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On the Spiritual Foundation of Europe

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The European Union came into being in 1993, under the Treaty of Maastricht signed in the previous year. Its creation was a result of a long process of European integration which was achieved mostly in its economic and social dimensions. Currently, the emphasis seems to be placed on the political character of the union, as demonstrated by the growth and strengthening of the range of its institutions. However, what escapes our attention is the spiritual integration, which should become the foundation of any attempts at unification. This is because the nature of integration is not only economic and political, but, above all, spiritual; though we should remember that it cannot be brought about at the expense of quashing our cultural, religious and ethnic differences (Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 28.46–48).

The spiritual dimension of integration gains particular importance in times of great crises. It seems that one of them is currently facing us, affecting the EU structures and European communities. We can observe its symptoms: lack of effective leadership, failings of democracy, promotion of national interests, a split into Union 1 (formal authority of the Commission, the Council, and the Parliament) and Union 2 (informal and real authority of strong states) (Giddens A., 2014, p. 13–16).

In our present situation, we are facing an immense challenge. We need to seek the inner bond linking Europe and to discover the spiritual foundation which can serve to forge such a bond. Let us not forget that for centuries, such a foundation was provided by Christianity, currently

more and more often marginalised by the representatives of certain socio-political factions. Simultaneously, Europe lives on the spiritual capital of Christianity (Juros H., 1997, p. 126–129). Cutting ourselves from our Christian roots may lead to cultural, political, and economic repercussions (Zięba M., 2015, p. 15). We cannot ignore the fact that Christianity, due to religious conflicts and the Reformation, have also played a divisive role in Europe and the results of the scandal can be felt even in contemporary times. Nevertheless, Christianity has shaped, and is still shaping, the character of Europe and its culture (Halik T., 2004, p. 134). Not as any particular creed, though the role of the Roman Catholic Church could hardly be undermined in this respect, but as a set of ideas and values which have their source in the Judeo-Christian revelation.

These analyses are an attempt at exploring the European unification projects based on a specific spiritual foundation, discussing the unity of Europe and presenting European spirituality as a basis for this unity.

1. Projects of European integration

The origins of Europe date back to ancient Greece, Rome, the traditions of Celts, Germans and Slavs. From the very beginning, Europe has been a meeting point for different cultures and an open-minded attitude towards otherness has been characteristic of Europeanism (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 12–13). The ideas of particular importance, emphasised especially in ancient Greece (5th century BC), were freedom and truth. The Greeks insisted that a man and a collectivity need to rise up above emotions to gain sovereign possession of themselves. They believed freedom to be a universal law guiding human behaviour and governing the human community. Freedom entailed a necessity to enter the path of rational exploration of the truth about man and the world. Thus, individual and social life was to be oriented around the ideas of freedom and truth (Buttiglione R. and Merecki J., 1996, p. 39–56).

Europe was formed in relation to the expanding religion of Islam. Originally, the region included the territories surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, linked by cultural, business and political ties. It was the birth and invasion of Islam that spread further north from the 7th century onwards (Ratzinger J., 2005a, p. 10–11).

From the outset, the relationship between Europe and Islam was marked with enmity. Admittedly, as successors of ancient civilisations of the Middle East, they had common roots. Furthermore, both civilisations

were shaped by Jewish religion, Greek philosophy, and Roman law. Yet, regardless of a common sphere of influence, Muslim expansion occurred at the expense of Christian Europe. Therefore, Islam was considered a deadly military and religious threat. Military campaigns, organised many times throughout the centuries, were an attempt at escaping from the tightening Muslim grip and at regaining lost territories (Lewis B., 1990, p. 274–280)¹. That was because Islam was deemed an entirely foreign, alien system of beliefs and customs. Nevertheless, many works of Arab philosophers became popular in Europe and left an imprint on its culture (Fitzgerald M.L., 2005, p. 179).

