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## Theology and the public arena from a Polish point of view

1. The understanding of public character of theology – 2. Characteristics of the public arenas in Poland – 3. Experiences and problems of Polish theologians with the public arena – 4. Challenges for Polish theologians

For theologians, Polish too, it is clear that the Church has a mission to be present in the public arena. This undertaking is rooted in the words of Jesus when preaching the Gospel to all creation and in council maintaining that moral theology should bring “fruit in charity for the life of the world”<sup>1</sup>. The same undertaking is recalled by Pope Francis in his apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* when he wrote that evangelisation means to make present the kingdom of God in the world and *kerygma* has a social context and should be understood as a mission in which “all of us are called to take part in this new missionary going forth” and “reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel”<sup>2</sup>.

The discussed theme is complex and is required in order to give a more transparent public character of theology, and what is the public arena to which the Church and theologians have to enter. Then it is possible to show experiences and challenges which are connected with the mission in the public arena for the Church and theologians in Poland. At the beginning it should be clarified what the word “theologians” means in Poland, the primary clergy, because the majority of them are priests and religious people and the lay Christians are a minority amongst Polish theologians. The second clarification concerns the strong ecclesial understanding of the mission of theologians in Poland which is connected with the teachings of

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<sup>1</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Decree on priestly training “Optatam totius”*, Vatican 1965 (OT), no. 16.

<sup>2</sup> FRANCIS, *Apostolic exhortation “Evangelii gaudium”*, Vatican 2013 (EG), no. 20.

John Paul II and his pontifical heritage. To be a theologian in Poland means to be a member of the Church and to be faithful to the Magisterium.

## 1. The understanding of public character of theology

When undertaking proof to clarify the public dimension of theology we touch both the question of understanding of the nature of theology and the tasks which it has in order to fulfil in the Church and in the world.

Generally the public dimension of theology is connected with its academic character. As an academic discipline, theology is a teaching about God and a scientific discipline that contains biblical exegesis, systematic and practical theology and that has its own material and as a formal subject, uses specific methodology which is connected with a cognitive process (process of discovery which contains academic research and a non-discovering process which consists of the transmission and teaching of theological contents). Theology, comprehended as such, displays adequate results in relation to the cognitive processes as contextualized in an objective dimension with signs such as: doctrine, systems, publications and institutions, and in a subjective dimension with a sign acquainted to theological content<sup>3</sup>.

The public dimension of the nature of theology is connected with the fact that it is the rationalisation of revealed faith as expressed objectively or as communication about God and his salvation deeds and subjectively as acts of faith in revealed truths. Each acceptance of revealed truth accompanies its understanding and motivation which is induced as to receive it. Hence theology is dealt with as an academic aspiration which is precisely an inspection of truth in faith, intensity of reasons for receiving it and the systematization of it as put in order<sup>4</sup>. The rationalisation of the contents of faith, systematically and ordered recognition and the presentation of the results is that theology has public character and that it is not allowed to be reduced to subjective, irrational and chaotic individual religious experiences.

The public dimension of theology is connected with its nature which is the confrontation of reason with revelation, precision of truths of faith and ways of protecting them from false interpretations and translate them, so much as is possible, to the truth of reason and science. In this way theology serves to build the

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<sup>3</sup> S.C. NAPIÓRKOWSKI, *Jak uprawiać teologię*, Wrocław 1991, p. 17–18.

<sup>4</sup> J. HERBUT, *Jaką nauką jest teologia katolicka?*, in: A. ANDERWALD, T. DOLA, M. RUSECKI (ed.), *Tożsamość teologii*, Opole 2010, p. 11; E. WÓJCIK, *Teologia*, EK, vol. 19, Lublin 2013, col. 654–655; S. OLEJNIK, *Dar. Wezwanie. Odpowiedź. Teologia moralna*, vol. I: *Wprowadzenie i idea wiodąca*, Warszawa 1988, p. 8–9.

Christian truth, to confirm it, systematizing it, developing and communicating it in space and time. Theology serving the salvation of people makes contact with God reasonable, critically, free, autonomous and human and helps overcome in religiosity the symptoms of fanaticism, determinism, fatalism and the negative aspects of rationality<sup>5</sup>.

