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OPPORTUNITIES FOR CATHOLICISM IN THE TRANSFORMATIONS IN POST-COMMUNIST SOCIETY IN POLAND*

THE LEGACY OF COMMUNISM

Over the past ten years we have been witness to a unique experiment. Dozens of nations brought up for generations with a totalitarian ideology have suddenly gained freedom – not only economic and political freedom, but also freedom of what Marxists would term their “world-view”. The inhabitants of Eastern and Central Europe have suddenly found themselves in a different world. Political priorities have shifted, former centres of power have lost their importance, the centres of influence from which the elite took their lead have changed, the system of economic management and decision-making has changed, and the systems of social norms with which generations were indoctrinated are no longer valid. Post-Communist countries and their peoples have suddenly had to rise to the challenge presented by the “free world”, with its free markets, globalisation, liberalism, moral relativism, the omnipotence of the media etc.

At the beginning of the transformations, Poland’s situation was unique among the other countries in the region. First and foremost, it possessed an extremely well organised elite of anti-Communist opposition, which boasted not only great intellectual potential and a strong political base, but also unquestioned moral authority. In addition, the opposition enjoyed the support of the Catholic church, which in spite of decades of Communist rule had succeeded in retaining considerable influence on the life of society. It was only these two factors that enabled Poland to be the first Communist country to undertake the precursory task of transforming its “socialist” society into a democratic, civic society.

* The conference was already held in Budapest at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University on the 10th May 2000.

The Polish economy was quick to shed the most visible outward trappings of its socialist economy, the market controlled by the vendor. Shop shelves filled up, and the pathetic sight of yards of empty shelves with the only stock solitary bottles of vinegar is now only to be seen on archive footage. The process of change in society from socialist to democratic, however, is neither as swift nor as spectacular as the transformation from the model of vendor-controlled to consumer-controlled market.

Socialist mentality

The initial period of transformation was marked by growing apathy and frustration, a legacy of the attitudes that had taken root in Communist Poland as a result of the over-protective and interventionist role of the State. In 1993, the author A. Titkow indicated that post-Communist society in Poland was dominated by the approximately 75% of its citizens whom he described as “externally controlled”, i.e. the classic result in human terms of an over-protective State, characterised by the unshakeable conviction that only external factors, and nothing they can do, have the slightest effect on anything that goes on or anything that happens to them¹. This figure would appear to be somewhat lower today, but “externally-controlled” individuals continue to be in the majority in our society.

The ballast left over from the days of the Polish People's Republic in the form of the mindset of society will continue to cast a shadow over any attempts at reform for decades to come. Although few Poles would now consider themselves Communists, a considerable majority still firmly believe that all are born equal, all “have the same stomach inside them”, and all are entitled to handouts from the State. Hence the attitudes of both whole sections of society and individuals that they are owed something. Miners, farmers, dockworkers and steelworkers are all “entitled” to something. Someone else protests when the council does not grant them a flat. Homeless people protest because they object to living anywhere other than on Warsaw Central Station – they protest, and get what they want. The result: public life becomes irrational to the extent that demagogues, loudmouths and troublemakers are given more time and attention than the reasonable person in the street.

¹ A. Titkow, *Stres i życie społeczne. Polskie doświadczenia*, Warszawa 1993, p. 236.

A proportion of these protests are the legacy of decades of a system in which Poland's economy was subordinated to the political arena, and where the working classes in the manufacturing industries were elevated to the status of idols by the authorities (hence the privileges that continue to be enjoyed by the various sectors of industry even now). Even though ten years have passed since the beginning of the changes, some of the privileges enjoyed by various sectors continue to function, and over 20% of the entire industrial sector is still under direct state control. Paradoxically, this situation is to a large extent due to the power of the trade unions, which played the greatest part in overthrowing the old regime.

This attitude of being owed is intensified by the impoverishment of a large proportion of society, numerous economic scandals, widespread corruption among civil servants, and the growing pathological element in society – by all the factors that inevitably go hand in hand with the profound transformation of a system. Neither is it surprising that large sections of society, including those who actively participated in overthrowing the old system, are seeing their hopes dashed by the changes taking place and are being faced with challenges that they never anticipated and that they are often unable to deal with.