In the light of the above, some argue that since the civilisations of both Islam and Christianity have drawn on Jewish revelation, the Greek philosophy and the traditions of the Middle East, they are in many ways alike. However, we cannot ignore their significant differences, visible particularly in the relationships between society, state and religion. The dichotomy between religion and the state, of utmost importance in Christianity of the West, is alien to Islam, which links religious faith and political authority with inextricable ties. A classical Muslim state is a theocracy in that God remains the highest authority and the only source of law and every worldly ruler wields both political and religious power (Lewis B., 1994, p. 144–146.156).

It was in the times of Christian Middle Ages that Europe began to be shaped as a united entity (Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 35). In this respect, we should note the merits of Charlemagne (8th century) who brought Italian, Gallic and German lands under one rule. However, Europe was always formed in opposition to the Muslim world. The meaning of 'Europe', a name already used in antiquity, was changed to denote the universalist reach of political power wielded by Charlemagne. The next attempt at reviving the Roman empire as a community of Christian nations was made by the Ottonian dynasty (10th century). In the 15th century, it was King George of Bohemia who envisaged implementing the idea of a united Europe. His project involved reaching peace between Christian countries and protecting Europe against the Turks. To this end, he meant to form a confederation of Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. However, the plan failed to gain the understanding or support of other countries. In the 17th century, the

¹ Let us note that Islam has become a real social power. European believers in Islam are demanding more and more rights. They have ties to public structures of their countries of origin. However, Islam is unable to speak with one voice because no Muslim institutions could be regarded as representative of the whole community. All Muslim groups share disapproval of the liberal concept of freedom and individual rights (Juros H., 2003, p. 217–218).

Pan-European idea of driving the Turks away from Europe was promoted by French Duke of Sully, with a plan to form a European confederation of 15 states (Zwoliński A., 2001, p. 151–155).

Maciej Zięba lists three important European projects that preceded the Union, all of them related to the activity of specific people. The projects are called: *Christianitas* (Alcuin), *religion of progress* (Isaac Newton) and *open society* (Karl Popper). The first one aimed to (1) create a common Christian identity for peoples inhabiting a given territory and (2) establish a culture (e.g. science, architecture, music, poetry) inspired by Christianity. The second project was based on faith in the gradual and inevitable progress of humanity, infinite capabilities of the human mind and adoration of science. The third project referred to the human community which was pluralist, egalitarian, rational, critical, humane, and followed the voice of reason (Zięba M., 2011, s. 8–9.17.22.86–106.117–123; Zięba M., 2015, p. 79.85–89)². In time, Christian Europe witnessed the birth of scientific rationalism. On one hand, it brought about geographical unity of the world, a meeting of cultures and continents. On the other, it excluded God from public awareness and caused a shock in moral consciousness. This rationalism accepted only computation-based truths demonstrable by experiment – a stance which reflected but a part of the human reason. Thus, in a way, reason became crippled (Ratzinger J., 2005b, p. 46–47.61).

Currently, Europe seems weary of the primacy of reason and lay rationalism, self-evident to the mind of a Westerner but not comprehensible for every type of rationality. European rationalism is informed by a certain cultural context and cannot be adopted by the entire human race. Only when other cultures are taken into consideration may we begin a purification process which will reveal values – some of them religious – shared to some extent by all people (Ratzinger J., 2005a, p. 77.79). Europe cannot rely on the ‘open society’ project either, because the society in question is threatened, slowly dominated by aspects such as egoistic perspective, erosion of interpersonal relationships, own interest and profit-and-loss balance. It is becoming a transactional society whose members undermine social values, lower the standards of morality, fail to share common beliefs, weaken the fabric of society and change interpersonal relationships into transactions between individuals. Laws, contracts and economic rationality provide necessary but insufficient

² The inception of *christianitas* was related to the fact that Christian faith adopted the role of *religio*, a socio-political function of integrating and stabilising society. Consequently, faith ceased to be a way or a lifestyle and became a system of theses, institutions, and rites (Halik T., 2004, p. 131.134–136).

basis for stability. For an open society to exist, it needs a set of basic values but it cannot develop them on its own (Zięba M., 2011, p. 129–137).

