

Discussion from the conference on *Crises Situations in the Czecho-Slovak Context after 1989*

A summary and reflection of the presented conference papers

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First Topic: *The Bible and the Church today*

1. Jiří Lukeš analyzes the selected defense speeches of the Apostle Paul from the Book of Acts. After the rejection of the Jerusalem audience Luke presents Paul as a secular person. It is known that the Apostle Paul had knowledge of classical rhetoric. This, as well as his Roman citizenship, Luke repeatedly mentioned in the context of a future witness in Rome. In a speech before Agrippa, Paul refers to Christianity as a significant social phenomenon. As Lukeš writes, in a crisis situation it does not involve a change in the strategy of the mission of Paul; it does not mean the abandonment of the mission. Paul has a sophisticated argument. Maybe because of repeated crises Apostle Paul received a deeper interpretation of the cross of Christ.

Application of the New Testament text in the practice: Efficient methods for performing missions in recent decades appear to be less applicable. The content of the message does not change, but some strategies are changing. Paul does not change his strategy - not only it was the way to proceed mission, but it was a timeless purpose to preach Christ to the Gentiles. If we would like in the background of this analysis to interpret the missionary situation of the church today, we could just focus on the new understanding of the nature and quality of the mission. Empirical studies mostly target on the missionary experience. If we should narrow our view on the situation in the Czecho-Slovak Context, the partial researches of missionary strategies mapping out the reactions of the missionary workers. On the other hand, there are missing reactions of converts who could better shape the mosaic of knowledge on the effectiveness of missionary work.

2. Juraj Laššuth discusses the notion of *the end of history* from the author Francis Fukuyama. In addition to being its open critic, the article focuses on the impact Christians might have in today's world. Laššuth defines the fundamental problems of social and political relations. As noted, according to Kant despotism in religious thinking and policy manifests differently. "*Their common feature is the inability to use the intellect without the direction of someone else.*" It is a government that is not based on the consent and does not reflect the law of liberty. Concept of the end of world history the author sees in the context of Christianity as an establishment of fullness of God's kingdom on earth. In the Old Testament he points out two main related texts interpreted in Christianity:

- *Isaiah tradition of the servant* (the world is empty and waits for God's good news - everyone shall believe in God - eternal peace)
- *Daniel's vision of the kingdom of the Son of man* (duality of the two ways of the governance - the fight of the divine forces and antidivine forces - the world as a hostile place).

Jesus is committed to both traditions and functioning of the church becomes a situation known as "*already and not yet*". Paul's skeptical theology focused on the suffering of Christians in the world is balanced by an optimistic view of the Book of Acts. The author discusses the political theology in relation to the Roman Empire; this was an important question for the early church. The Bishop of Caesarea, Eusebius, tried to deal in his writings (year 313 is considered the end of world history) with the new situation in state-church relations. In this context Laššuth suggests an association with the perception of the political situation in the Czech Republic. For example, he quotes Masaryk's notion of conflict of

theocracy and democracy during the First World War. In the light of the development after the fall of the communism, he sees signs of the end of history in rhetoric of a defeat of "the last enemy." The concept of the end of history was evident in the rhetoric of politicians and priests in the post-revolutionary period. The use of this concept is not surprising, given the historical experience of persecution of Christian churches. Laššuth mentioned several ways how Christians can respond to the situation of the end of history. Appropriate to consider redefinition of problems - not the end of history, evil remains, but at the same time it is a real hope for change. As an alternative to the concept of the end of history he offers a conception of world polytheism of values and world political sphere, where these values meet. A reflection on the plurality concepts of goodness is to be found in the works of Max Weber and Hans Morgenthau, as well as in the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr. The major representatives of this theory of ethical realism are A. Lieven and J. Hulsman. Unlike Kant's optimism with regard to the end of history Morgenthau puts forward realistic expectations in terms of political philosophy. *The evil cannot be destroyed, only limited.* Morgenthau sees the tragic situation of man in the world. Laššuth considered political realism as a suitable alternative activity of the Christian in the world, in the tradition of Augustine and Paul. He proposed the concept of the political sphere as a space for meetings of the plurality of values and in order to avoid the disappointment of the controversial "end of history" in the future.

