenical Ethics, History and Vatican II*. “Josephinum Journal of Theology” 6:1999 n. 2 p. 18-38. His books include: *A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2004), *Handbook of Moral Terms* (Washington: Georgetown University Press 2013).

²⁶ Later published as *Christian Moral Realism: Natural Law, Narrative, Virtue and the Gospel* (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press 2000). Cf. its review by S. Nowosad in “Roczniki Teologiczne” 50:2003 n. 3 p. 203-204.

a unique *locus theologicus* for moral theology. Black's publication is a fine example of a fruitful effort how three different ethical positions can be mutually enriching and show the way for ecumenical discussions on Christian morals.

The Catholic Church has a long tradition of clearly articulating her faith both in doctrine and in morals which often assume the form of papal pronouncements. The moral teaching of Pope John Paul II often crossed the borders of Catholic Church and provoked reactions from non-Catholic ethicists. In this regard his two crucial encyclicals – *Veritatis Splendor* of 1993 and *Evangelium Vitae* of 1995 – played a particular role and received a considerable attention in Protestant circles. The collection of eleven essays entitled *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics* is proof of how a serious ethical and theological conversation can be pursued aiming at a better understanding of the Christian moral vision²⁷. John Paul II's moral teaching is perceived here as relevant not merely for Catholics but for "all ecumenically concerned Christians who seek both the greater visible unity of the church and also the critical discussion and mutual learning that such unity should bring"²⁸. These contributions, which are mainly Lutheran (American and European) and Anglican (one), deal with both ethical methodology and specific ethical problems in a critical but also constructive way, and thus can promote the framework of the ecumenical dialogue in Christian morals. The essays "probe, examine and identify potential and actual points of consensus in the basic theological and ethical perspectives"²⁹. It is legitimate to say that this publication is both a valuable tribute to the work of John Paul II and to all those who seek new ways and areas of concern in the ecumenical discussions of ethics.

Beside *Veritatis Splendor* it was John Paul II's encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* that contained momentous moral teaching, potentially compelling for ecumenical relations³⁰. The character or temper of the encyclical as evangelical and clearly christocentric could be appealing to many Protestants as well as – in another manner – its emphasis on a rational way of discovering moral truth. Not only traditionally consequential notions as the concept of man and

²⁷ *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals* (eds. R. Hütter, T. Dieter. Grand Rapids–Cambridge: Eerdmans 1998).

²⁸ R o o t. *Foreword*. In: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics* p. VII.

²⁹ H ü t t e r. *The Project*. In: *Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics* p. 3.

³⁰ Cf. P. J. W o j d a. *The Ecumenical Significance of Evangelium Vitae*. "Word and World" 16:1996 n. 1 p. 52-59.

his sinful condition will be relevant for ecumenical discussions but also, in the context of increasingly secular modern culture, possible forms of the common Christian witness in favour of human life. These and other issues mutually significant could again bring about discussions on individual conscience and liberty, particularly where John Paul II's authoritative declarations are concerned. That might be understood as an issue that "has to do with the *public* character of the church's witness in matters of faith as well as morals" and thus searching for the best possible ways the Church should speak before the world³¹. Another ecumenically provocative aspect of the Pope's teaching is his call not to limit the defence of human life and dignity to subjective endeavour, however devoted, but to do it in the liturgy which is "the preeminent form of Christian action": "In this perspective John Paul II's call for genuinely ecumenical celebration among the Churches, of both the 'Gospel of Life' and of the approaching third millennium, takes on a dramatically new urgency"³².

Ecumenical discussions in Christian ethics must not remain within Catholic-Protestant relations but should also relate to the Eastern tradition of Christianity. Though not so well and distinctly developed – according to the Western point of view – as an independent concept of Christian ethics or moral theology, it is a vital part of Christian moral heritage. It is mainly Basilio Petrà who in the European context demonstrates rather unknown richness of Orthodox moral teaching to the wider audience³³. He has been lecturing on Orthodox theology and morality for decades in Rome, Florence and Bari. Of Greek origin himself, in a uniquely able manner and referring to numerous Orthodox authors, he describes the task of Orthodox ethics as an explanation and development of life in Christ perceived as man's fulfilment according to the truth. Christian ethics cannot in any way be confined to a human ethic but of its nature has to be open to spiritual life which is man's new creation

³¹ "If Christians can agree that the transformation of culture, as understood by *Evangelium Vitae*, is both an individual and an ecclesial task [...] the ecumenical dialogue around papal authority should be thought of not in Paul Ramsey's phrase, 'Who speaks for the church?' but rather 'How ought the church to speak?'. Ibidem p. 58.