In the 20th century, another project of Europe resulted in the creation of the European Union. This plan was conceived out of helplessness, past tragedies, willingness to overcome centuries-long antagonisms, mobilisation to join forces in building peace, the need to let go of anger and hate. Its foundation was laid by the French-German reconciliation between Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer (De Schoutete Ph., 1999, p. 108–110). The unification plan was focused on the economy in the hope that basing on economic interests would prevent conflicts and wars. References were made to the shared cultural heritage of Christianity with its ideas of forgiveness and trust (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 104–105). De Gaulle emphasised two issues. Firstly, he argued the European inhabitants were united by the foundation of the white race, Christianity and a shared lifestyle informed by the different ties of thought, art, science, politics and trade. Secondly, he posited that the unification of Europe should involve a gradual integration of nations but not melding them into a single entity. De Gaulle opted for 'Europe of Fatherlands', especially as in his opinion, arbitrary centralisation always triggered a sudden spike in national feelings (De Schoutete Ph., 1999, p. 145–146; Zwoliński A., 2001, p. 168)³.

The authors of the new European project cherished three values: democracy respecting human rights, a departure from different forms of absolutism and a Christian worldview (De Schoutete Ph., 1999, p. 4–5; Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 77–78). In their moral concepts of state, law, and peace, Winston Churchill, Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman, Alcide de Gasperi drew mostly on Christianity, which emerged victorious from the trials of the Enlightenment. Their goal was to build not a confessional state, but one informed by rational ethics. Thus, religions helped them animate reason, hitherto subjugated and corrupted by the tyranny of ideology. In their mind, the light of Christianity pervaded the mind and never left. Thus, Christian ethos was the ethos of reason. The role of Christianity for the existence of Europe

³ Since the French and American Revolutions, the term 'nation' is more and more often equated with 'society', while society consists in a group of citizens. Gradually, 'nation' is becoming less of an ethnic or cultural notion and more of a political term. However, the term 'nation' should involve the following aspects: personalistic (a community of people), finalistic (bond in the form of common good), and generational (bond between generations) (Jaroszyński P., 2002, p. 16.19). Currently, we do not know what exactly should be the final product of integration: a federal state, federation of fatherlands, or another political structure. We search for a model political order that could replace the concept of a nation state and guarantee stability in the long run (Juros H., 2003, p. 183).

was beyond dispute (Kłoczowski J., 2005, p. 212; Ratzinger J., 2005a, p. 84–85.117). Certainly, many attempts were made at developing ethics that did not rely on religion. Such ethical frameworks rested on two pillars: the principle of humanism (with its belief in the absolute value of man) and the imperative of its unconditional affirmation. The principle of humanism was considered self-evident for reason and as such requiring no transcendental justification. However, secular ethics proved wanting in crises for it failed to imbue a man with spiritual and moral strength (Juros H., 2003, p. 62).

The creators of the new European project wanted to emphasise that a united Europe, a stronghold of law and a place of inter-cultural dialogue, could not be based on reason which ignores God. If Europe was to be anything more than an economic bloc, great values had to be rooted in Christianity. Europe was meant as a spiritual community (Ratzinger J., 2005a, p. 10–118)⁴. Besides, values could never be rootless. For the faithful, they are rooted in God, and for the non-believers – in some other transcendental dimension (Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 41). A reference to God was also a precaution against manipulating the system of values which could not be altered at whim or by any majority (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 85). God is, and will remain, the final guarantee of all values, and responsibility before God is the best assurance that responsibility will be taken in the eyes of history and people (Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 19). Thus, values are transcendental and cannot be altered. They precede the political system and are, therefore, meta-political (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 125–126).

The founders of Europe realised that politics and economy are nothing but tools for the completion of an underlying project which could succeed if Europe had a soul (Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 35). A. Gasperi was particularly insistent that Christianity, with its emanating ideas of fraternity, society and unity, had to be taken into account in the European project (König F., 1990, p. 15). The soul of Europe could be saved by faith and following the values such as justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity (Karski K., 2002, p. 40)⁵. Concern for solidarity would give rise to community policies (De Schoutheete Ph., 1999, p. 94).

Therefore, the creators of the 20th-century project seemed to share the belief that if Europe was to exist, it needed a soul. However, current-

⁴ It seems that nowadays it is necessary to emphasize, according to the thought of John Paul II, the need for interreligious dialogue in Europe, which would be based on mature religious consciousness and avoid the temptation of syncretism and irenicism (Górzna S., 2015, p. 18).