Let us look at the role of Christians in the world through the eyes of another author, a theologian dealing with Christian ethics. According to I. Kišš Christians need to seek the implementation of a justice in the world by analogy with the basic ethical values of the spiritual kingdom of God, which are: justice, love, freedom, equality, truth, peace, kindness, community, respect for life and an ethical phenomenon of work. *Spiritual values of the kingdom of God must become ethical and human values around the world.* Christian ethics has significant specificity. Its center is not mediated by the abstract and normative acts (as in Old Testament ethics), but living, the particular person of Jesus Christ. According to H. U. von Balthasar, Christ is the specific categorical imperative, because he is personnel and a particular standard, not just a formal universal standard of ethical behavior. Morality of the New Testament underlines three essential aspects: the coming of the Kingdom of God, the fulfillment of the law - a call to conversion and repentance, and the supreme order is to fulfill God's will. The ideal Christian life is following the example of Jesus Christ.

Second Topic: *Society and Economy*

1. Markéta Sedláčková explores democracy in the Czech society and trust in the democracy. Functioning civil society is dependent on the quality of social relationships; the author highlights the need for a general trust in the functioning of the democracy. She follows the decline of a trust in the democracy in the Czech Republic (for example, in 1998). Legitimacy – the trust in the legitimacy of the democratic system is crucial. However, researchers are encountering different understandings of democracy in different population groups; linguists pointed out differences in the understanding of spoken language in relation to its scientific definition. The author quotes one research of democratic values in the Czech Republic, as well as the trust in institutions and the general trust in other people. Found a lack of confidence in different areas of society; this author sees this as a possible brake in the development of a democratic society and of a market economy system.

The quality of life requires the integrity: material and spiritual-cultural values. The values affect relationship to self and others, but also with the environment. Today, more and more researchers speak about a crisis in value systems. Schwarz's research has confirmed that the basic problems that societies are facing are between individual and society: ensuring the responsible behavior of the society members and the relationship of humankind to the nature

and to the global community.¹ Every person has his values and goals and for society it is important, how have the individual values an objective validity, though every society applies particular system of values.² The importance of universal values for which there is consensus between the theories of religious and secular values has been shown by E. Bergin and I. R. Payne. Confidence in the democratic system is a specific problem of research of the values. Compared to the objective moral requirements (as Kant's categorical imperative) stands dominance of an individual freedom, which can be traced for example in S. Kierkegaard's work. According to M. Buber it is a fundamental fact of a human existence, man to man in communicating with each another. As the basis of our humanity he determined a relationship. This principle opens new perspectives to him in the cultural anthropology, in the philosophical, religious and political issues. A need for the social values and democracy is often denied today. A representative of *neopragmatism*, R. Rorty, expressed the philosophy of values as follows: "Dichotomy of acts and values arising from an objective and subjective dichotomy, so that sounds fair value today as well as a mythological winged horse".³ From this perspective, proclamation of objective values (like democracy) as the development of the social relations is inadequate for a pragmatically oriented society. Without the acceptance of the fair values, however, in practice, society cannot be functional.

2. Andrej Miklošik: A reassessment of the advertising budgets in the transition between phases of the economic cycle is noted by Andrej Miklošik in his presentation. He pointed out, inter alia, long-term trends in the transfer of expenditure on advertising in the modern media like the Internet, advertising on mobile phones, etc. Based on its research he notes that advertisers in Slovakia are conservative in comparison with the U.S.

Harold Laswell – a political scientist and one of the founders of the discipline of communication – constructed a basic model of medial communication: „Who says to whom through what channel and for what effect?“ The audience is also the producer and consumer of thinking. Consumer decodes and interprets the media in ways that are created from its social and cultural situations and subjective examination of these effects. Researchers have started to use the term *„interpretive community“*. An issue of subcultures and their preference to certain kinds of content in the media is an independent chapter of the global research.

