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THEOLOGY AND HISTORY: AN OUTLINE OF METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

Abstract. The article aims to bring together the ambiguities that arise in the course of determining the relationship between theology and the historical sciences. Just as the understanding of the relationship between the natural sciences and theology has developed due to the growth of methodological self-awareness of these disciplines, especially regarding their temporality, a similar progress could be expected in the research on relationship between theology and the historical sciences. It seems that the topic still needs to be synthesized on the ground of fundamental theology. For the theologian, a hermeneutical point of reference on the issue under discussion, can be the ruling of the Second Vatican Council in the 36th paragraph of the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. The temporality of theology features at least three dimensions: God's Revelation occurrence in time, the occurrence in time of scientific reflection on this Revelation, and the dependence of the understanding and interpretation of both on the data provided by the historical sciences. The solution to the aporias arising in these processes can be the theological study of historiographical doctrines and the historical study of the history of Christianity, self-aware and critical of the historiographical doctrines being accepted.

Keywords: fundamental theology; *Gaudium et Spes*; historiography; history; methodology; philosophy of science; Revelation

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1. HISTORY: SACRED OR CURSED?

From the time of Eusebius of Caesarea¹ to Karlheinz Deschner² (next year will bring the tenth anniversary of his death), the Church as a social dimension of the Christian religion has invariably appeared on the radar of interest of generations of scholars. Names of the historians, who at radically different times followed radically different historiographies, in a scope from to say the least, poems of glory and holiness down to showcase of the Roman Catholic Church as the hell on earth,³ have been recalled deliberately to illustrate a question: which story is true? And what is the truth?⁴ Is then the history, in this case history of the Church,

¹ Died before 341 AD, is known as exegete, apologist and historian. Living at the time of the abolition of persecution of Christians by Constantine's Edict of Milan, he can be considered the first regular historian of the Church. However, it is difficult to see him as a historian in the 20th-century sense. His work includes, for example, a Panegyric in honor of Emperor Constantine, and as James Stevenson points out: "A noteworthy tendency in his writings is an almost excessive reliance on sources, which sometimes reduces his work to strings of quotations. This may be described as the writing of fully documented apologetic or history, but it can also be considered as a failure to digest what he had read and to consolidate the results of his reading." J. Stevenson, "Eusebius of Caesarea," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, ed. Thomas Carson, Joann Cerrito (Washington DC: Catholic University of America, 2003), 453.

² To the author, who died on April 8, 2014, the website deschner.info is dedicated, where 51 of his works are noted in the bibliography section. The most extensive, written between 1970 and 2013, was "Christianity's Criminal History".

³ Hannes Hintermeier posthumously characterized the figure of the aforementioned author in this way: "For Deschner, there was only one enemy—the Catholic Church and its Roman leaders. Deliberately one-sided, as an early representative of participatory historiography, he wanted to prove how often the Church had walked over dead bodies in its long history ... Prominent church critic Hans Küng dismissed Deschner's criminalization of the Church as unacceptable, while historians confirmed his methodological shortcomings and one-sided selection of literature." Hannes Hintermeier. *Zum Tod des Religionskritikers Deschner: Richter Gnadenlos*, accessed November 8, 2023, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, accessed November 8, 2023. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/zum-tod-des-religionskritikers-deschner-richter-gnadenlos-12889729.html>.

⁴ "Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?". John 18,37–38, Bible Gateway, accessed November 9, 2023, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2018&version=NRSVCE>. The extremity of historical assessments and the contradiction of narratives could, of course, be reconciled in a postmodern discourse, nevertheless, even this seems a poor consolation, if only in light of the work of Karl Raymund Popper taken into a serious consideration i.e. in the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Krakow (pl. Ośrodek Badań Interdyscyplinarnych—OBI): Stanisław Wszolek, *Nieusuwalność metafizyki. Logiczno-lingwistyczne aspekty debaty Rudolfa Carnapa z Ludwigiem Wittgensteinem i Karlem R. Popperem* (Tarnów: Biblos, 1997); "Zagadnienie sensu i demarkacji we wczesnych pismach Ludwiga Wittgensteina, Rudolfa Carnapa i Karla R. Poppera", *Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne* 15 (1997): 65–97; Józef Życiński, "Popperowska obrona racjonalności", *Zagadnienia Filozoficzne w Nauce* 10 (1988):

heaven or hell, domain of wicked humans or heavenly spirits? And why should a theologian deal with historic issues?