Lost ethical and social standards

Several decades of life in a society governed by a “socialist economy”, with its non-motivational system of work and the lack of identification of both management and the workforce with the interests of their company have led to the erosion of the work ethic. Accustomed to working by the maxim “whether we work or not, we are entitled to our pay”, people have little chance of comprehending the notion of pride in a job well done. People like this are also incapable of identifying with the idea of a business that is “theirs” and of learning to make sacrifices that are sometimes necessary for the good of the firm. The Polish People's Republic has spawned legions of lazy, poorly trained and often arrogant “experts” and “specialists”, victims of the old system who will most probably never now be capable of changing.

In addition to the work ethic, socialism was also responsible for the destruction of much more fundamental morals. Under socialism, theft was a socially accepted means of improving an unjust system of distribution of goods. It is paradoxical that despite the fact that society was by its own confession by and large Catholic, a religion in

which one of the most fundamental tenets is “Thou shalt not steal”, most people nonetheless did steal. Nowadays much of society has learned to respect ownership rights, although this is probably due to a large extent to changes in the approach to property ownership. It is still commonly accepted that stealing does pay, although it is important to steal on a large scale so as not to get caught out, or to be in a position to bribe the relevant State bodies. Socialist morality, with its lack of respect for private ownership, is still in evidence today. As politicians attempt to move towards the re-privatisation of property appropriated illegally by the socialist state they are meeting with resistance from the majority of society, both on the left and on the right. This indicates a clear lack of comprehension of what private property is, and in effect constitutes another example of society’s consent to theft, this time theft committed in the name of the state.

Socialism has also left us with a lack of respect for law. In the past, the law was often manipulated and adapted to the needs of the authorities at a given moment. Now, this lack of respect continues to increase, and the impotence of prosecuting bodies and the courts in the face of excess and the activities of organised groups of criminals is all too clear. Worse still, our legal system itself is so full of loopholes and open to varying interpretations that it actually provokes unethical behaviour.

In addition, there is the problem of the lack of respect and consequent lack of loyalty towards the state that is evident not only amongst normal citizens, but also within the political class. This is an issue connected with the negative aspects of this era of change as mentioned above, which have led to increasing anti-institutional feeling within society, laying it open to atomisation and to the decay of existing bonds within the community.

A time of change

In the initial period of reforms, inexperience and the lack of a tradition of working within a market economy led to economic freedom being treated to a large extent as a negative freedom, i.e. freedom from the constraints imposed by a centrally controlled economy. The wet-behind-the-ears business community gorged itself to choking point on this economic freedom, and attitudes of extreme liberalism flourished, characterised by the maxim that “anything that is not forbidden is permissible”.

Business circles began to exhibit a lack of sensitivity for the ethical and economic effects of the actions of an individual on others and a lack of any sense of responsibility for these actions. Unlimited personal gain came to be accepted as the basis for economic activity, and many businessmen declared their conviction that professional ethics could only hinder them in the pursuit of success.

This period saw activities that flew in the face of any kind of morality being committed openly or at most thinly disguised, mostly due to the strong ties between the economy and the political scene. Incidences that have had the most demoralising effect on public life include corruption amongst civil servants in connection with purchases made in the public sector without tender or by “fixed” tender, concessions for certain areas of the economy, Party members occupying positions in State-run or State-owned companies, or politicians accepting well-paid positions in companies or on Boards of Directors in return for preferential treatment for the company from those pulling the political strings.

This period of building capitalism was also a period characterised by the spread of unfair competition – trade in bootlegged goods, falsification of invoices to reduce customs duty, import of goods past their sell-by date, tax fraud, non-payment of liabilities due – the list is endless. This was also the time when the “grey economy” was born, a product of sharply rising taxes, and at times estimated to extend to up to 30% of the entire manufacturing industry. The fact that it could and still can function on such a scale is due solely to a lack of belief among the people in the authority of the State.

High unemployment during this period made possible a situation where businessmen could reduce the wages of their workforce as they saw fit. They were also in a position to prevent the formation of trade unions within their companies to protect the interests of the employees. At the same time, stances on entitlement were being taken up by several organisations within various branches of industry, such as the Ursus organisation, the Gdańsk shipyard, and the mining and farming industries, which led to a phenomenon unprecedented in the history of economics – the exploitation of employers by employees, and in the case of farmers, the exploitation of the State and of groups of consumers, by organised groups of manufacturers. Growing unemployment led to a rise in crime rates, in particular among young people. The collapse of firms into bankruptcy or mass redundancies also left many middle-aged and older people with no hope of finding a job and bereft of any way of leading a dignified life.