It is presumed that theology contains structure to which belongs revelation, faith as its perception and *kerygma* or preaching and transfer of this contents, generally the public aspect of theology is connected with the last element. Theology has an important role in the process of communication of truth of faith which consists in ordering, systematisation, verification and methodological and academic organisation. In the individual dimension theology orders and organizes personal religious perception of believers and in a social dimension is theology an official, inter-subjective ecclesial science which in academic way orders a common consciousness of the Church<sup>6</sup>.

According to Polish theologians the public dimension of theology is the result of the nature of theology as connected with its ecclesial character. Theology is an activity of the Church and cannot exist away from the Church. In engaging with Christianity, its Message, Bible, tradition, Church and faith matters without and apart from the Church is religion-science and not theology. Theology follows on from the belief in on God's revelation and in the Church is one of many forms of explanation and proclamation of it. So theology is connected with the public, official teachings of the Church and with the proclamation of the word of God and the Gospel in preaching and catechesis. Consistently theology is a way of fulfilling the Church of its mission of proclamation and explanation of God's revelation<sup>7</sup>. The public dimension of theology is connected with its ecclesial character and is supported by academic information, promotes communication in the community of believers, supports the process of self-understanding of the Church, crystallizes the doctrinally identity, serves the religious didactic and pedagogic and contributes to socialisation and personalisation in the Church<sup>8</sup>. Theology as an expression of Christian faith always forms a co-belief with the Church and what liberates people from isolation and opens them to the horizon behind their own subjectivity<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Cz. BARTNIK, *Teologia chrześcijańska*, in: Z. PAWLAK (ed.), *Katolicyzm A–Z*, Łódź 1989, p. 376; J. SZYMIK, *Teologia. II. Natura*, EK, vol. 19, Lublin 2013, col. 657.

<sup>6</sup> Cz. BARTNIK, *Teologia chrześcijańska*, p. 372–373.

<sup>7</sup> A. ZUBERBIER, *Teologia*, in: A. ZUBERBIER (ed.), *Słownik teologiczny*, vol. II, Katowice 1898, p. 309–310; S. OLEJNIK, *Dar. Wezwanie. Odpowiedź*, p. 11–12.

<sup>8</sup> Cz. BARTNIK, *Teologia chrześcijańska*, p. 376.

<sup>9</sup> J. SZYMIK, *Teologia. II. Natura*, col. 658–659.

The public dimension of theology is connected not only with its tasks which are to be fulfilled in the Church but also with the mission which it has to fulfil towards the world. The Second Vatican Council remembered the need of each kind of teaching of theology which was to guide through the skill of resolving people's problems in the light of revelation, using eternal truths to the changing conditions of human life and to proclaiming it in a comprehensible way for contemporary people<sup>10</sup>. The council stressed that theological reflection is required in each great area of social and cultural life which will make the understanding and harmonizing of customs, manners, world outlook and social order possible through revelation<sup>11</sup>. An important task of theology which attests its public character is the coordination of communication with the world and the way in which the incarnation of Christianity is in contemporary life and especially in the sphere of culture. Theology should support the development of the world and plays an important part in the dialogue between people belonging to diverse confessions and religions, with nonbelievers and in the mission too<sup>12</sup>, just as the council challenges the obligation of "bearing fruit in charity for the life of the world"<sup>13</sup>. The cooperation and dialogue of theology with other sciences serves the development of the world and man's growing and wider research possibilities. Theology as *sui generis* science has a potential to give the activities of knowledge a relational and holistic character that crosses the extemporary utility. As such theology has to fulfil important tasks towards politics, economy, and culture and to support universities and academic societies as a space for the research of truth and to promote in them an integral vision of life. This expresses the public dimension of theology<sup>14</sup>.

The fulfilment of the mentioned tasks is connected with the interdisciplinary dimension of academic research conducted by theologians which indicates the next aspect of the public dimension of theology.

The recent studies and findings of science, history and philosophy raise new questions which effect life and which demand new theological investigations. Furthermore, theologians, within the requirements and methods proper to theology, are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of their

<sup>10</sup> OT 16.

<sup>11</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Decree on the mission activity of the church "Ad gentes"*, Vatican 1965, no. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Cz. BARTNIK, *Teologia chrześcijańska*, p. 376.

<sup>13</sup> OT 16.