Solutions can be sought through at least two avenues, which two would be called: one—ontological-spiritual and another—methodological, which is consequently an extension of the former. In the first instance, the answer provided by the eminent Aramaic language expert, Catholic biblical scholar Pierre Grelot is noteworthy: “Secular and sacred history are not two separate realities that run in parallel. They are interwoven one into the other. In concrete terms, there is only one human story, unfolding on both planes at the same time.”⁵ The Christian understanding of history according to Mircea Eliade goes even further: “In view of the fact that God became incarnate, that He took upon Himself a human existence, historically conditioned, history can also receive sanctification.”⁶

Fundamental theology seems to be the very scholar field, that sets the benchmark for interdisciplinary research in theology, and therefore also for its methodological relation to the history as science: first, because it can be considered a “threshold discipline”,⁷ and at the same time it remains at the heart

36–40; As stated by Wiesław Wójcik “Popper’s criticism not only applies to neo-positivism (and various forms of scientism), but also concerns contemporary forms of struggle against the notions of truth, objectivity and individuality (...) proponents of Popperian methodology, conceptions of science, society and culture go against the grain of contemporary postmodernist and constructionist currents”. Wiesław Wójcik, “Two ways of neo-positivism critique,” *Uniwersyteckie Czasopismo Socjologiczne* 10 (2015): 71.

⁵ Continued: “The grace of redemption, whose mysterious is at work right at the heart of secular history. This grace strives to transform every moment, to pull it back from the perils that threaten it, either to reorder it to its supernatural purpose, or to remedy the “wounds” of human nature. And since the advent of the New Man in Jesus Christ is the ultimate end towards which everything is directed, we can say that, in a certain sense, holy history integrates all secular history, to which it ultimately confers its intelligible meaning. In this way, even those events whose immediate significance would lead one to link them to secular history are linked, through their ultimate destiny, to sacred history.” Pierre Grelot, *Sens chrétien de l’Ancien Testament: esquisse d’un traité dogmatique* (Paris: Tournai (Belgium): Desclée, 1962), 111.

⁶ Continued: “*Illud tempus*, invoked by the Gospel, is a strictly historical time—the time when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea—but this time was sanctified by the presence of Christ ... In short, history is revealed as a new dimension of God’s presence in the world. History becomes sacred history again, as it was understood—but in a mythical perspective—by primitive and archaic religions.” Mircea Eliade, *Sacrum, mit, historia. Wybór esejów*, trans. Anna Tatarkiewicz (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970). 116.

⁷ As Hans Waldenfels characterized it “In a sense, the activity of a fundamental theologian can be compared to standing on the threshold of a house. Whoever stands on the threshold is simultaneously outside and inside. He hears the arguments of those behind the door and those inside. But he is interested in entering the house. On the one hand, he makes his own what people outside know and see—in *philosophy, history and the social sciences* [emphasis by F.K.]—what they know about God, Jesus of Nazareth and the Church, but also what they know about themselves,

of theological knowledge classification.⁸ The second reason for fundamental theology's interdisciplinary affiliation is because it constructs the methodological foundation for theology by working out basic theological concepts, such as Revelation.⁹ This issue will be due to revisit in the final part of this paper.

2. FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY AND "SECULAR" HISTORY RESEARCH

Rev. Professor Marian Rusecki, co-founder of the Lublin School of Fundamental Theology, can hardly be suspected of lacking historical interests. One of the school's characteristics is its attention to the "credibility criteria from the test of time, a positive balance of the Church's presence in history as well as cultural and historiotransformative arguments".¹⁰ He consistently develops this theme in

the world and society in which they live. On the other hand, knowledge from within as an invitation to all who are inside and outside. The key point of Christian theology, however, is that the door, which figuratively, as the door to man's true salvation in the light of the only vision of the one who said in the words of the Gospel of John: "I am the Gate" (John 10,9)." Hans Waldenfels, *Kontextuelle Fundamentaltheologie* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1985), 87.