Economists indicate that these phenomena also occur in highly industrialised countries. The difference in the scale on which they occur, however, is significant. The same economists also indicate, that the only means of slowing this process down is pressure from public opinion on both politicians and the business environment. It should not be forgotten, however, that in order for public opinion to have a decisive effect on improving ethics in public life, it must itself be conscious of what is ethical. The legacy we have been left by the old order is that society has been stripped of moral examples to follow and has lost its ability to distinguish between good and evil. Political debate that consists in nothing more than mudslinging and exchanges of insults between rival political camps also does nothing to improve the situation. It has gone so far that Poles are no longer shocked or spurred into action by the lack of ethics in the public sphere, because it is perceived as the norm, and the public sector is seen as an arena for the division of spoils between whichever politicians are currently in power.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS PERIOD OF CHANGE

A unique opportunity is opening up to the Polish Church. We know which direction changes in society's morality are going to take. We can learn lessons from the changes that are taking place in Western Europe and defend ourselves against at least some of the threats presented by the pluralistic society that is coming into being.

In a pluralist society religion ceases to be a "compulsory" element of objective reality and becomes one of many systems attempting to provide solutions to problems related to the meaning of life, patterns of behaviour and the values on which we base the choices we make. The messages that religion conveys are interpreted selectively. Christians who say that they belong to the Church admit that they are only interested in some of the aspects of its message, i.e. those that are important to them, and they ignore, pass over, or simply do not understand others. Even committed Catholics are beginning to discuss and even question the teachings of the Church.

Society harbours many systems, all with equal rights, that provide explanations for reality. Truth has become relativised to nothing more than the different truths of individual social or professional groups or local communities. This is a natural state in a pluralistic society founded on the rights of the individual and respect for minor-

ity beliefs. Truth has lost its objective dimension and has to a large extent become a form of expression of one's faith. It is no longer possible to decree one absolute truth – all such attempts have ended in “fundamentalism and some form of axiological totalitarianism”². Equally, aiming to establish the supremacy of a single truth leads to distrust and the fear of fundamentalism, which is always potentially dangerous, and antagonises society.

In these circumstances, the Church has a unique opportunity. It has a two-thousand-year tradition behind it that has outlasted hundreds of intellectual fads, it is an institution that attracts enlightened, wise thinkers that are attractive to both Catholics and non-Catholics alike, and, most importantly, is in possession of a truth that has not faded over these two thousand years and is not in danger of fading with the next intellectual fad.

We must be aware of the fact that the sacral is not eliminated by the changes that are occurring. The need for something sacred is to a certain extent independent of the progress of civilisation, and that need continues to be manifest both in the Church and without it, both in developing and highly developed countries, regardless of processes of change. The ambivalence of contemporary culture is provoking interest in transcendentalism, and in consequence in religion. Religious needs exist in every society, regardless of its level of development, a fact which is borne out by the mushrooming number of sects growing up in Western European and American societies. Religion is an autonomous part of human life, and where the Church fails to meet needs, people are attracted by other faiths, sects or socio-religious movements.

In a world subordinated to the dictates of modernity, many sections of society are experiencing a deepening of attitudes to religion, are becoming more involved in religion, and are making more conscious choices regarding faith and the form their religious life should take. The question is whether the Church notices the changes that spirituality in society is undergoing and can make the best possible use of them.

The Church has sufficient advantages to be able to fulfil the pluralistic mission to which it has been called. We know what we have to convey, and we know what the Church's mission is. All that is left to solve are a few “technical” problems.

² E. Wnuk-Lipiński, *Granice liberalnej demokracji*, „Znak” 2000, no. 536, p. 62.

We need to consider what it is that the Church cannot give to those who are leaving it and seeking answers to their questions in other religions or sects, and why it is that the Church does not fulfil the need of faith for so many people. We need to find answers to the questions of how to convey the truth of our faith, and how to join in with public life in such a way that we can obey our calling without offending others and without awakening their distrust. In order to be effective, we have to find and eliminate the many mistakes that the Church has made in the past in carrying out its calling. We must also select the areas in which our activities will be the most effective, both from the point of view of the Church's mission and with regard to the interests of society.