<sup>14</sup> J. SZYMIK, *Teologia. II. Natura*, col. 664.

times; for the deposit of Faith or the truths are one thing and the manner in which they are enunciated, in the same meaning and understanding, is another. In pastoral care, sufficient use must be made not only of theological principles, but also of the findings of the secular sciences, especially of psychology and sociology, so that the faithful may be brought to a more adequate and mature life of faith<sup>15</sup>.

From this conviction arises the need for cooperation between theologians with representatives of other scientific disciplines. It is connected with the duty of aspiration for a deeper recognition of the revealed truth and care about the connection with modernity which leads representatives of different sciences to a more complete perception of truth. It is connected with the tendency that more lay people takes theological education. It should be guaranteed adequate freedom of research and thought by theologians and their humble and courageous expression of opinions within the domain of their competences<sup>16</sup>.

## 2. Characteristics of the public arenas in Poland

The public arena can be characterised as a social space in which people live and fulfil their vocational life. The public arena is a space in which people together realize goals, exchange opinions and cooperate to build and increase the common good. A specific kind of public arena is the community of believers present in the Catholic parishes but it has a religious character and is connected with the specific pastoral questions in the Church and not with the mission of the Church in the world.

One of the main kind of public arena is politics, and connected to it, government, parties, states organisations and the laws passed by parliament. For theologians it is clear that politics is the domain of lay persons and the mission of the Church is not to participate in the party and to support any party but to participate in politics which focuses on freedom, social justice and solidarity. This main understanding of the presence of the representatives of the Church and theologians in politics is elaborated on after the political changes in 1989 in Poland which were influenced by the teachings of John Paul II and Catholic social thought.

The other public arena is the economy and the reality of companies and joint ventures along with all the problems of work, finances, justice and the environment.

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<sup>15</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Pastoral constitution on the church in the modern world "Gaudium et spes"*, Vatican 1965, no. 62.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

In this space the presence of theologians or ethicists in Poland is possible and limited to voices during conferences on justice, respect for human sources and care for the environment.

An important public arena where theologians have the possibility to be present and to cooperate with other people and to have some influence on the course of public debates in Poland is the academic world. Since 1994 when the first state University with the faculty of theology in Opole was founded in Poland there existed seven state Universities with Faculties of theology with the function of educating theologians to be active as priests and teachers of religion at public schools and as employees at other institutions<sup>17</sup>. The matter is not only that Universities educate people who are able to partake in debates in the public arena but that universities with their structure and mission of education are able to conduct a study which is important in the public arena in Poland. Conferences are organized at universities during which questions are discussed from different points of view and theology plays an important role within those debates.

The next important public arena in Poland is the media, as in the press, radio, TV and especially the internet. There is no need to justify how strong an influence and place the media has in the public arena and for the debates on essentially important questions. In Poland there exists a public press, public radio and public TV which is actually controlled by the government and there is also private media connected with different agencies. The Catholic Church has its own media in press, radio, TV and internet portals and they have a different range from local to nationwide and international, a different level of importance with different forces of influence and different characteristics from national-conservative to more open and liberal characteristics. Theologians and representatives of the Catholic Church have access to all kinds of media in Poland and in this way can participate in the public debates. The mainstream presence of theologians in the media are the Catholic media, and are especially connected with Radio Maryja, TV "Trwam" and the daily "Nasz Dziennik". In this way the representatives of the Church are present in the public as well as the private liberal media and rather than take part in full public debate, are at present, within their own media in which transmission is easily one-sided.

One other important element of the public arena in Poland is culture with her material and spiritual heritage. Different symptoms of culture establish the impor-

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<sup>17</sup> Cz. RYCHLIKI, *Teologia akademicka w Polsce na początku XXI wieku*, in: K. GÓZDŹ, K. KLAUZA (ed.), *Teologia polska na XXI wiek*, Lublin 2005, p. 43–47; A.A. NAPIÓRKOWSKI, *Teologia polska wobec wyzwań współczesności*, in: RADA NAUKOWA KONFERENCJI EPISKOPATU POLSKI (ed.), *Kościół w życiu publicznym. Teologia polska i europejska wobec nowych wyzwań*, vol. I, Lublin 2004, p. 39–40; K. GŁOMBIK, *Poland after John Paul II: hopes and challenges for the future*, „ET-Studies” 7 (2016), no. 2, p. 321.

tant dimension of public sphere in which theological contents finds ways of presentation and transfer. Specificity of culture in Poland is their national character and strong connection with Catholic confession. It is a reason that there is in Poland a specific current of theology which develops questions of national culture. There are connections between culture and theology. Culture is an important arena of transmission of theological contents adapted to concrete social context and through the medium of changing mediums of expression and adequate language of transmission. Theology is an element of culture and together it includes a subject of processes of development. At the same time theology brings to culture an unchanging truth of faith about God's salvation of men in Jesus Christ and makes it possible to discover the history of salvation in the changing trend of culture<sup>18</sup>.