⁸ Today the three-fold differentiation between historic, systematic and practical theology is being taken for granted. "The division of theological disciplines into historical, systematic and practical is widely accepted." Wiesław Przygoda, "Paradygmaty metodologiczne we współczesnej teologii pastoralnej", *Teologia praktyczna* 10 (2009): 31. Interesting, that some 20th-century studies included historical theology in the structure of the theological sciences, skipping fundamental theology instead as "Fundamental theology usually includes a *purely rational justification of the act of faith* (known as apologetics) [emphasis by F.K.], which comes out of human experience, and a lecture on the sources of theological faith (known as *loci theologici*)." Stanisław Kamiński, *Pojęcie nauki i klasyfikacja nauk* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1970), 284. Some, on the other hand, placed fundamental theology between historical and systematic theology. Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski, *Jak uprawiać teologię* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej, 1996), 76. As Marek Skierkowski stated, "Fundamental theology, heir to traditional apologetics, had to come a long way before it became one of the core theological specialties today". This path was described in the article: Marek Skierkowski, "Revelation—Credibility—Transmission (Gerald O'Collins' Concept of Fundamental Theology)," *Studia Theologica Varsoviensia* 37 (1999): 127.

⁹ Marian Rusecki, *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa*, t. 1: *Z teorii teologii fundamentalnej* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1994), 120; René Latourelle, "Apologetique et fondamentale," *Salesianum* 26 (1965): 272.

¹⁰ Krzysztof Kaucha, "The Credibility of the Church in Contemporary Poland," *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 33 (2018): 71; *Wiarygodność Kościoła w kontekście wyzwań współczesności europejskiej w świetle nauczania Jana Pawła II* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2008), 44–53; Marian Rusecki, "Kulturotwórczy argument," in *Leksykon Teologii Fundamentalnej*, ed. Marian Rusecki and others (Lublin-Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2002), 730–742; "Czy Kościół w Polsce jest

his work, publishing “The Historical Significance of Christianity” a year before his death, where he summarily discusses the historical development of Christianity “ad intra” and “ad extra,” the contribution of Christianity to spiritual-material culture, the anthropogenic and community-forming role of Christianity, and the Christian understanding of the meaning of history.¹¹ With some surprise, then, one can read Fr. Rusecki’s methodological works treating the relationship of fundamental theology to neighboring sciences, which include natural and philosophical sciences, anthropology, biblical sciences, dogmatic theology, ecumenism and religious studies. However, look in vain for the historical sciences, or the humanities more broadly, in this list.¹² In the context of the preceding considerations, this seems quite a gap. Or, maybe, a conscious choice?¹³

The reason for not placing “secular” history sciences among the disciplines neighboring fundamental theology may be explained by the statement in the same volume: “Church history, belonging to the theological disciplines, studies the activity and development of the Church of Christ as the People of God called to transmit revelation-salvation values in history. *It differs from secular history in its subject matter, mainly formal* [emphasis by F.K.]. Using the methods developed in the methodology of history, it adapts them to its own purposes. These methods are: heuristic, source criticism, interpretation, value judgments and synthesis.”¹⁴ The idea, then, would be to “safeguard” the mysterious, divine-human character of the Church, while preserving the scientific nature of the study of this complex reality through methods accepted in the scientific world. Another explanation for the described absence might have been bi-directional crisis of the Vatican II era, when fundamental theology almost disappeared¹⁵ and, at the same time, variations of metahistoric reflection grew to the pain of theologians in different parts of the World.¹⁶ But is it worth abandoning the idea of closer cooperation between theo-

wiarygodny?” in *Wiarygodność Kościoła wobec przemian w Polsce. Quo vadis Ecclesia Polonorum?*, ed. Marian Rusecki (Pelplin, Lublin: Bernardinum, 1994); *Fenomen chrześcijaństwa. Wkład w kulturę* (Lublin: Gaudium, 2001)

¹¹ Marian Rusecki, *Dziejowe znaczenie chrześcijaństwa* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2011).

¹² Rusecki, *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa*, 29–82.

¹³ The aforementioned classification was repeated in the expanded posthumous edition of the previously cited item *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa*. In Marian Rusecki, Jacenty Mastej, Krzysztof Kaucha, *Metodologia teologii fundamentalnej* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2019), 71–118.

¹⁴ Rusecki, *Metodologia teologii fundamentalnej*, 26.

¹⁵ See the above footnote on the “three-fold differentiation in theological disciplines” and how it was attempted to place or not to place fundamental theology within this structure of theology.