Catholicism on the road to a pluralist society

After 1989, Poland passed, to use the terminology of P. L. Berger, from the world of fate, the world of determination, into the world of choice³. This move, brought about by a change in external circumstances, is bound to cause a change in people's mentality. A society liberated from a totalitarian system will become a pluralist society. Researchers into social change are already noticing differences in the attitudes of Polish society to religious messages. Despite the fact that for centuries, down the generations, society has passively accepted the moral and religious patterns it has found before it, now as it is splitting into groups and niches, each of these is actively beginning to seek out systems of values for itself. The process of development that is now underway will in time lead to the creation of a pluralistic society similar to those that have emerged in Western Europe. Equally, religiousness in Poland is and will continue to be subject to changes similar to those that have been taking place over the last few decades in the West.

Tradition, culture and Christian values – it has suddenly become possible to question all these things that up to now seemed obvious, sure and lasting, and to replace them with other ideas, authorities and institutions. This is particularly the case because Polish Catholicism has always been, and to a large extent continues to be passive and superficial. It can be stripped down to a belief in God as the crea-

³ P. L. Berger, *Der Zwang zur Haeresie. Religion in der pluralistischen Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt am Main 1980, p. 16.

tor of moral laws, faith in eternal life and judgement after death, and to attending Mass once a week.

And the Church, with its involvement in the changes to the system, has paid a high price for this. Each reform that has been introduced and has been unsuccessful has had the side effect of weakening the authority of the Church, the guarantor of peaceful transformation in Poland. What is worse, this authority is often further weakened by politicians of all colours, often inept, who attempt to make political capital on the basis of references to Christian values or take advantage of the support of sections of the clergy. Particularly damaging to the moral authority of the Church are the activities of some of its priests who, accustomed to the dual social and political role of the Church, are unable to give up their political role in these new conditions. This is compounded by the increase over recent decades of clericalism, which can be attributed to the lack of the religious organisations and church structures advocated by the Second Vatican Council⁴. It is clear that the Church's authority is being weakened not only by atheist demagoguery and consumerism in society, but also by mistakes made by certain of the priesthood and by the Church's lack of resoluteness in eliminating the attempts by various political camps to take possession of Christian values.

The economy and ethics

The Polish economy has seen dynamic expansion over the past few years, and a number of firms that were set up during the early days of "wild" capitalism are now large, prosperous enterprises with long-term prospects for further success. Inflation is under control and this, together with favourable economic forecasts, is having a positive influence on long-term business decisions, which in turn is creating the increasing need for companies to pay attention to their image in society. Another important element for ethical and social stability in the Polish market is investment by large companies with foreign capital, which are introducing in Poland the ethical principles that are adhered to in all their branches throughout the world. All these new features are referred to as globalisation and the internationalisation of the market.

With the crystallisation of a class of businesspeople that thinks in long-term categories, plans strategically, is integrated in society and

⁴ Cf. W. Piwoński, *Socjologia religii*, Lublin 1996, p. 371.

has an interest in the consumption of the profits generated, action is starting to be taken to eliminate morally questionable economic activity. More and more businesspeople are beginning to realise that unethical activities are not profitable in the long term, and that winning clients' trust is of fundamental importance for the success of the company. In order to gain and keep trust, that trust has first to be *deserved*, and one of the means of achieving that trust is to portray an ethical stance. "Total honesty is always the best and safest way", says one businessman, F. Bettger⁵. This group of people is increasingly conscious of taking responsibility for the decisions they make. Many businesspeople realise that this growing group solidarity and the desire of this group to gain acceptance and prestige within society are making the clarification of ethical standards in business and the adherence to these self-imposed standards vital.

Each year, more and more people are being won over to the belief that honesty, frankness, openness, truthfulness, fairness, reliability, adherence to confidentiality and transparency of activities are all just as important as professional levels of management for companies to improve their credibility and stability and for the process of inter-company transactions to be rationalised. They are realising that for a modern free-market economy to take root in Poland, values must be propagated that will improve the effectiveness of the business community – practical virtues and virtues that inspire trust.

The middle class, bearer of the standard of "middle-class values", industriousness, thrift and fairness, is growing all the time, and is a natural resource for initiatives taking it upon themselves to codify and improve ethics of behaviour in various different areas. It is within the middle classes, and in particular in the free professions, that this type of initiative is most common (medical codes, journalism codes and craftspeople's codes, for example).