⁵ A. Giddens adds such values as the pursuit of peace, rule of law, and gender equality (Giddens A., 2014, p. 20).

ly we either engage in endless discussion which serve but to reveal profound differences, or try to limit ourselves to the pragmatic and procedural approach. We focus on measures at the expense of objectives. As a result, we relinquish the struggle to legitimise Europe, turning it into a body without a soul (De Schoutheete Ph., 1999, p. 146–150.157).

Simultaneously, pragmatic and egoistic attitude of the West, free from religious motivation and craving nothing but advantage and gain, does not stand a chance. It can be clearly observed in the attitude of representatives of other cultures which are often informed by profound and dynamic spirituality (Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 24). Therefore, Europeans need to bear the burden of cultivating values and respecting *sacrum*. Even more so since absolute secularism, prevalent in the West, is alien to other cultures founded on the conviction that there is no future without God (Ratzinger J., 2005a, p. 31–32).

In recent times, Europe is frequently said to be filled by a spiritual void and in need of a spiritual revival (König F., 1990, p. 17). We could say that Europe lacks mythology and ideology. Consequently, maybe we should strive to re-root European societies in a culture, a tradition or a religion (De Schoutheete Ph., 1999, p. 83.153). Once again, the spiritual source for such a culture and tradition may be found in Christianity.

2. The issue of European unity

If Europe wants to overcome the crisis and play an adequate role in the world, it needs to unite and speak with one voice. Even more so in the light of concerns that the importance of Europe in the world is fading and its standing needs to be solidified (De Schoutheete Ph., 1999, p. 111–114).

The unity of Europe was crushed by the Reformation, which led to the birth of various particularistic tendencies (e.g. Czech Hussitism, German Lutheranism, French Calvinism, Polish Nontrinitarianism, Anglicanism). Europe was split into four creeds: Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and Anglican. European unity based on shared beliefs, liturgy and liturgical calendar ceased to exist. Thus, people began to seek the foundation of unity in religious tolerance (Erasmus of Rotterdam, John Locke, Voltaire) or in natural law (Johannes Althusius, Hugo Grotius, Samuel Puffendorf) (Pomian K., 1990, p. 100–103; Zwoliński A., 2001, p. 153). The Reformation led to the collapse of the medieval *Corpus Christianum*. Protestant churches organised their religious life within structures that fell within state borders. Contacts with co-religionists

were sporadic and Christians of other creeds were approached with reserve or indifference (Karski K., 2002, p. 29). It was only the geographical discoveries that revived the Europocentric perspective and brought a renewed sense of community among nations sharing the same religion, culture and historical tradition. The new basis for unity was found in philosophy, science, law and art. Liberalism, with its idea of human freedom, was also an ideology which brought Europe together (Zwoliński A., 2001, p. 154–155.160).

Currently, the spiritual foundation for European unity is feeble at best. Economy and politics get all the spotlight while issues such as culture are often forgotten. However, we shall remember that, above all else, unity must be based on the communion of souls (Buttiglione R. and Merecki J., 1996, p. 27; Jaroszyński P., 2002, p. 27.49; Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 83)⁶. It is even more important in the light of pluralism which pervades religion, the ethnic structure of society, economic system and policies. Pluralist Europe lost its unity of values and soul. For centuries, the core spiritual bond that brought it together was provided by Judeo-Christian values. However, over time, values became an impediment that stood in the way of success. What gained in importance was everything that secured a material advantage or profit (Muzzyński H.J., 2002, p. 9–10.20.46). What took hold was the idea that the world of European values had reached its end. As a result, in terms of spirituality, Europe became hollow (Ratzinger J., 2005a, p. 21–22).