¹⁶ As an example of the theologian’s critical view of mid-20th century historiosophy, let’s take a bittersweet essay by Rev. Richards, in which he wrote: “Indeed, the day is not far distant when, in

logians and historians, when it has somehow succeeded even with representatives of sciences like medicine, physics or cosmology?¹⁷

3. WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE TRULY SCIENTIFIC?

In the precarious World the mid-20th century baby-stage crawling globalization rose out of the second-war bloodshed. This post-colonial or neo-colonial world has been contested in places by reactions of isolationism for an overwhelming number of factors, like former and rising superpowers rivalry and

history as in metaphysics, the third degree of abstraction will triumphantly be reached: a history of histories of history. ... Now that theology, side-stepping the advances of Professor Toynbee, passes over into history, the earnest reader and the innocent enquirer may well give up the stony search for truth and curl up comfortably once more in their favourite armchairs to dream and doze over their old familiar copies of *The Bible Designed to be Read as Literature*.” Michael Richards, “Theology and History,” *New Blackfriars* 46 (1965): 447–448. Much more traumatic was the clash between Marxist historiography and Catholic theology in the Communist Poland, where historiography was abused by the authorities as an instrument of open ideological and political warfare against the Church. Zbigniew Romek, *Cenzura a nauka historyczna w Polsce 1944–1970* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, Instytut Historii PAN, 2010), 172–201 (the Chapter: “From the practice of applying Marxism on the example of censorship reviews of historical works from 1952–1955”). So it is hardly surprising to see some relics of isolationism, discernible even in mature methodological studies.

¹⁷ Representatives of the aforementioned OBI (Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Krakow) have made a significant contribution to promoting the discussed dialogue in the Church circles. The author of this article studied their work, which resulted in a book: Filip Krauze, *Jedna Prawda. Dwie Księgi. Nauki przyrodnicze a teologia w Ośrodku Badań Interdyscyplinarnych Papieskiej Akademii Teologicznej w Krakowie* (Kraków: Ośrodek Badań Interdyscyplinarnych—Wydawnictwo WAM, 2008). The greatest influence on the dialog between sciences and religion, as well as the inspiration for the “OBI” operations was exerted by Cardinal Karol Wojtyła—Pope John Paul II, who personally assumed and organized interdisciplinary seminars for representatives of theology, history and natural sciences first in Krakow and then in Castel Gandolfo. Evidence of this approach can be seen, for example, in his address to the Participants in the 12th Seminar on “Science, Religion, History” in Castel Gandolfo on August 8th, 2003: “Our community has expressed symbolically the bond between the Church and the Academy; this bond is particularly important in this era of major cultural changes. In order that the contemporary witnesses of truth should not feel alone, it is necessary to promote an authentic spirit of solidarity between all those who are at the service of thought. The Church cannot be indifferent to the achievements of science that have come about and developed within Christianity's cultural sphere of influence. It is also necessary to remember that truth and freedom are inseparably united in the great work of the edification of culture at the service of the complete maturation of the human person. Calling to mind the words of Christ, “the truth will make you free” (Jn 8: 32), we want to build the gospel culture, free from those illusions and utopias which brought great suffering in the 20th century,” vatican.va, accessed November 11, 2023, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2003/august/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20030808_seminario.html

crescendos of the cold war. Then the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* promulgated by pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, has become a kind of an amnesty for those in the Church, who doubted the permission of the ecclesiastic authorities to dialogue with this rather suspicious reality and moreover, a sort of apology for the previous isolations, or even dominations.¹⁸ The Council Fathers, with a single paragraph, liberated vast areas of human scholar (and therefore historiographical) activity from the moral anxiety of believers, actually placing only two conditions on its fairness: it needs to be “carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms”. In this case “accord with moral norms” means, of course, Catholic ethics. But what has been meant by the “genuinely scientific manner”?¹⁹

The changes in the understanding of what is “scientific” today and what was “scientific” yesterday are evident. When I talk to students, for example, about the fallacy of presentism²⁰, I recall potential examples of criticisms against intel-

¹⁸ This is especially true for the Paragraph 36th, which must necessarily be quoted here because of the momentousness of its implications: “For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts. Therefore if methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out *in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms* [emphasis by F.K.], it never truly conflicts with faith, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God. Indeed whoever labors to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind, even though he is unaware of the fact, is nevertheless being led by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence, and gives them their identity. *Consequently, we cannot but deplore certain habits of mind, which are sometimes found too among Christians, which do not sufficiently attend to the rightful independence of science and which, from the arguments and controversies they spark, lead many minds to conclude that faith and science are mutually opposed* [emphasis by F.K.]” Vatican.va, accessed November 11, 2023, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

¹⁹ Michał Heller, a cosmologist, theologian and Templeton Prize winner, found delivery of a strict and universally accepted definition of the term “science” inconceivable. Instead, it is possible, in his opinion, to identify several designations of the term, referring to such fields and processes as cognitive activity, the process of research or learning, the product of research activities, and the institution. Michał Heller, *Filozofia nauki. Wprowadzenie* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Papierskiej Akademii Teologicznej, 1992), 10; In a similar vein, Polish science methodology specialist Stanisław Kamiński suggested that the term “science” should be treated as a kind of “family of meanings” because “there is a family resemblance between the different types of designators of science, hence the definition of science should take into account the family of meanings.” Stanisław Kamiński, *Nauka i metoda. Pojęcie nauki i klasyfikacja nauk* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1992), 22.