### 3. Experiences and problems of Polish theologians with the public arena

The Church in Poland, its representatives and some theologians have problems maintaining a presence in politics. During the communist system the Church was distanced from the state, it was united with the people against the communist system. Since Poland became a democracy in 1989 the Catholic Church is still on its way to finding a presence in which to coexist with the state. For the majority of Catholics and theologians it is clear that the secular character of the state, its autonomy and cooperation with the Church is to realize the common good. Generally, in Poland it is accepted that the secular character of the state and the coexistence, presence and activity of the Church together with the state is conducted in a friendly manner. A good example of this friendly coexistence is a letter by Polish bishops on the Christian understanding of patriotism which goes towards answering some of the extreme national and egoistic tendencies in Polish society<sup>19</sup>.

Essentially, there are some problems between the presence of the Church and theologians in politics. Some bishops, theologians and priests do not distinguish between being involved in politics and social commentary and the support which is given to one party. If they are not directly present in politics then it is a quiet deal between the Church in Poland and the government, especially from one side of a section of bishops, clergy and theologians connected with Radio "Maryja". This deal is profitable for the ruling party but not for the Church to a certain degree. This

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<sup>18</sup> A. ZUBERBIER, *Kultura*, in: A. ZUBERBIER (ed.), *Słownik teologiczny*, vol. I, Katowice 1985, p. 269–270.

<sup>19</sup> RADA DS. SPOŁECZNYCH KONFERENCJI EPISKOPATU POLSKI, *Chrześcijański kształt patriotyzmu*, Warszawa 2017.



attitude on behalf of Polish bishops, theologians and clergy prevents the voices which are needed to help emigrants and refugees and to create humanitarian corridors. The voice of the Catholic Church in Poland in a land in which the solidarity movement was founded based on this question should therefore be stronger and unanimous even if it is inconsistent with the position of the Polish national-conservative government and the public opinion of Polish people. It is here that the Church and its representatives and theologians should be independent and present Christian values.

From one side we can speak about the presence of theology and of theologians in the public arena in Poland, which widely understands politics, social questions, acceptance of the importance for Polish society of the foundation of democracy, protection of life from conception to natural death, protection of the environment and social rights of workers. From the other side we can observe some weak aspects of the presence of theology in the public arena which is the absence of spirituality and which leads to the development of the activity of sects. Furthermore there is a risk of uncritical identification with trends towards nationalistic thought and sometimes with clear support for one side of political dispute or dialogue inside the Church based on the scheme of political dispute and interparty confrontation. Theologians should be more sensible about transcendence and take more distance in their position concerning social and political problems which are subject of public debate in Poland<sup>20</sup>. Only in this way can they contribute to social peace and to reconciliation between divided people and groups in Poland.

The entrance to the public arena of the academic world via universities is very fruitful for theology. The results are possibilities for the Church to be present in the modern "Areopagues" in order to cooperate with others for the common good. It is profitable for theology and theologians because it gives them academic requirements for education and research. At the University, the representatives of theology have the opportunity to meet other scientists and can enter into dialogue and discussions with them. In this field one ought to mention Professor Michał Heller and his research in the field of cosmology and theology. It is especially interesting to note his proposal of theology of science which is based on the assumptions of theology as a form of dialogue with others sciences and a theological reflection on sciences and the fact of their existence, their foundations, methods and results of research in the light of revelation. A justification for the need for a theology of sciences is common for theology and for science subjects of research which is the Universe. The theology of sciences transcends the borders of results of experimental research and

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<sup>20</sup> Por. A.A. NAPIÓRKOWSKI, *Teologia polska wobec wyzwań współczesności*, p. 35–38.



allows for the explanation of the reality of the Universe from a perspective which is inaccessible for empirical sciences<sup>21</sup>.