³² Ibidem p. 59.

³³ Among his books are: *La teologia ortodossa e le nuove frontiere del dialogo tra Ortodossia e Cattolicesimo* (Rimini: Istituto di Scienze Religiose 2000), *L'Etica ortodossa: Alcune fondamentali caratteristiche* (Roma: Edizioni Academiae Alphonsianae 2005), *La contraccensione nella tradizione ortodossa: Forza della realtà e mediazione pastorale* (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane 2009), *L'etica ortodossa: Storia, fonti, indentità* (Assisi: Cittadella 2010).

aiming at divine perfection³⁴. Clearly, this way of understanding moral life as a life deeply rooted in Christ leading man to *theosis* (deification), can be a challenge as well as an opening of new theological and spiritual horizons to every Christian whose final destiny is God in His Communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

Valuable attempts to present major assumptions and principles of Orthodox moral vision can be found in several American authors. Stanley S. Harakas, an Orthodox priest himself, has taught theology and ethics in such leading Orthodox schools as Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline or St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York. Most of his publications deal with fundamental as well as various specific aspects of Orthodox ethics where the central accent is put on the "wholeness of faith and life"³⁵. Harakas explains that though Orthodox Christianity does not focus on the normative dimension of faith, "when such attention is given, almost every dimension of Orthodoxy reveals that some aspect of ethics is present. The direction and guidance, the commandments and rules, the prescriptions and the proscriptions, which are integral parts of the Christian tradition, are the specific content of its ethical tradition"³⁶. Covering personal, ecclesial and social aspects of human life, Orthodox ethics is to guide the Christian to the real renewal in freedom of his God-likeness to which he is led in many ways – theological, spiritual, liturgical, sacramental and ethical. In his outlook of an Orthodox Christian ethics, based on the reciprocal relationship between God and man – fallen, but still called to achieve authentic humanity – the following fundamental ethical notions or concepts can be enumerated: the good, sin and evil, human moral capacities, conscience, the

³⁴ P e t r à. *L'Etica Ortodossa* p. 69-71. "L'unione dell'uomo con Cristo che raggiunge il suo culmine nella comunione eucaristica, si attua nella vita quotidiana con il conformarsi della sua volontà alla volontà di Cristo [...]. Cristo come perfetto Dio e perfetto uomo manifesta all'uomo l'ethos divino e lo chiama ad avanzare verso la perfezione divina" [trans. B. Petrà]. G. I. M a n t z a r i d i s. *Etica Cristiana* [in Greek]. Tesalonica: Pournaras 1984 p. 34.

³⁵ Harakas's books include: *For the Health of Body and Soul: An Eastern Orthodox Introduction to Bioethics* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press 1980), *Contemporary Moral Issues Facing the Orthodox Christian* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publications 1982), *Toward Transfigured Life: The Theoria of Eastern Orthodox Ethics* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publications 1983), *Living the Faith: The Praxis of Eastern Orthodox Ethics* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publications 1992), *Of Life and Salvation: Reflections on Living the Christian Life* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publications 1996), *Wholeness of Faith and Life: Orthodox Christian Ethics* (Vol. 1-3. Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press 1999).

³⁶ H a r a k a s. *Wholeness of Faith and Life: Orthodox Christian Ethics*. Vol. 2: *Church Life Ethics* p. 27.

natural moral law, the Evangelical ethic, being moral as conformed to the image of God, ethical decision-making, the “politeia of theosis”³⁷.