There is also another angle from which the improvement of ethics in economic activities can be addressed. Businesspeople have noticed that poor treatment of their workforce has extremely negative effects on employees' morale, which is in turn reflected in the company's financial performance. They learn, of course, that well-paid employees who are treated with respect by their employers take pride in the work they do, and work becomes something of value.

Business ethics are being developed here and now. We can observe that it is impossible to create economic values in the management

⁵ F. Bettger, *Jak przetrwać i odnieść sukces w biznesie*, Warszawa 1993, p. 82.

process if ethical values do not exist within economic entities and without a defined system of morals for management communities. The development of economic order is not naturally an ethical process, indeed it requires a system of ethical norms that can be used as a system of comparison and assessment of individual economic activities. Management of the economy is a communal cultural process, and although it cannot be humanised “from above” or from the outside, it is possible to influence the direction of the changes taking place within this process.

And in this area lies one of the Church’s most significant chances to become involved in the processes that go on in our society. We need to find an answer that will satisfy the economic community to their question of how to “develop (...) economic life (...) in accordance with the message of the gospel”⁶. We have to discover where the boundary lies between acting *solely* for one’s own good and acting for one’s own good in a way that will also bring benefits for the common good, and we have to support solutions that accord with negotiated compromises already reached and point out the weaknesses of extremist solutions. The most important aspects of this task are to *support, provide guidance* and resist the temptation to *impose* our own views and solutions on members of society.

Small communities – the common good

There are examples in probably every area of public life of lack of comprehension of what is the common good, and what the meaning is of concepts such as the citizen, civic society, one’s fatherland, tradition, and even such fundamental concepts such as decency or honesty. Public life at all levels, from the “normal” citizen to the highest-ranking public officials, has lost all means for moral judgement. There is no universally binding plane of agreement in the fundamental questions of moral assessment of the actions of members of society.

Moral values are inherent in the life and the language of the communities that are a part of a given tradition. This tradition was destroyed by Communism, and all that can be done now is to rebuild

⁶ Jan Paweł II [John Paul II], *Odpowiedzialność pasterzy za Kościół. Orędzie Papieża do Konferencji Episkopatu Polski (8 czerwca 1997)*, [in:] *VI Podróż Jana Pawła II do Ojczyzny*, Kraków 1997, p. 214.

and recreate it by taking specific action and by educating members of society in it. Moral education used to take the form of tales passed down from generation to generation. These tales contained patterns of behaviour, and with each new generation the stories were added to as new problems arose to which solutions were sought. Gradually, systems of solutions were developed, moral principles that regulated practical activity within the community, and to complement these, mechanisms for communicating with the outside world. This process was destroyed, and our task now is to reconstruct it.

We have to create a new tradition that will be based on actual social reality. The moral fabric of society, which is woven chiefly around the functioning of public authorities, can only be strengthened and expanded by the day-to-day cooperation of members of that society. By working together, members of a community get to know one another, and learn that they are valuable and that other people are also valuable. They learn to respect each other and develop a sense of common responsibility for work done together. At the moment, this type of community of action at the level of a large-scale administrative unit seems almost impossible.

Too many people of a cynical cast of mind have exploited powerful symbols and authorities that once unified society for it to be possible to find a common good that would unite society at a national level. As A. MacIntyre noted:

What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us⁷

Power is in the hands of barbarians now, but by ceding power to them, we ourselves become barbarians also. In this situation none of us remains blameless. He is guilty who stands by while deeds are committed against order in society, but he is also guilty who allows such deeds to be committed, or who claims that “nothing can be done” because “everyone is doing the same”.

Thus it would seem that the only way to cleanse society of the chaos within it is to nurture understanding of the identity of the individual good and the common good, and the way to find this is through small local communities. Each of us, therefore, should be emphasising more the development of “small parish homelands” than the “Poland of districts” propagated by politicians. Small parish com-

⁷ A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, London 1985, p. 263.

munities can be the forum for decisions affecting the common good, a forum that does not transform joint government into an abstract theoretical construction, but enables each and every member of the community to gain a sense of their own power to make things happen, and hence their own responsibility both for the fate of the community and for their own fate.