Theology at the University is fruitful in many academic conferences of an interdisciplinary character, especially when it comes to bioethics and social questions. Theologians have their own representatives in assembly at the Polish Academy of Sciences and are at present at the Central Commission of Scientific degrees. In the field of structures there are many possibilities for theologians to enter the public arena but the potential possibilities are not always fulfilled. Polish theologians need to be open to the wider scope of other disciplines and more dialogue is needed to be able to realize such interdisciplinary academic projects that will serve to resolve the actual problems experienced within society<sup>22</sup>.

On an academic level theology in Poland has great potential, generally it is healthy and promising. It is connected with a great circle of well-prepared and educated theologians and with pluralism of centres of study which guarantees creative and interesting research and critical and fruitful disputes. Incorrect and exaggerated orthodoxy is verified by critical academic theology and the risk of a lack of ecclesial dimension is prevented by studies conducted at diocesan and religious seminaries which are under the control and custody of bishops and religious superiors. One of the challenges in this regard is the question of academic freedom and its protection from irresponsible interventions from outside. On the one side academic research should be conducted in freedom because of the sovereignty of truth toward which they strive. At this same time theology as an ecclesial discipline should understand rightfully its place in the Church and contributes to an appropriate understanding of the Church and its place in the contemporary world<sup>23</sup>.

One of the problems of academic theology in Poland is the narrowing down of the theologian sources to the official teaching of the Church and especially to the teaching of Pope John Paul II. Emotional identification by many theologians with the Pope from Poland blocks out some aspects of his teaching over passing blinkered horizons and is one of the reasons of contestation of the teachings of Pope

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<sup>21</sup> A. MICHALIK, *Michała Hellera koncepcja nowej teologii*, in: A. ANDERWALD, T. DOLA, M. RUSECKI (ed.), *Tożsamość teologii*, Opole 2010, p. 251–253; M. HELLER, *Nowa fizyka i nowa teologia*, Tarnów 1992; more on dialogue of theology with nature sciences see: A. ANDERWALD, *Zur Vernünftigkeit des Glaubens. Überlegungen zum Dialog zwischen (Fundamental-) Theologie und Naturwissenschaften*, Opole 2017; A. ANDERWALD, *O tożsamości teologii na tle relacji z naukami przyrodniczymi*, in: A. ANDERWALD, T. DOLA, M. RUSECKI (ed.), *Tożsamość teologii*, Opole 2010, p. 149–171.

<sup>22</sup> S. RABIEJ, *Dlaczego wydziały teologiczne w uniwersytetach?*, in: A. ANDERWALD, T. DOLA, M. RUSECKI (ed.), *Tożsamość teologii*, Opole 2010, p. 257–266.

<sup>23</sup> A.A. NAPIÓRKOWSKI, *Teologia polska wobec wyzwań współczesności*, p. 40; J. KOWALSKI, *Autonomia uniwersytetów katolickich i wydziałów teologicznych*, „Sosnowieckie Studia Teologiczne” (2001), vol. V, p. 121–133.

Francis, especially as included in the postsynodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*. Furthermore, the teachings of John Paul II are considered selectively – in the centre are placed the national traditions and interests and incompletely developed are questions connected to the good values of all people and nations, the problems of place and the role of lay Christians in the Church are insufficiently explained, the role of women in the Church, society and theology, and an understanding of Church as community. Emphasizing of Magisterium of Church guarantees the orthodoxy of theology in Poland but hinders its development, weakens its dynamic and blocks its openness towards the contextual questions and challenges. The effect is theological doctrinal correctness but is not interesting enough nor convincing enough for ordinary believers, as it is more theoretical and traditional, and not existential enough at meeting the expectations connected with the new challenges in social, cultural and religious life<sup>24</sup>.

The Catholic Church in Poland, the bishops, clergy and theologians have a lot of possibilities in which to be present and to preach the Gospel in the media and to reach not only Catholics who participate in the Eucharist every Sunday (about 30 percent) but the others who rarely come to church or who are also distanced from the Church also. The presence of the Church in the media can be seen in both the public and private media, especially in the Catholic press, radio, TV and internet portals. The pluralism of the media profile means that it is possible to present liberal and conservative, national and religious, theological and social, traditional and modern, political and cultural beliefs and contents. The problem is not the possibilities but the reciprocal respect of people having different beliefs, a lack of dialogue, and sometimes accusation of heresy and cooperation with alien, anti-Polish, non-Catholic and the damage done to the media within society. This leads to a limited use of only one kind of media and in this way establishes a set of beliefs instead of an exchange of them. One negative example of the presence of theologians in Polish media was a few years ago when the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception prevented Adam Boniecki's voice in the media whilst at the same time Dariusz Oko without any problems to expressed information on gender questions, which disgraced the Church and theology.