In the United States 2% of the total national product was used for advertising in 1986 (Association of National Advertisers, USA, 1988), excluding expenses for design, marketing and production. Among the principles defined by “American Advertising Federation” it is also included that: *“Good advertising informs the consumer and help him to buy smarter.”* However in its formulation it puts greater emphasis on the emotional part of the personality of the consumer.⁴ TV commercials usually last for 60, 30, 15 or even 10 seconds. Most of them are dramatization of the lifestyle, enjoyment and benefit of the consumer society. TV advertising often takes the structure of *conflict - resolution* from the television programs. This raises a serious question: *Is advertising information or persuasion?*

To learn how to watch *ads* critically is an important task for experts who can help us avoid the manipulation. In order to sell certain products corporations are inventing campaigns to associate their products with positive and desirable examples.

¹ SCHWARTZ, S., H. A Theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work. In *Applied Psychology : An International Review*. Vol. 48, No.1, 1999, pp. 23-47. ISSN 0269-994X

² GRÁC, J. *Pohlady do psychológie hodnotovej orientácie mládeže*. 1. vyd. Bratislava : Slov. pedagogické nakladateľstvo, 1979. 338 s.; s. 36. bez ISBN

³ BROŽÍK, V. *O hodnotách a ľudoch*. Nitra : FF UKF, 2006. 177 s.; s. 118. ISBN 80-8050-958-1

⁴ DOWNING, John - MOHAMMADI, Ali - SREBRENJ-MOHAMMADI, Anabelle, 1991: *Questioning the Media: A critical introduction*. USA: Sage publications, 1991. 3. edícia. ISBN 0-8039-3642 s. 330

Advertising sells its products and an image of the world through verbal and visual expression and design effect calculated in a certain psychological and marketing strategy. The mass media reach a large audience; they have a great political and economic influence. Their control has become a particular problem for a democratic state. Therefore, knowledge of the problems of mass culture, mass communication and the mass media are becoming a focus of those sciences, which are concerned with the issues of collective behavior. These facts lead us to recommend us to confront the freedom of creative expression with the need to protect children and youth from the negative effects of the mass media, as an urgent social need, which ultimately reflects the wishes of parents and professionals.

Third Topic: *Personality, Identity*

1. Alexander Plecner deals with popular culture, which includes the crisis of intimacy and communication, as well as crisis of gender identity as its accompanying phenomena. The crisis of communication results in remorse, self-pity, explosions of anger, manipulative forms of communication etc. In a late modern society, man has lost confidence in knowing his own experience. Our author explores the above-mentioned factors on contemporary "lifestyle magazines" that offer insight into an imaginary ideal world. After a detailed analysis of variables the author concludes that the late modern man lacks the concept of *life sense as stabilizing perspective*.

The concept of the meaning of life is a current topic. V. E. Frankl considered the search for a meaning of life as a basic responsibility of a human; he called an individual life-long meaning an "occupation".⁵ At the meeting the basic needs of man is filled with "sense of meaning". Frankl puts the meaning of life to the spiritual dimension of man (not necessarily in a religious importance). He describes three value categories: *creative values, experiential values and attitudinal values*. Individual elements of his theory are closely related to finding a global and value opinion of the individual. P. T. P. Wong clarified his concept of noetic dimension of personality; the noetic dimension of personality, according to him, lies in the overlapping of psychological and spiritual dimensions.⁶ As was noted by Chlewnski, the central object in consciousness controls the functioning of a human. If religiosity as an individually lived religion is the central value, then the other values are subordinate.⁷ In Slovakia, P. Halama examined how values and value systems affect human behavior. According to Halama the development of *existential intelligence* helps an individual to interpret his life as meaningful and can offer valuable goals to live his life as fulfilling.⁸

2. Mária Matulčíková in her presentation *The Continuity and Transformation of Childhood in the Pedagogical Context* draws attention, inter alia, to the influence the media have on today's children. She supports the *media education* of children, focusing on the research of role and authority of a father in the present-days concept of a family.