By creating small communities together, and by proving themselves within these communities, each citizen can learn to appreciate the value both of themselves and their fellows. Only small communities provide the opportunity for the fulfilment of specific common aims without the need to take into consideration variations in opinions and views. In such communities, every action has a visible result, every mistake made is paid for in visible human suffering, and every goal achieved together provides a definite visible cause for pride and the chance to be able to claim with honour that we did this together. This kind of organisation is a place for the education of the future political elite, who will learn to honour the common good as a matter of course and to take responsibility for the public property they are charged with managing. In the words of Plato:

In the first place, (...) those who are duly appointed to magisterial power (...) should severally have given satisfactory proof of what they are, from youth upward until the time of election; in the next place, those who are to elect should have been trained in habits of law, and be well educated, that they may have a right judgment, and may be able to select or reject men whom they approve or disapprove, as they are worthy of either. But how can we imagine that those who are brought together for the first time, and are strangers to one another, and also uneducated, will avoid making mistakes in the choice of magistrates?⁸

It is only in such small communities that it is possible to create a sense of respect for others, to break through barriers of isolation and passivity in certain members of the community, and at the same time to single out members of the community and of the political elite who are proven and worthy of trust.

There is no other way for society to regain a moral dimension. And herein lies another way in which the Church can play a meaningful role in the process of the transformation of society and the reconstruction of authority within it. Priests must take definitive action that will benefit their entire local community. They must awaken and support common initiatives in order to rebuild and strengthen bonds within these communities.

⁸ Plato, *Laws*, IV 751 cont.

Challenges for the Church

As Pope John XXIII so aptly expressed it, Catholic theologians and philosophers should “assume an attitude of objective benevolence towards the views of others (...) and show their readiness to undertake loyal acts of cooperation in the pursuit of either that which is by nature good, or that which leads to good”⁹. Communication with other systems of values certainly does not have to mean that the Catholic Church will lose its identity. On the contrary, by shutting itself away behind a wall of dogma, it limits its own moral ability to continue the search for that which is the most important, and to receive and live by the gospel.

The authorities within the Polish church seem to be becoming ever more aware of the need to adapt the Church to the changes that are taking place. Polish bishops “are pointing out that seeking the common good is the task of each and every one of us (...). They are encouraging both individuals and communities to take a creative part in building a civic society (...). They value all efforts made to repair the Polish home by implementing social reforms and are calling for compassion for every human individual to be the driving force behind them”¹⁰.

The Church has also realised that one of the most common reasons why the Church is losing its faithful is that priests are poorly prepared for dealing with the problems of people today. From the Document of the Council of the Polish Episcopal Conference Commission for Dialogue with Non-Believers of 2nd July 1999 entitled: *Non-believers within the parish*:

It is clear that in order to be able to provide spiritual guidance in this new situation and in dealings with non-believers, evangelists and priests need to be specially trained. A priority is the training of students in seminaries and students of theology in theological departments in institutes of higher education. (...) A separate problem will be to train priests in this area. It will not be easy, since it will require the breaking down of habits and stereotypes in the way they think and judge people.

Priests are not trained in talking to people who are genuinely seeking answers to questions about religious experiences, the meaning of life or moral doubts. They are unable to understand the problems and dilemmas of people today who are caught up in situations

⁹ Pope John XXIII, *Mater et magistra*, no. 239.

¹⁰ Document from the 303rd Plenary Assembly of the Polish Episcopal Conference, Warsaw, 2nd March 2000.

that often force them to choose “the lesser of two evils”. They do not understand the problems people face in the economic market.

To be able to meet today’s challenges it is vital that the Catholic intellectual elite find new forms of evangelism and humanisation that will enable them to reach the many different layers, groups and communities in this pluralist society. People are making choices, and this means that catechists, theologians and philosophers must be trained who will be able to meet the challenges of these modern times – open, courageous and dynamic people who know that it is not enough to possess knowledge, but that they need to be able to pass it on in a suitable form and to be strong enough to fight for their truth. Without this kind of attitude, the Church’s intellectual elite will be forced to cede ground to more vociferous, fashionable trends, sects and even fads in music.

Attempts at developing such forms of training are already underway in Catholic universities¹¹. We are trying to make academic pedagogues aware of the need to work on encouraging students to take a wider look at the culture and tradition in which they find themselves, to foster openness and tolerance of other traditions, to be aware of the question of responsibility for practising what they preach, and to foster independence in the search for truth by teaching methods of analysis and shaping reflective sensitivity. Another, separate issue is training future priests to undertake initiatives in the life of parish communities, initiatives which would spur such communities into common action and integration in the name of the common good. Many priests do undertake initiatives like these independently, but many of them simply lack knowledge of the world and the mechanisms that drive it, and of the religious needs of the members of the community in which they work.