²⁰ The problem of presentism and its modern mutations has been recently addressed in detail by François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time (European Perspectives)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). The vision outlined by the French

lectual conditions in the Middle Ages. People of that era must have been boundlessly stupid, because they did not know penicillin and perished like flies upon any infection. And it was certainly the fault of the Roman-Catholic clergy, keeping people in the dark. (Just where did these universities, architecture and art come from? ... Maybe they were left behind by visitors from outer space?) Wait a minute... what will people say about us in 500... oh no, in 50 years? That after the French and Communist revolutions, after the significant elimination of religion from public square in Europe, we became idiots, fighting in the Persian Gulf over hydrocarbons and trembling at Russia turning off our gas tap. After all, it was enough to trigger cold fusion... It was enough after all... The above “cabaret insert” was intended not only to entertain the Reader, but also as a reminder that in meta-reflection on scientific progress, so-called “common sense” can prove to be an extremely unreliable guide.

What is then a resolution of this aporia? One would have to turn to studies in the philosophy of science, such as Zygmunt Hajduk’s “Temporality of Science. Controversial issues in the dynamics of science.”²¹ “Temporality” means “Dependence on time”, which invokes a screaming relativism in place, where one following positivist paradigm would take his observation statements for granted. In the work’s preface the author claimed, that post-positivist scientific theories place a strong emphasis on the question of scientific advancement, development, and cognitive progress. A multitude of perspectives on the dynamics of science, its evolution, advancement, and the variables that jointly influence the intricate processes of theory selection, or more broadly, the diachrony of science and its

historian swings to the dark side of the mental coherence of modern scholars, or even civilizational continuity of the world as we know it: “Today, enlightenment has its source in the present, and the present alone. To this extent—and this extent only—there is neither past nor future nor historical time, if one accepts that modern historical time was set in motion by the tension between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation. Are we to conclude that experience and expectation have moved so far apart that the tension between them has reached breaking point, that we are at a point where the two categories have come apart? Whether this is a temporary or a permanent state, the fact remains that this present is a time of memory and debt, of daily amnesia, uncertainty, and simulation. As such, we can no longer adequately describe our present—this moment of crisis of time—in the terms we have been using and developing, inspired by Arendt’s insights, as a “gap” between past and future. The present can no longer be understood, or only partially, as an “odd in-between period” in historical time [The new “Middle Ages”?—remark by F.K.], “during which one becomes aware of an interval in time which is altogether determined by things that are no longer and by things that are not yet.” On the contrary, this presentist present seeks to be determined by nothing other than itself. Its features have been sketched above—and they are our own.” Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity*, 204.

²¹ Zygmunt Hajduk, *Temporalność nauki. Kontrowersyjne zagadnienia dynamiki nauki* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1995).

non-cognitive fruits, are matched by the pluralized contemplation on science. The issue pertains to the natural sciences, as well as, to a lesser extent, the humanities, such as philosophy and history.²² After examining traditional approaches as well as Popper's position and the solutions proposed in post-Popperism, Hajduk proposed a synthetic approach, within which the problem, definition and the determinants of scientific progress have been approached. In conclusion, he stated: "In the analysis of all three components of the dynamics of science, that are: the change, development and progress, the theme of scientific rationality, modified under the influence of the results of research in the field of humanistic meta-sciences, was clearly marked. Publications in this field often take the form of ... case studies ... In turn, if such research is carried out within the philosophy of science, it features a metamethodological dimension, playing a role in the evaluation of various types of theories of rationality."²³ Thus, a field capable of measuring the "scientificness" and deeply, the "rationality" of scientific theories would be the philosophy of science. At least by analogy, would we expect to have a similar solution in the "dispute between Caesarean and Deschner" signaled at the beginning of this article? Before attempting to answer this question, let us return for a moment to the methodological determinants of fundamental theology.