Yet, Christian traditions are of tremendous importance for the unity of Europe. That is because the oldest cultural sources bear testament to its religious history, particularly Christian (Zwoliński A., 2001, p. 169–170). Therefore, in the search for European unity we should turn our attention to its Christian roots. However, we cannot allow ourselves to automatically recreate scenarios of the past. A return to the source should be a creative act of welcoming new challenges, strengthening ties between eternal values and learning to develop new ones. Obviously, secular elites tend to palm off the issue of spiritual roots of Europe by simply pointing to the existence of different cultures, religions, nations or invoking ideological neutrality and religious freedom. Yet, such an approach looks like an attempt to escape the problem. For one, the posited ideological neutrality or impartiality is not a solution. That is because in the axiological dimension, ideological neutrality is a fiction. Con-

⁶ However, we should remember that Europe never had a single culture or civilisation; there were always many (Jaroszyński P., 2002, p. 23–24). From the Middle Ages to the 19th century, European unity was manifested in the existence of Pan-European universities (Zwoliński A., 2001, p. 152).

sciously or not, a man always has a specific hierarchy of values. Every person needs some spiritual guidance in life (Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 42.65–66.73.108–109.128–129). Such guidance may be found in religion. But in Europe, because of the policies implemented by different states, religion often ceases to provide spiritual and moral strength (Ratzinger J., 2005a, p. 24–25).

It seems that a religious revival, or re-experiencing Christianity, is a prerequisite for restoring the united, animated Europe. But before that happens, Christianity must respond to the scandalous division between the faithful. In present circumstances, the Christian legacy of Europe cannot be usurped by a single creed. Unless all creeds are brought together, they will face huge difficulties in becoming the foundation of European and global unity (Buttiglione R. and Merecki J., 1996, p. 103–105; Juros H., 2003, p. 202). Yet, unity based on religious foundations and ties does seem possible. It would be unity in diversity, which has remained a constitutive European quality. For unity shall never be mistaken for homogeneity which never reflected the character of Europe (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 22–24).

In conclusion, the 20th-century project conceived by Churchill, Adenauer, Schuman, and Gasperi may only come to fruition if we recognise the need for a spiritual dimension of unity and re-explore its foundation laid by Christianity.

3. Spirituality of Europe

The word 'Europe' means 'rising gently' or 'dusk, darkness' (Leciejewicz L., 2007, p. 9–10). In reference to the latter interpretation, we could say that Europe is currently considered a place of dusk, moral and spiritual decay (Buttiglione R. and Merecki J., 1996, p. 100). Spirituality in this context should be construed as a specific lifestyle, inspired by specific values.

Speaking of Europe, let us emphasise that it is usually regarded as a continent. However, in terms of geography it is not continent at all but only an Asian peninsula (a subcontinent). Consequently, Europe is more of a cultural notion than a geographical one (Buttiglione R. and Merecki J., 1996, p. 29–31.34–35; Ratzinger J., 2005a, p. 9). But above all, Europe is a communion of history, culture, and values (Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 127).

Thus, Europe is a space whose shape was mostly determined by Christianity and the process of Christianisation undertaken by the faith-

ful (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 7–10). Even though Christianity is not of European origin, this is where its main branch developed and from whence it spread (Shils E., 1990, p. 197). Nevertheless, we need to remember that Christianity has ‘two lungs’, Eastern and Western, wherewith it has to breathe (Hilarion, 2005b, p. 89). Consequently, Europe also has two parts: Eastern and Western. The East is built on Greek culture and Christianity of the Constantinople, whereas the West took both elements from Rome. Both parts differ in mentality and outlook on the world. Both parts complement each other. Remembering the Eastern part of Europe is important for its inhabitants since it questions a certain paradigm of preaching the advancement of Western Europe and belittling its Eastern counterpart (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 24–30). European roots are not only Western but also Eastern, or Byzantine. They are united in the legacy of the Bible, ecclesiastical Antiquity, imperial ideas, shared understanding of church affairs, the idea of law and monasticism which was a medium for culture and core religious and moral values. At the same time, there is a profound difference between the West and the East. For instance, it involves relationships between authority and religion: separate in the West and equated in the East (Ratzinger J., 2005a, p. 12–15).