It is only priests, theologians and philosophers with all-round training in communicating with reality who will be able to take up the challenge of this age of competitive struggle between ideas, traditions and systems of values, to prevent the role of the Church from becoming marginalised in society, and even to attempt to rebuild its authority in society.

¹¹ Of the initiatives underway at the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Cracow, I would like to mention, for example, the symposium organised by the Department of Theology entitled: *The universalism of Christianity and the pluralism of religion* (14th–15th April 1999), or the symposium organised two years earlier under the auspices of FUCE (the Federation of the Catholic Universities of Europe) entitled: *Society and the Church faced with the challenge of intellectual education: the role of Catholic Universities and Theological Departments* (16th–19th April 1997).

SZANSE I WYZWANIA KATOLICYZMU W OKRESIE TRANSFORMACJI USTROJOWYCH

Streszczenie

Po upadku komunizmu Polska przeprowadza reformy, które mają ją doprowadzić do Unii Europejskiej. Po PRL-u odziedziczyła szereg negatywnych zjawisk i postaw społecznych, takich jak postawy roszczeniowe, brak poszanowania dla prawa i instytucji państwowych, brak etosu pracy. Do tego doszły niekorzystne zjawiska związane z dokonującymi się gwałtownymi przemianami gospodarczymi i ustrojowymi: upowszechnianie się postaw skrajnie liberalistycznych wśród elit, brak tradycji i zasad w prowadzeniu interesów, związane z mieszaniem się sfer polityki i gospodarki, korupcja i nepotyzm.

Kościół w początkowym okresie zaangażował się czynnie w przemiany polityczne dokonujące się w kraju, co spowodowało spadek jego autorytetu, szczególnie że niedolni prawicowi politycy często nadużywali symboli religijnych. Od roku 1993 Kościół stopniowo wycofuje się z życia politycznego, koncentrując się na działalności duszpasterskiej i przewyciężaniu niekorzystnych zjawisk, jakie niesie ze sobą kształtowanie się nowoczesnego społeczeństwa pluralistycznego. Wśród najważniejszych tendencji, jakim musi stawić czoło Kościół, jest pojawianie się nowych systemów objaśniania rzeczywistości, konkurujących z katolicką wizją świata, co prowadzi często do relatywizacji prawdy i do deprecjonowania sfery *sacrum*. Wśród części katolików pojawia się tendencja do wybiórczego odbioru treści religijnych; „dopasowują” zasady wiary do własnych potrzeb, co często wypacza sens nauki Chrystusa. Duży wpływ na tę wybiórczość mają: słabość polskiego katolicyzmu „ludowego”, jego powierzchowność i silne związki z polityką.

W okresie przemian katolicyzm polski ma jednak niepowtarzalną szansę uratowania własnego dziedzictwa. Dzięki doświadczeniom Kościoła w Europie Zachodniej zna mogące się pojawić zagrożenia i może wychodzić naprzeciw szansom na umacnianie swoich wpływów. Aby to było możliwe, konieczna jest jednak, przy wyraźnym określeniu pryncypiów, zmiana sposobów ewangelizacji i wykorzystanie nowych metod komunikacji społecznej.

Trzeba przeanalizować powody, dla których wierni opuszczają Kościół. Trzeba działać nie metodą odgórnych, politycznych czy prawnych nacisków, ale przez przykład. Aby to było możliwe, wielu duszpasterzy musi „pogodzić się” z nowym społeczeństwem i z pokorą przyjmować warunki, w jakich realizują swoje posłannictwo. Wskazane jest włączanie się hierarchii kościelnej w uczestniczenie a nawet współtworzenie nowego systemu gospodarczo-politycznego. W tym celu konieczne jest pogłębianie przez księży wiedzy o współczesnym świecie i zachodzących w nim procesach. Ważne jest również integrowanie wokół Kościoła małych społeczności lokalnych w celu wytwarzania wspólnego dobra, dzięki czemu możliwe byłoby współdziałanie wszystkich członków społeczności, nie tylko katolików.