4. TEMPORALITY OF THEOLOGY

An example of the 1960's crisis in fundamental theology, triggered by its search for a new identity, has already been mentioned in this paper.²⁴ Catholic theology falls subject under evolution analogically to what we have just named as "temporality of science",²⁵ although its attachment to the Aristotelian-Thomistic

²² Hajduk, *Temporalność nauki*, 7.

²³ *Ibidem*, 233.

²⁴ See also: Marian Rusecki, "Współczesne teorie apologetyczne," *Collectanea Theologica* 51 (1981), 5–42; Krzysztof Polak, "Od apologetyki do teologii fundamentalnej. Analiza przemiany nauki o wiarygodności chrześcijaństwa w świetle pism Tadeusza Gogolewskiego," *Studia Teologiczne* 40 (2022), 121–135.

²⁵ The ancient principle of St. Vincent of Lerin, allowing Catholic doctrine to evolve, was expressed in his *Commonitorium*. According to some renowned theologians, such as Nicola Bux, today the Church experiences quite an opposite problem: it is not at all a matter of ossification of doctrine, but of revolutionary changes, breaking out of the aforementioned ancient principle. Nicola Bux, "Living Tradition and the misunderstanding about Vincent of Lérins' position." *Daily Compass* 28.01(2022). Daily Compass, accessed November, 11, 2023, <https://newdailycompass.com/en/living-tradition-and-the-misunderstanding-about-vincent-of-lerins-position>; The researcher, who comprehensively traces the development of the Catholic theological tradition is French theologian and ecumenist

tradition made an impression of its permanent petrification. On the part of the Roman-Catholic Church in Poland, perhaps the heaviest accusation against such a state of affairs was made by Archbishop Józef Życiński: “The philosophical shift from the intimately close God of nature and human life dramas to the abstraction of the Immovable Mover represents one of the most dramatic examples of the impoverishment of the content of Christianity.”²⁶ According to the author, this impoverishment is directly responsible for the creation of the intellectual climate, that resulted in the atheistic interpretation of nature during the Enlightenment period.²⁷

Being about the self-awareness of limitations in fundamental theology it becomes to recall another dimension of its “temporality”, which is, that in examining and justifying the plausibility of Christian revelation, our discipline remains deeply dependent on the results of historical theology: biblical studies, patrology, Church history. Every newly discovered manuscript containing a copy of Biblical texts, every new archaeological excavation from times of Jesus and his community of disciples, or analogous discoveries of early Christian paleography and other auxiliary sciences of history, may shed a new light (or cast a shadow) on previous interpretations. This, by the way, seems quite obvious, and Catholic theology had to face its historiography challenged by “demitologization” and formgeschichte approaches.²⁸ The time of Jesus Christ’s teaching, the duration of his earthly life is limited, according to Christian tradition, to about 30 years.²⁹ Church history, however, finds itself on a completely different scale, counting now in the thousands of years. The amount of testimony, both internal and external, on the basis of which one would have to judge the credibility of the Church as a whole or in its individual communities (continental, national, ethnic, religious), seems completely overwhelming in the latter case. Thus, this is a problem of a quantitative kind that calls for a qualitative methodology grounded in an appropriate historiography.

Bernard Sesboué, co-author of series: *Histoire des dogmes*, vol. 1: *Le Dieu du salut* (1994); vol. 2: *L’homme et son salut* (1995); vol. 3: *Les signes du salut* (1995); vol. 4: *La Parole du salut* (1996).

²⁶ Józef Życiński, “U źródeł panenteizmu chrześcijańskiego”, in *V Seminarium Interdyscyplinarne w Castel Gandolfo, 8–11 sierpnia 1988* (Kraków: Wydział Filozoficzny Towarzystwa Jezusowego, 1990), 85.

²⁷ Krauze, *Jedna Prawda*, 197.

²⁸ It seems that in the Polish literature, this issue was most succinctly and clearly dealt with in a small booklet by Rev. Prof. Jozef Kudasiewicz, *Jezus historii a Chrystus wiary* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1987); Kazimierz Romaniuk, *Morfokrytyka i historia redakcji czyli Form-i Redaktionsgeschichte* (Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1983).

²⁹ The newer discussions over this issue may be represented by Jeffrey R. Chadwick, “Dating the Birth of Christ,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 49 (2010): 1–35.