Media research, particularly focusing on issues affecting children, is a standard attempt to create insight into the long-term socialization effects of mass communication. D. Morley was interested in the role of watching TV, which he called a "policy of the living room." It would be interesting to look at the relationships between parents and children in the context of media behavior. The media play an important role in arranging our daily lives and social relations. For a child it is extremely important to meet the needs of security, stimulation

⁵ DRAPELA, V., J. *Přehled teorií osobnosti*. Praha : Portál, 1997. 175 s.; s. 145-153. ISBN 80-7178-251-3

⁶ HALAMA, P. Teoretické a metodologické přístupy k problematice zmyslu života. In *Československá psychologie*. Roč. 44, 2000, č. 3, s. 216-236; s. 221. ISSN 0009-062X

⁷ STRÍŽENEC, M. *Psychológia náboženstva*. Bratislava : Veda, 1996. 108 s.; s. 66. ISBN 80-224-0475-6

⁸ HALAMA, P. *Zmysel života z pohľadu psychológie*. Bratislava : SAP, 2007. 223 s.; s. 107. ISBN 978-80-8095-023-1

and success; for the further development of the child's personality it has a great importance to meet the needs of one's own responsibility.⁹ J. Piaget's approach, who concluded moral formation of children's attitudes from internal sources, is inconsistent with theories that favor the impact of socialization and socio-cultural environment. According to Muchova's opinion the role of parenting is to create a psychological "basis" for the adoption of the Christian message.¹⁰ Family is the first environment where socialization as well as education of the child begins; by implication, it applies to the formation of his personality, too. The task of catechesis is to strengthen positive socializing effects of interpersonal relations, but also to build child's relationships on the biblical foundations. Willingness to forgive, and help take the measure of unity with God (Matthew 5:45.48 and 6:12.25.40-45). The desire for *value-education* is one of the responses to the crisis of the orientation, caused by rapid cultural transformation of modern societies.¹¹

There are many ways in which parents, teachers and religious institutions try to convey values. Direct instilling values that best certifies, unless there is a complete agreement on how are desirable values formed. Restrictions directly inculcating values lies in the fact that this method often leads to discrepancies between theory and practice. Another way to communicate values is to give an example. Leading by example is therefore an effective way of teaching values, because it represents a living example of the practice. Of course, we serve as an example, whether or not consciously. We note how other people behave and how to handle a serious decision. Also, we look at whether their behavior matches their proclaimed faith. Everyone always serves as an example to others, whether it be positive or negative model. Leading by example is just as instill an important and necessary method of transmission of values; of course, it also has its limitations. The main problem is that people are surrounded by many different examples they can follow. It is the role of a father too - in order to help children to choose their life values.

Conclusion: The modernity project of human freedom assumes that everyone wants to be a mature personality who sees his life as a vocation. But it is not so. Therefore, we ask whether the Czech and Slovak society as a whole in the post-communist period, as well as families and individuals, just missing this unifying element. The interdisciplinary research output of which is inter alia reflected conference in Bratislava, brought a constructive debate on critical social situations from the perspective of theologians, Christian workers and experts in social sciences. Precisely these "insights from other parallel house windows" are a new refreshing aspect that can produce good fruit in the study of missiology in our context.

⁹ HOMOLA, M. *Motivace lidského chování*. Praha : Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1977. 359 s.; s. 271-272.

¹⁰ MUCHOVÁ, L. *Úvod do náboženské pedagogiky*. České Budějovice : Pedagogická fakulta Jihočeské univerzity, 1992. 147 s.; s. 83. ISBN 80-7040-052-8

¹¹ BREZINKA, W. *Filozofické základy výchovy*. Praha : Zvon, 1996. 213 s.; s. 7. ISBN 80-7113-169-5