If ecumenical dialogue, as it seems, has been only slightly interested in ethics and now not few Christians hope for its enhancement, in Harakas’s opinion it is in fact a mistaken expectation. Viewing the issue from an Orthodox perspective he claims that ethics cannot be the appropriate means for restoring the visible unity of the Church. The reason for this is that it is only faith and doctrine that can found a proper basis for ecclesial unity. Ethics is secondary because it “has no standing outside of the belief system from which it is drawn”³⁸. Having stressed this “ecumenical incapacity” of ethics, nevertheless Harakas does see a specifically Orthodox contribution to ecumenical dialogue on ethical issues. It is about a proper understanding of Christian ethics itself which remembers that its source is not itself, not philosophy, not human experience but “the light of the historic Christian faith of the scriptures and authentic Holy Tradition”³⁹. His approach is typically Orthodox, i.e. balanced and holistic which is at the same time personal, ecclesial and outreaching (“to what is not church”). It is a model which would be true to Christian tradition (patristic above all) where “the personal, ecclesial, and outreach dimensions are to be held integrated together and understood as a holistic interpenetrating, mutually informing, illuminating, and guiding model. All three aspects are properly integrated, so that every ethical reflection, normative imperative, inner motive, and intention is mutually illuminated by the personal, ecclesial, and outreach dimensions”⁴⁰.

Coming from the Armenian background, Vigen Guroian is yet another Orthodox theologian and ethicist whose publications essentially contribute to the integral picture of Christian ethical vision⁴¹. Having taught in several North American universities, including St Mary’s Seminary and University as well as Loyola College in Baltimore, he is now professor at the University of Virginia. He is also active in the ecumenical field having worked for the

³⁷ Cf. S. S. H a r a k a s. *Christian Ethics in Ecumenical Perspective: An Orthodox Christian View*. “Journal of Ecumenical Studies” 15:1978 n. 4 p. 638-643.

³⁸ S. S. H a r a k a s. *What Orthodox Christian Ethics Can Offer Ecumenism*. “Journal of Ecumenical Studies” 45:2010 n. 3 p. 378.

³⁹ Ibidem p. 384.

⁴⁰ Ibidem p. 380.

⁴¹ His books include: *Ethics after Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1994), *Life’s Living toward Dying: A Theological and Medical-Ethical Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996), *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 2002).

World Council of Churches. While Orthodox tradition does not easily allow of a distinction between theology (dogmatics) and ethics and Guroian's conviction is that "Orthodoxy is never likely to grant ethics the autonomy that it has attained historically in Roman Catholic theology and more recently in Protestantism", there must be "room within Orthodoxy for a more direct and developed approach to ethics than in the past"⁴². In a very accessible way he introduces the reader into the rich Orthodox tradition of theology and spirituality drawing on its cardinal concepts like image and likeness, *theosis* or love. Since Orthodox ethics does not intend to be formally systematic and does not rely on "a formal or conscientious adherence to rules and a dispensing of duties", it can be rather understood as primarily concerned with "the realization of love, righteousness and divine similitude in persons and social institutions"⁴³.

John Breck's influence in Orthodox (and not only) environment in the West, mainly in the USA, can be recognized without much difficulty⁴⁴. A convert from Protestantism, now an Orthodox priest and a well known professor of theology and ethics, he teaches at two major centres of Western Orthodoxy – St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris and St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood. He briefly describes morality as a life of virtue and obedience to the commandments. While stressing the legitimacy to have an Orthodox ethic as such, his main concern is with bioethics where life and death issues are increasingly vital for a true Christian living. Especially in this field a sincere and broad collaboration is needed among all Christian traditions – Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox: "These [Roman Catholic and Protestant] traditions could benefit greatly from an Orthodox perspective [...]. And we Orthodox certainly could benefit from mutual exchange of ideas, experiences and apprehensions, as we seek to make the voice of the Church heard in this increasingly pluralistic

⁴² *Incarnate Love* p. 3.

⁴³ "Orthodox theology rejects all forms of utilitarian, deontological or teleological ethics that intend the world as either utility, law, or unfolding rationality [...]. Orthodox theologians and ethicists will remain steadfast, believing that the goal of Christian morality is, after all, salvation". Ibidem p. 27.