In the above context a remark made by Yves Congar in the early 1970's may be as inspiring as warning against theological drifting with the waves of momentary trends and aesthetics: "The knowledge of history opens the way for us to a healthy relativism ... Through history we grasp things in their proper proportions. We avoid taking for tradition, what comes from the day before yesterday and has changed over time. We deprive of drama many of the anxieties of which the appearance of new ideas and forms makes us sick ... But we should also mention *the history of history* [namely: historiography, emphasis by F.K.], which is by no means a kind of bidding war of scholarly research: it is an excellent means of self-criticism, showing us how events and people have been misjudged under the pressure of some conditions ..."³⁰

Moreover, let us not oversee the variability of theology not only in time, but also in space, and in its various models.³¹ Thus, for example, in the context of Latino-American theology, Andrzej Pietrzak lists six of such models: translational, anthropological, praxeological, synthetic (of the relationship between faith and culture), transcendental and counter-cultural.³² Just as there is no "perfect science," and the criteria of "scientificness", as mentioned, keep changing in time with the development of meta-scientific self-awareness of science, similarly, the richness of content represented by the term "theology" allows for its multifaceted understanding, as well. What unites the disciplines under discussion, is a certain form of criticism, more evident in the natural sciences. A constant criterion for distinguishing theology and secular sciences remains their relationship to divine Revelation.³³ Noteworthy, besides the meanings and notions of science, the concept of Revelation was subject to certain transformations as well, especially since the second half of the 19th century.³⁴ Increase in the self-awareness of the limits of science has its analogy in theological reflection. Even

³⁰ Yves Congar. "Historia Kościoła 'miejscem teologicznym,'" *Concilium* 6–10 (1970), 95 quoted after: Napiórkowski, *Jak uprawiać teologię*, 116.

³¹ On the issue of theological tradition "in time and space": Napiórkowski, *Jak uprawiać teologię*. 95–96. As practical as elaborated application of the category of model in theology may be found in works of Andrzej Pietrzak SVD, who considers its function comparable to the role that models play in other sciences. He does so especially on the example of the model of cultural evangelization and inculturation of faith. The author gives numerous examples of model and paradigmatic approaches to the historical reality studied by theologians in such scholars as Cipriano Vagaggini, Justo L. González, Robert J. Schreiter, Clodovis Boff, Avery Dulles and others. Andrzej Pietrzak, *Modele ewangelizacji kultur i inkulturacji wiary w teologii latynoamerykańskiej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2019), 34–46.

³² Pietrzak, *Modele ewangelizacji*, 46–52.

³³ Krauze, *Jedna Prawda*, 51.

³⁴ Rusecki, *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa*, 182–199.

theological cognition, reaching into God's mysteries, is also limited by human cognitive and linguistic abilities.³⁵

5. ENCOUNTER OF THEOLOGY AND HISTORY IN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Let us return to the issue of the concept of Revelation, signaled at the end of the 1st paragraph of this paper, the reliability of which is the core, constituting the methodological consistency of fundamental theology. This issue is also a tangible example of the "temporality of theology" described earlier in its multiple dimensions. In Marian Rusecki's conviction, "God's revelation only came into existence in history when a particular man, the addressee of God (patriarch, messenger, emissary, king, judge or ordinary man, perhaps even the first in history) heard God's word or perceived His work and interpreted it as a call for dialogue. *Then it became historicized* [emphasis by F.K.]. This is not to say that God is not the Lord of history, unable to act in a specific time and place, but He does so most often through the sign of a person, also real and concrete. The other signs of Revelation are sort of secondary to the personal, but also related to them."³⁶ Here we are dealing with the basic, existential level of human contact with God in history, and yet not the only one, since this person-oriented and personalistic revelation features its meta-level in the form of theology, as well. Thus, while the historic character of this first encounter between man and God fades into the darkness of prehistory, this second encounter on the meta-level of theology holds its relevant mark on the timeline. The historicity and thus temporality of theology, however, is not without its conflicts. In the work "One Truth. Two Books," this problem is shown as the so-called Heller-Pedersen Conflict of Birth Thesis which concerns the extraordinary significance of the first entry of Christian theology into the influence of science, at the time when, at the very dawn of Christianity, transcendent truths had to be expressed in limited human language. The tension between science and religion, resulting from the poverty of the available means of expression, in relation to the infinitely surpassing content, is practically irremovable and always present in all kinds of confrontations between natural science, and on the basis of previous considerations, it can be assumed that also historical, and theology.³⁷

³⁵ Tadeusz Dzidek, "Granice formalne teologii pozytywnej," in *Granice rozumu w teologicznym poznaniu Boga* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2001), 129–146.

³⁶ Rusecki, *Metodologia teologii fundamentalnej*, 205.