Theological discussions conducted in the media are encumbered with a scheme of white-black transported from the communist period or with the dualistic mentality of the false and right camp which are not conducive to contemporary pluralistic society. A rich spectrum of theological reflections and convictions which is con-

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<sup>24</sup> A.A. NAPIÓRKOWSKI, *Teologia polska wobec wyzwań współczesności*, p. 41–43; K. GŁOMBIK, *Poland after John Paul II: hopes and challenges for the future*, p. 323.

firmed in Poland by the existence of different groups fixated around Radio “Maryja” or the well-wisher of “Tygodnik Powszechny” should be seen rather as a chance for dialogue and space on which theology can reach different groups and should not be considered in categories of opposed camps between them making it impossible to form dialogue and leads to the domination of confrontation<sup>25</sup>.

One of the positive examples of the presence of the Church, bishops, clergy, lay Christians and theologians in Poland in the field of culture is the edition of the Convention of Gniezno with a series of lectures and discussions on the Christian heritage of Europe. The other example of dialogue were discussions and seminars held on ethical and social questions organized between the years of 2008–2012 as “Areopague of Gdańsk”. There are in Poland a lot of local initiatives, conferences and activities (especially in the field of charity) which are a positive examples of the presence of the Church and the theology in the public arena.

#### 4. Challenges for Polish theologians

There are some challenges for the mission of the Church and the theology in the public arena in Poland. The first one is the acceptance of pluralism in public spaces, of different ways to be present in them, and of the pluralism of contents which are presented to reach different people in a modern society. The next step is the reciprocal acceptance of the representatives of the Church and theologians and the consciousness that there are a lot of ways to preach the Gospel. According to apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* by Pope Francis is that the Church is of a rich variety and if the Church will credibly fulfil its own mission then there is no space for warring amongst ourselves. There cannot be tolerated

different forms of enmity, division, calumny, defamation, vendetta, jealousy and the desire to impose certain ideas at all costs, even to persecutions which appear as veritable witch hunts<sup>26</sup>.

The second challenge for the mission of the Church and theologians in the public arena is its essence. To be present in public spaces and to fulfil the mission of preaching the Gospel which is supposed to enlighten the situation in which people live within the problems of secularisation, individualism, relativism, and a lifestyle

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<sup>25</sup> A.A. NAPIÓRKOWSKI, *Teologia polska wobec wyzwań współczesności*, p. 43–44.

<sup>26</sup> EG 100.

of consumption. However the mission of the Church cannot be limited to just diagnose and present social threats but

The evils of our world – and those of the Church – must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervour. Let us look upon them as challenges which can help us to grow. With the eyes of faith, we can see the light which the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness, never forgetting that “where sin increased, grace has abounded all the more” (Rom 5:20)<sup>27</sup>.

One of the more serious temptations which stifles boldness and zeal is a defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists, “sourpusses”<sup>28</sup>.

An important challenge for the mission of the Church and theology in the public arena is the understanding of ecclesiology which in Poland is strongly hierarchical. From this point of view the task of being witness to the Gospel in public spaces means that the bishops and clergy and the lay Christians should be supportive. However if this task is understood as being taken from the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and the vision of the Church by Pope Francis as a people of God then the presence in the public arena is an important task for all baptised people and not only for the clergy. It is not only that people should follow pastors but all believers are an active subject of evangelisation<sup>29</sup> and therefore all have to find a way to preach the Gospel in situations in which each finds oneself. To be a theologian is not and should not be only the domain of the clergy.

If the priority of theology in Poland is its pastoral dimension it should not signify the neglect of dialogue within contemporary culture. It is evidently necessary for a more evident presence of theology in communicative society and on the peripheries of the Church. The presence of theology for a more and more passive people, indifferent and marked with the Spirit of the age then its presence should drift into the public arena by means of mediums of culture. It is not about conforming to the needs of the contemporary world but the matter is that theology should contain and mirror mystery and in an adequate way should be servant of the incarnate Word of God<sup>30</sup>.

The challenge for theology in Poland is media attention and the mode of transfer too. Theology should be, by its nature and content less complicated and more

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<sup>27</sup> EG 84.