Europe is built on Christianity. The religion has never aimed to eradicate native cultures but encountered other traditions and changed them from inside, saving the elements which did not contradict the Christian soul. Thus, the wonder of Christianity lies in its capability of inculturation (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 13–14.65). For Christianity is a religion wherein universal truth becomes embodied in a specific culture. The universal becomes the specific in a particular historical event, and the specific becomes a medium for the universal. In conclusion, Christianity left an imprint on European culture, which gave rise to the emanation of different national traditions (Buttiglione R. and Merecki J., 1996, p. 99.101).

Christianity delineates the borders of Europe. Those borders are less geographical and more spiritual in nature since they are defined by the sense of importance and dignity of a human being; not given forever but changeable if the members of a given community fail to preserve their spiritual heritage (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 16–17). European borders may be unequivocally delineated only in the south and in the west (The Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic). On the other hand, northern and eastern borders remain debatable and fluid. Therefore, we should focus on their spiritual aspect, defined by values which set the framework for a more permanent co-existence and co-operation

(De Schoutheete Ph., 1999, p. 4; Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 20–21.28). In conclusion, political borders are being replaced with spiritual and cultural borders which gain in importance (Smolicz J.J., 2002, p. 98).

Another current which has largely contributed to the spiritual condition of Europe is the Enlightenment, with its concept of 'civilised peoples' (De Schoutheete Ph., 1999, p. 3). According to Edward Shils and Charles Taylor, present-day Europe is a product of the Enlightenment succeeded by the Romanticism. In this concept, certain elements such as Christianity are rejected. Nevertheless, we cannot forget that Enlightened Europe was built on the foundation of Christian Europe. Admittedly, the age of Enlightenment rejected certain articles of faith and religious institutions. But then again, it based on the Christian spiritual heritage (*Dyskusja*, 1990, p. 39.133). Thus, we may say that the main current in the modern European culture developed in opposition to Christianity but was deeply rooted in the culture that the religion had been fostering for centuries (Zięba M., 2015, p. 13).

In addition, there is also a notion that the Enlightenment itself is rooted in Christianity which has identified as a religion of reason from the start. Christianity emphasised freedom of faith and preached human dignity, which gave rise to the ideas of the Enlightenment. Hence, the Enlightenment came into being in the context of Christianity (Ratzinger J., 2005b, p. 65–66).

In conclusion, the shape of Europe was informed by the following phenomena: Greek philosophy, Roman law, Christianity, humanism of the Renaissance and rationalism of the Enlightenment. Currently, they have gradually fallen into oblivion as our attention is turned to other pillars of the European community – representative democracy, human rights, rule of law and the idea of welfare state (Prostak R., 2014, p. 25).

However, we cannot forget that Europe traces its history back to Christian values, later adapted by humanism (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 35). Let us note that the ideas of the French Revolution (liberty, equality, fraternity) are also rooted in Christianity (Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 109). Christianity informed such notions as: person, family, neighbour, civil society, solidarity, common good and human rights (Zięba M., 2015, p. 15–16). The critical attitude prevalent in Europe is also related to the Christian belief in objective truth (Zanussi K., 2004, p. 27–28). The idea of truth is correlated with another important element of the European spirituality: the idea of the unconditional. In its origins and its very nature, it is the idea of God. Currently, it has been spread as the idea of human rights, with its underlying idea of human dignity. Human dignity is closely related to religious faith in God.

Positing any inviolable human dignity without it is a feel-good illusion (Spaemann R., 1990, p. 339–341)⁷. In religion, human dignity results from the fact that God created man in His image. It is an important principle not only for monotheistic religions but also for secular humanists (Figel J., 2005, p. 18). The dignity of a human being is at the forefront of the catalogue of spiritual values. A person is a being that is central, unique, good, historical, created to live in community, and finding its vocation in the spiritual and the eternal. This vision of a man, put into practice and experienced in a multitude of manners, should become the framework for a political system. It may provide better legitimisation for politics and a source of new energy (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 117.132–133). In conclusion, human dignity is a foundation for the spiritual unity of Europe (Figel J., 2005, p. 18; König F., 1990, p. 19).