³⁷ Krauze, *Jedna Prawda*, 92. 173.

The groundbreaking character of the *Gaudium et Spes* Constitution, was not limited to aforementioned liberation of believers' reflection on the historical dimension of Christianity. Moreover, it expressed itself in giving this reflection a certain methodological direction. As Fr. Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski wrote three decades after the Vatican II, "the definition of the signs of the times is only just maturing. It is assumed that it is a matter of distinguishing in time, that is, in the course of events, in history, those aspects, those signs, which can tell us something about immanent providence ... or perhaps can be indications for us ... of some connection with the Kingdom of God ... These very manifestations seem to us to be signs of the times ... the hermeneutical key to understanding the Christian economy, in order to discover in the course of history the presence of the Word of God."³⁸

Indeed, the multifaceted development of such an understanding of history by Catholics continues in both theological reflection and pastoral activity. As an example of this synthesis, let us consider the description of the "see-judge-act" method proposed by Fr. Andrzej Pietrzak SVD: "The purpose of this stage ["seeing"] is to build a critical and reliable discourse—a description of reality that takes into account all necessary aspects: religious, anthropological, psychological, socio-cultural, historical, economic and political."³⁹ Thus, it is clear that modern theology cannot and does not want to do without communication with history, with historical sciences. However, the initial question returns: which historiography is "true"?

The nightmare of "the third degree of abstraction", the "meta-meta-history" mentioned by quoted in the 2nd paragraph of this paper Rev. Michael Richards⁴⁰ may unexpectedly turn into the blessing in disguise. By analogy with research in relationships between science and religion, resulting in discovery of their "mutual temporalities" should not be beneficial to implement such a study on history of historiography and its theological consequences? Happily for further research of this kind, though apparently without much resonance among theologians, a monumental work by Andrzej F. Grabski, "History of Historiography," was published.⁴¹ The comprehensiveness of the study, bringing, among other things, a detailed overview of post-Enlightenment historiographical doctrines, such as: historicism, positivism, Marxism, the Annales School, global, quantitative and psychologizing history, offer hope in such a dialogue for a healthy relativism on

³⁸ Napiórkowski, *Jak uprawiać teologię*. 40. A comprehensive study of the issue of signs of the times was offered by Paweł Rabczyński, *Znaki czasów według Marie-Dominique Chenu* (Olsztyn: Warmińskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 2007).

³⁹ Pietrzak, *Modele ewangelizacji*, 192.

⁴⁰ Richards, *Theology and History*, 447.

⁴¹ Andrzej Feliks Grabski, *Dzieje historiografii*. Wprowadzenie Rafał Stobiecki (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2006)

the side of both theology and historical science. And for a mature completion of the question of the placement of fundamental theology among the neighboring sciences. Then perhaps it will be easier, both for historians and theologians, to find the right path for a Christian understanding of history, between the Scylla of Eusebius of Caesarea and the Harybdis of Karlheinz Deschner.

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TEOLOGIA I HISTORIA. ZARYS WYZWAŃ METODOLOGICZNYCH W TEOLOGII FUNDAMENTALNEJ

Streszczenie

Artykuł ma na celu zebranie niejednoznaczności, pojawiających się w toku ustalenia relacji teologii do nauk historycznych. Tak jak rozumienie relacji nauk przyrodniczych i teologii rozwinęło

się dzięki wzrostowi samoświadomości metodologicznej tych dyscyplin, zwłaszcza co do ich temporalności, podobnego postępu można by oczekiwać po relacji teologia — nauki historyczne. Wydaje się, że temat wciąż wymaga syntetycznego dopracowania na gruncie teologii fundamentalnej. Dla teologa hermeneutycznym punktem odniesienia może być w omawianej kwestii orzeczenie Soboru Watykańskiego II w 36. punkcie Konstytucji *Gaudium et spes*. Temporalność teologii ma co najmniej trzy sensy: zaistnienie w czasie Bożego Objawienia, zaistnienie w czasie refleksji naukowej nad tym Objawieniem oraz zależność rozumienia i wykładu obydwu od danych dostarczanych przez nauki historyczne. Rozwiązaniem powstających w tych procesach aporii może być teologiczne studium doktryn historiograficznych oraz historyczne studium dziejów chrześcijaństwa, samoświadome i krytyczne wobec przyjmowanych doktryn historiograficznych.

Słowa kluczowe: *Gaudium et spes*; historia; historiografia; metodologia; filozofia nauki, Objawienie; teologia fundamentalna