⁴⁴ His most important books on ethics are: *The Sacred Gift of Life: Orthodox Christianity and Bioethics* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1999), *God with Us: Critical Issues in Christian Life and Faith* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 2003), [with Lyn Breck] *Stages on Life's Way: Orthodox Thinking on Bioethics* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 2005), *Longing for God: Orthodox Reflections on Bible, Ethics and Liturgy* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 2006).

and militantly secular society”⁴⁵. In his moral convictions Breck points out above all to the theological perception of reality, including God as Creator and Saviour, where a particular attention should be put on a sound and clear vision of man as the human person. Then not only his dignity and rights can be effectively protected but God is not excluded from His creation⁴⁶. In his bioethical views Breck is under a strong influence of H. T. Engelhardt, another American convert to Orthodoxy and a medical doctor himself⁴⁷.

III. KUL'S CONTRIBUTION TO AN ECUMENICALLY ORIENTED MORAL THEOLOGY

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) has had a relatively long tradition of its ecumenical engagement in almost a hundred years of its existence. Several decades of the activity of KUL's Ecumenical Institute has been in some way supplemented by the establishment of Chair of Ecumenical Moral Theology (within the Institute of Moral Theology) in the early 2000s. It was obvious that Catholic moral theology does need to cross the borders and look beyond Catholic ethics in order not only to better understand other ethical traditions of Christianity but in this context to better understand its own content, its past and possible future developments. The principle of the exchange of gifts should have its place in the field of morality as it has elsewhere where so many of Christ's disciples find it necessary to enter into authentic dialogue and collaboration. An indispensable condition of any dialogue, still more in ecumenism, is not only consciousness of one's own identity but also one's readiness to listen and to learn. Over the last decade or so a lot of promising examples of research and study in non-Catholic con-

⁴⁵ Breck. *God with Us* p. 20-21.

⁴⁶ “The human person, created in the image of God and called to progress toward the divine likeness, is unique and of infinite value. Any attempt to reduce the person to a reservoir of genetic components or to reproduce that person through cloning is an offense not only against human rights and human dignity. It is above all an offense against the God who creates and loves this person, and calls each one without exception to share for ever in His divine life”. Ibidem p. 31.

⁴⁷ Engelhardt's major work is *The Foundations of Bioethics* (Oxford–New York: OUP 1986, 2nd edition 1996). For a more detailed survey on Engelhardt's bioethical convictions see S. Nowosad's review of *At the Roots of Christian Bioethics: Critical Essays on the Thought of H. Tristram Engelhardt* (Eds. A. S. Iltis, M. J. Cherry. Salem: M&M Scrivener Press 2010) in „Roczniki Teologii Moralnej” 5(60):2013 p. 226-229.

cepts and trends of Christian ethics have been successfully carried out by those who teach and study at KUL. Among the courses offered to doctoral students are “Anglican Moral Theology” and “Protestant Ethics” as well as a seminar on ecumenical context of Christian moral theology. A particular research interest is directed at the post-Reformation development of Christian ethics, above all its Anglican tradition. This research has resulted in many publications on Anglican ethics and moral theology, mainly in its 20th century developments⁴⁸, while a wider Protestant context has not been neglected⁴⁹. In several publications some basic and specific problems of ecumenical dialogue on moral matters were dealt with⁵⁰. Another sign of an authentic ecu-