Thus, the spiritual and axiological character of Europe is defined by the ideas of God, human dignity, human rights and a monogamous marriage as a union of a man and a woman (Ratzinger J., 2005a, p. 28–31). Furthermore, it is informed by the following elements: anthropology with a reflection on the human 'self', the thesis on the central value of a human being, conviction that history has a meaning, faith in progress, hope for a better world, optimism in fighting evil, and realism in pursuing ideals (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 15)⁸. Other aspects important in Europe include goal awareness and a sense of meaning behind the future-oriented actions. Human existence finds its ultimate meaning and value in religious faith and hope, especially Christian, which has been exploited thus far. Currently, it is said that Europe is also shaped by other values, profoundly Christian and humane, including: an integral vision of a person, freedom and justice as the foundation of social order, concern for the common good (national, continental, and worldwide), family as a foundation of morality and social order, freedom (choosing the greater good – both a gift and a responsibility), work ethic (a form of self-fulfilment, human vocation, image of God), tolerance, non-discrimination, the principle of subsidiarity and participation in

⁷ Let us note that the notion of human dignity lacks clarity. We can distinguish several standpoints: dignity as a manifestation of external appreciation by others, dignity as a result of introducing philosophical and religious views into the arena of law and politics, dignity as a subjective and existential manifestation of life and a sphere of irrational feelings, dignity as a notion that has a solely pragmatic function, dignity as a value ascribed to man by society, and dignity resulting from the ontic and axiological structure of human existence (Juros H., 1997, p. 74–79).

⁸ In this context, it is necessary to develop an adequate vision of the human person, which can be Karol Wojtyła's personalism (Podgórski R.A., 2016, p. 39–53).

public life, solidarity as the will to work for the common good. The following civil virtues gain recognition: decency, honesty, sincerity, and respect for good laws. However, believers cannot limit themselves to those virtues, as their life also fulfils itself in the virtues of faith, hope and love. Especially active evangelical faith may become a vital source of spiritual strength (Muszyński H.J., 2002, p. 11.15–16.22. 53–54.92–106).

Contrary to appearances, the spiritual and axiological dimension of living in Europe is still rather significant. Until recently, EU institutions discussed solely economics and politics. Currently, the debate involves axiology, too. It turns out that we do not live in a post-axiological world but need some stable reference points we can hold on to in a changing world (Sowiński S. and Zenderowski R., 2003, p. 86–87).

We could argue that spiritual character of Europe is conditioned by two contradictory value systems. The former originates from religion, whereas the latter is based on anthropological concepts of the Enlightenment. However, the system of religious values has not been completely eradicated. Religion continues to be a spiritual power, its value system is not obsolete and does not have to be replaced by secular values (Hilarion, 2005a, p. 31). However, as we have discussed above, some ideas of the Enlightenment, although interpreted as completely atheist and secular, are still rooted in Christianity. In conclusion, the spirituality of Europe is profoundly informed by the spirituality of Christianity.

Conclusions

These analyses were an attempt at exploring the European unification projects based on a specific spiritual foundation, discussing the unity of Europe and presenting the character of European spirituality.

They revealed that the attempts at building a united Europe are nothing new under the sun. Various projects of integration have been conceived since the Middle Ages. Its most important creators include: Alcuin, the Ottonians, King George of Bohemia, Duke of Sully, I. Newton, K. Popper, and finally W. Churchill, K. Adenauer, R. Schuman, and A. de Gasperi. Initially, those projects were a reaction to the Muslim expansion and the need for a confrontation. However, very soon they started to reflect the need to build Europe on a permanent foundation: reason, scientific progress, open society or Christianity. The role of Christianity was particularly emphasised by Alcuin, but also the creators of the European Union. They looked for sources for rational ethics which was supposed to become the basis of social life. It was in Christianity

that they found them. For them, the Christian ethos was an ethos of reason. It provided Europe with a spiritual dimension. Furthermore, it provided values with roots and protection against attempts at manipulation. Adenauer, Schuman, and Gasperi insisted that their project of a united Europe would not be successful unless it had a soul. Christianity was meant to be this soul.

Christianity should also be the foundation of European unity, which was troubled by many phenomena, including the Reformation. Currently, many efforts are made to re-establish this unity. We seek its foundation in political and economic institutions or a federation of some sort, while it seems that any attempt will not be successful unless it is based on the spiritual foundation of active Christianity.