<sup>28</sup> EG 85.

<sup>29</sup> EG 119.

<sup>30</sup> A.A. NAPIÓRKOWSKI, *Teologia polska wobec wyzwań współczesności*, p. 60.

oriented and empathic to contemporary people and the problems bothering them. For discourse and the transfer of Christian message in the contemporary Areopagus of the world it is necessary for a new and communicable language. It concerns the language of academic publications too, which without use of a languages speaking during congresses is not able to reach wider groups of readers outside of Polish. An important element of the public dimension of theology is the question of dissemination, which in the era of the Internet means using this medium. Nevertheless, in Poland there are numerous functioning web sites popularizing theological contents which are not optimal and need more coordination and actualisation. Theology needs expression in the form of contemporary art, literature, music, painting, and architecture as has happened in the past. They are an important aspects of the public dimension of theology. In this way the spiritual, invisible and God's reality speaks to the people and above and beyond is appealing, convincing, interesting and fit for people to receive<sup>31</sup>.

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The present article is concerned with the question of the place of theology in the public arena. The question is connected with the nature and tasks of theology in Church and in the world which in a Polish context has strong ecclesial and national characteristics. The public arenas in which theology and theological opinions can be present are politics, culture, media and especially universities. In each of those arenas are experiences and problems as well as possibilities and challenges for theology and theologians in Poland. The present article presents only selected problems and shows them generally and will provoke and inspire to further studies on theology in the public arena.

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<sup>31</sup> A.A. NAPIÓRKOWSKI, *Teologia polska wobec wyzwań współczesności*, p. 61–62; B. KOCHANIEWICZ, *Teologia polska oczami rzymianina*, „Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne” 29 (2005), p. 241, 246; K. GŁOMBIK, *Poland after John Paul II: hopes and challenges for the future*, p. 324.

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**Abstract:** One of the important and actually problems of theology is its place in the public arena. Concerning this matter are connected questions about experiences, problems and possibilities and challenges which have a contextual character. The present article discusses this issue from the point of view of Polish experiences and opportunities. At the beginning on the basis of reflections of Polish theologians is presented the connection in the public arena with the nature of theology and its tasks which are to be fulfilled in Church and in society. In this regard specific characteristics in an ecclesial dimension of theology are discussed. In the next step were showed kinds of public arena in which it is possible to study and teach theology and the work of its representatives. In Poland it is politics and the social sphere, culture and media and especially the academic world. In the next point were depicted the main experiences and problems of Polish theology and Polish theologians within the public arena. At the end are presented important challenges for theology and its presence in the public arena. The present article is not the complete presentation of a very complex problem but a depiction of it and will inspire research and studies about theology and its place in the public arena.

**Keywords:** theology in Poland, public arena, ecclesial dimension of theology, challenges for theology, contextual theology.

**Streszczenie: Teologia i sfera publiczna z polskiej perspektywy.** Jednym z ważnych aktualnych problemów teologicznych jest miejsce teologii w przestrzeni publicznej. Wiąże się z tym pytania o doświadczenia i problemy, ale także możliwości i wyzwania, które mają dość mocne zabarwienie kontekstualne. Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia tę problematykę z perspektywy doświadczeń i możliwości w Polsce. Na początku, w oparciu o refleksje polskich teologów, został przedstawiony związek przestrzeni publicznej z naturą teologii i zadaniami, jakie ma pełnić w Kościele i społeczeństwie. Szczególnym rysem charakterystycznym jest w tym względzie wymiar eklezjalny teologii. W dalszej kolejności zostały ukazane rodzaje przestrzeni publicznej, w których możliwa jest obecność teologii i jej przedstawicieli. W Polsce jest to sfera polityczna i społeczna, kultura i media, a zwłaszcza środowiska akademickie. W kolejnym punkcie zostały zarysowane doświadczenia i problemy polskiej teologii i polskich teologów z przestrzenią publiczną. Na końcu zostały ukazane główne wyzwania istotne dla obecności teologii w przestrzeni publicznej. Artykuł nie jest



całościowym przedstawieniem problematyki, ale jej zarysem i inspiruje do dalszych badań i studiów w tym zakresie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** teologia w Polsce, przestrzeń publiczna, eklezjalny wymiar teologii, wyzwania dla teologii, teologia kontekstualna.