⁴⁸ See two books by S. Nowosad: *Nazwać dobro po imieniu. Sumienie w anglikańskiej teologii moralnej* [To Call the Good by Name: Conscience in Anglican Moral Theology] (Lublin: RW KUL 1996), *Odnowa anglikańskiej teologii moralnej w XX wieku* [The Renewal of Anglican Moral Theology in the 20th Century] (Lublin: RW KUL 2001). Among his articles see for example: *Kenneth Escott Kirk (1886-1954). Teolog moralista anglikański* [Kenneth Escott Kirk (1886-1954): An Anglican Moral Theologian] (“Roczniki Teologiczne” 43:1996 n. 3 p. 117-134), *Sakramenty inicjacji chrześcijańskiej w tradycji anglikańskiej* [The Sacraments of Christian Initiation in Anglican Tradition] (“Roczniki Teologiczne” 46:1999 n. 6 p. 315-334), *Nadzieja na „visio Dei” w życiu moralnym* [Hoping for „Visio Dei” in Moral Life] (In: *Nadzieja chrześcijańska i nadzieje ludzkie*. Eds. J. Nagórny, M. Pokrywka. Lublin: Wyd. KUL 2003 p. 143-166), *Nurty w duchowości anglikańskiej XX wieku* [Currents in Anglican Spirituality in the 20th c.] (In: *Lumen Christi tantum in Ecclesia*. Ed. T. Paszkowska. Lublin: Wyd. KUL 2005 p. 379-391), *Anglikanizm* [Anglicanism] (In: *Jan Paweł II. Encyklopedia Dialogu i Ekumenizmu*. Ed. E. Sakowicz. Radom: Polwen 2006 p. 33-60), *Natural Law in the 20th c. Renewal of Anglican Moral Theology* (In: *Das Naturrecht und Europa*. Ed. T. Guz. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 2007 p. 443-462), *Kościelno-teologiczne fundamenty anglikanizmu* [The Ecclesial-Theological Foundations of Anglicanism] (In: *Scio cui credidi*. Ed. I. Ledwoń. Lublin: Wyd. KUL 2007 p. 851-868), *Świętość w perspektywie ekumenicznej* [Holiness from an Ecumenical Perspective] (“Studia Nauk Teologicznych PAN” – to be published in 2014).

⁴⁹ See for example S. Nowosad’s articles: *Etyka w ujęciu protestanckim* [Ethics from a Protestant Perspective] (“Roczniki Teologiczne” 53:2006 n. 3 p. 153-170), *Z zagadnień etycznych luteranizmu w kontekście ekumenicznym* [Ethical Problems of Lutheranism in an Ecumenical Context] (In: *Różnić się w zgodzie*. Ed. S. Pawłowski. Lublin: Wyd. KUL 2008 p. 209-226), *Protestanci wobec prawa naturalnego* [Protestants and Natural Law] (“Roczniki Teologiczne” 55:2008 n. 3 p. 31-47).

⁵⁰ See S. Nowosad. *Moralność w dialogu ekumenicznym* [Morality in Ecumenical Dialogue] (“Roczniki Teologiczne” 47:2000 n. 3 p. 47-77), *Teologia moralna w kontekście ekumenicznym* [Moral Theology in an Ecumenical Context] (In: *Polska teologia moralna po Soborze Watykańskim II*. Eds. J. Nagórny, J. Gocko. Lublin 2006 p. 127-161), *Problematyka moralna w dialogu katolicko-anglikańskim* [Moral Issues in the Catholic-Anglican Dialogue] (In: *Ekumenia a współczesne wyzwania moralne*. Ed. Z. Kałużny, Z. Kijas. Kraków: Wyd. Naukowe PAT 2009 p. 121-152).

menical exploration in Christian morals (and of course not only morals) is found when those ecumenically oriented follow new titles on the subject in the publishing market. Numerous reviews of recently printed books on various aspects of Christian morals have been appearing mainly in the issue 3 of "Roczniki Teologiczne" (in 2009-2013 renamed to "Roczniki Teologii Moralnej").

KUL's Theology Faculty, including the Institute of Moral Theology, is a uniquely well-equipped and qualified theological environment with numerous specialists in all fields of theology. A high number of graduate and post-graduate students come to KUL to continue their studies and research in theology. Some of those choose ecumenically shaped research and specialization in Christian moral teaching when preparing their doctoral dissertations. Among them was Janusz Podzielny with his dissertation on the concept of marriage in Evangelical theological ethics (2009)⁵¹. Jacek Uchan wrote his dissertation on the Jehovah's Witnesses' understanding of marriage and family life (2008). Jan Kobylecki's dissertation *The Catholic Vision of Marriage and Family in the Teaching of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen*, while focused on Catholic ideas, referred extensively to a non-Catholic religious and social context of American society (2008). It is also a good sign that in other Polish universities an ecumenical approach to theology and ethics is not overlooked. S. Nowosad was asked to act as a formal reviewer of Krzysztof Gryz's habilitation thesis in Orthodox theology in Kraków (2010) as well as of Tomasz Józefowicz's doctorate in John Howard Yoder's Mennonite political ethics in Warsaw (2013).