Thus, European spirituality takes its source in Christianity, which gave it a shape and could pervade local cultures thanks to its ability of inculturation. It is argued that Europe is based on the Enlightenment but let us note that the Enlightenment is also rooted in Christianity understood as a religion of reason. The key element of European spirituality is the idea of objective truth with its idea of the unconditional. The latter takes the form of the ideas of God and human dignity. They, in turn, delineate the spiritual borders of Europe. Other important values that emanate from those ideas include: faith in progress, hope for a better world, meaning of history, monogamous marriage and family, freedom, justice, work ethic, tolerance, non-discrimination, subsidiarity, participation and solidarity.

In this context, let us note that we think too much about Europe in terms of geography, politics and economics. What escapes us is the fact that all European projects have focused mostly on the cultural and spiritual dimension. Usually, the European foundation was sought in Christianity, perceived not only as a revealed religion but, interestingly, as a stronghold of rationalism. In the search for spiritual sources of the European rebirth, we should stop experimenting and take recourse to the existing and tested reality. Maybe it would be worthwhile to bolster the value of Christianity as a significant spiritual source which can still animate the rigid, bureaucratic European structure and inspire the contemporary, sometimes decadent culture.

O DUCHOWYM FUNDAMENCIE EUROPY

(STRESZCZENIE)

Celem artykułu jest wskazanie duchowego fundamentu Europy, którym powinno być chrześcijaństwo. Artykuł składa się z trzech części. W części pierwszej autor zwrócił uwagę na różne projekty integracji Europy, które stworzyli Alkuin, Otto, czeski król Jerzy, książę de Sully, I. Newton, K. Popper, a na koniec W. Churchill, K. Adenauer, R. Schuman i A. de Gasperi. Początkowo były one motywowane inwazją islamu. Jednakże bardzo szybko pojawiła się potrzeba budowy Europy na trwałym fundamencie, którym był postęp naukowy, społeczeństwo otwarte czy po prostu chrześcijaństwo jako źródło racjonalnej etyki, wartości i duszy Europy. W drugiej części autor przedstawił problem europejskiej jedności, który doszedł do głosu zwłaszcza w kontekście reformacji. Obecnie próbuje się przywrócić jedność na podstawie instytucji politycznych i gospodarczych czy też modelu federacji, ale zapomina o chrześcijaństwie. W trzeciej części autor ukazuje duchową historię Europy, która ma swoje początki w chrześcijaństwie. Jej punktem odniesienia jest idea prawdy i idea bezwarunkowego istnienia, która przybiera formę idei Boga i idei ludzkiej godności. Rezultatem duchowości chrześcijańskiej są następujące wartości: wiara w postęp, nadzieja na lepszy świat, poczucie historii, monogamiczne małżeństwo i rodzina, wolność, sprawiedliwość, etyka pracy, tolerancja, brak dyskryminacji, pomocniczość, partycypacja i solidarność.

ON THE SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION OF EUROPE

(SUMMARY)

This paper aims to delineate the spiritual foundation of Europe which should be laid by Christianity. The paper consists of three parts. The first part discusses various projects of European integration as conceived by Alcuin, Otto, King George of Bohemia, Duke of Sully, I. Newton, K. Popper and finally by W. Churchill, K. Adenauer, R. Schuman and A. de Gasperi. Initially, those projects were created as a response to the invasion of Islam. However, very soon they started to reflect the need to build Europe on a permanent foundation: reason, scientific progress, open society, or just Christianity as a source of rational ethics, values and a European soul. The second part of the paper presents the rift in European unity, which stems mostly from the Reformation. Currently, many efforts are being made to restore unity by founding political and economic institutions or creating a federation model, but Christianity remains forgotten. The third part outlines the spirituality of Europe, which has its origins in Christianity. It focuses on the idea of truth and the idea of unconditional being which takes the form of the ideas of God and human dignity. Christian spirituality gives rise to the following values: faith in progress, hope for a better world, the meaning of history, monogamous marriage and family, freedom, justice, work ethic, tolerance, non-discrimination, subsidiarity, participation and solidarity.

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