SELECTED LITERATURE

- J o h n P a u l II: Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*. The Vatican: LEV 1993.
 J o h n P a u l II: Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*. The Vatican: LEV 1995.
 ARCIC II. *Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church*. London: CHT-CTS 1994.
 Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions. A Study Document* [1995]. "The Ecumenical Review" 48:1996 n. 2 p. 143-154.
 B l a c k R.: *Christian Moral Realism: Natural Law, Narrative, Virtue and the Gospel*. Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press 2000.

⁵¹ Published as *Wizja małżeństwa w świetle ewangelickiej etyki teologicznej* (Opole: RW Wydziału Teologicznego UO 2009).

- B r e c k J.: God with Us: Critical Issues in Christian Life and Faith. Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 2003.
- B r e t z k e J. T.: Ecumenical Ethics, History and Vatican II. "Josephinum Journal of Theology" 6:1999 n. 2 p. 18-38.
- Ecumenical Ventures in Ethics: Protestants Engage Pope John Paul II's Moral Encyclicals. Eds. R. Hütter, T. Dieter. Grand Rapids–Cambridge: Eerdmans 1998.
- G u r o i a n V.: Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 2002.
- G u s t a f s o n J. M.: Roman Catholic and Protestant Interaction in Ethics: An Interpretation. "Theological Studies" 50:1989 n. 1 p. 44-69.
- H a r a k a s S. S.: Christian Ethics in Ecumenical Perspective: An Orthodox Christian View. "Journal of Ecumenical Studies" 15:1978 n. 4 p. 631-646.
- H a r a k a s S. S.: Wholeness of Faith and Life: Orthodox Christian Ethics. Vol. 1-3. Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press 1999.
- N o w o s a d S.: Moralność w dialogu ekumenicznym. "Roczniki Teologiczne" 47:2000 n. 3 p. 47-77.
- N o w o s a d S.: Teologia moralna w kontekście ekumenicznym. In: Polska teologia moralna po Soborze Watykańskim II. Eds. J. Nagórny, J. Gocko. Lublin 2006 p. 127-161.
- P e t r à B.: L'etica ortodossa: Storia, fonti, identità. Assisi: Cittadella 2010.
- R o o t M.: Ethics in Ecumenical Dialogues: A Survey and Analysis. "Journal of Ecumenical Studies" 45:2010 n. 3 p. 357-370.
- W o j d a P. J.: The Ecumenical Significance of "Evangelium Vitae". "Word and World" 16:1996 n. 1 p. 52-59.
- W i l l i a m s R.: Life in Christ: Considerations for Synod Group Discussions [26.06.2009] (www.churchofengland.org, access: 4.12.2013).

TEOLOGIA MORALNA UKIERUNKOWANA EKUMENICZNIE

Streszczenie

Dotychczasowy ekumeniczny dialog teologiczny rzadko podejmował głębsze studia nad moralnością chrześcijańską w jej różnych tradycjach. Podobnie i sama teologia moralna stoi przed wezwaniem do większej otwartości na szczery i wzajemnie ubogacający dialog ekumeniczny nad życiem moralnym. Przykłady takiego nastawienia można już jednak znaleźć u takich teologów moralistów (etyków chrześcijańskich), jak np. J. M. Gustafson (protestant), J. T. Bretzke (katolik), B. Petrà (katolik) czy S. S. Harakas (prawosławny). Również nauczanie moralne Jana Pawła II (zawarte zwłaszcza w *Veritatis splendor* i *Evangelium vitae*) doprowadziło do cennych dyskusji między katolickimi i niekatolickimi teologami nad rozumieniem fundamentalnych czy bardziej szczegółowych zagadnień moralnych. Warto podkreślić, że także Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, zwłaszcza przez badania i dydaktykę prowadzone w Katedrze Teologii Moralnej Ekumenicznej, ma swój godny uwagi wkład w tworzenie teologii moralnej ukierunkowanej bardziej ekumenicznie.

Słowa kluczowe: teologia moralna, etyka chrześcijańska, ekumenizm, dialog ekumeniczny.