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The Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification — 20 Years Later

The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* is the greatest achievement in the Catholic-Lutheran theological dialogue. Its importance is confirmed by the official signing of this document by representatives of the Holy See and the Lutheran World Federation. The other documents of the ecumenical dialogue are only supported by the authority of the theologians working on them, delegated by the Churches to conduct talks.

The Joint Declaration goes beyond Evangelical-Catholic relations. In 2006, the *Declaration* was officially signed by the World Methodist Council, in 2016 it was recognized by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), and in 2017 the World Communion of Reformed Churches joined the Declaration. Therefore, the *Joint Declaration* may become a *milestone* on the road to unity between Evangelicals and Catholics. It defines what the main reason for the division between Evangelicals and Catholics in the Reformation era and later centuries was, until the signing of the *Joint Declaration on Justification* on 31 October 1999. This main reason for the division can be illustrated by two biblical parables: about the father of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–24) and about the brother of the prodigal son

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(Lk 15:25–32). In the first parable we find the principle of justification by grace. The father of the prodigal son does not act like the mythical goddess of justice Themis, who wants to give everyone what is rightfully theirs. The father justifies his prodigal son by grace. In the second parable, the thinking of the prodigal son's brother is based on the merit-reward principle. This pattern comes close to what Themis would do: she only provided justification because of someone's merit. The principle merit-reward is alien to grace; grace is grace precisely because it is free of the principle merit-reward. Simplifying, the principle of justification by grace illustrated by the parable of the father of the prodigal son could be attributed to the Evangelists, whereas the principle of justification through merit illustrated by the parable of the prodigal son's brother could be attributed to the Catholics. To put it even more simply, the *Joint Declaration* undertook an impossible task of reconciling both principles: justification through grace and justification through merit. For this reason alone, the *Joint Declaration* deserves mentioning, and not just because of the 20th anniversary of its signing. The *Joint Declaration* was again brought to our attention already in 2017 in the report of The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity: *From Conflict to Communion*. The report reminds us that the consensus reached in the *Declaration* does not remove differences. These are, however, acceptable differences that concern language, theological form and nuances regarding the understanding of the sense of justification. Thanks to the consensus reached, the anathema of the Council of Trent does not concern the teaching of the Lutheran Churches as presented in the *Declaration*. Conversely, Lutheran condemnations do not concern the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church as presented in the *Declaration* (p. 139).

In view of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the *Joint Declaration*, we will recall the most important points of this document. However, the document deserves much more than a reminder: it should be widely known and recognized. The lack thereof would be equivalent to consigning *The Joint Declaration* into oblivion and, consequently, it would mean a step backwards on the way from conflict to community. Therefore, this study will indicate the selected attempts of the reception of the *Declaration*. A threat to the *Declaration* would be not only the lack of reception, but also the context of post-modernity. Martin Luther's question "where can I find a gracious God?" no longer interests post-modern man. This paper will also show the negative impact of post-modernity on the content of the *Declaration*.

Critical points of the *Joint Declaration*

The critical points of the *Joint Declaration* will be drawn from the *Annex*. This *Annex* was attached to the already completed *Declaration* after Joseph Ratzinger had expressed his criticism of the *Declaration* in the *Frankfurter Allegemeine*

Zeitung on 11 July 1998. Ratzinger noted that each of the agreements contained in the *Declaration* is accompanied by, as it were, *protocols of divergence*, from which it appears that, despite the declared reconciliation, each party remains committed to its original viewpoint. The text of the *Declaration* shows that although it is a masterful display of eloquence and diplomacy, it lacks a common language of faith. This common language of faith can be found in the *Annex*.² The critical points of the *Declaration* are the essence of justification and its independence from good works, the principle of *simul iustus et peccator*, an understanding of lust, the possibility of man's cooperation with grace, and the problem of good deeds treated as merit.

The essence of justification is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous (*Annex 2A*). Differences in the understanding of justification were created by the word *dikaioun*, which can mean “to declare righteous” in a legal or external sense, or it can mean “to make righteous” in the sense of actual, inward transformation. In the opinion of many Catholic theologians “Protestant theology places strong emphasis on the «judicial» dimension of the grace of justification. Catholic doctrine, often with an exaggerated polemics, has since the Council of Trent emphasized the inner nature of justification”.³ Evangelical theologian Manfred Uglorz has attempted to correct the opinion quoted above, saying that

it is a mistake to attribute to Luther the later view that justification is only a legal act, that is, that God sovereignly, at his discretion, declares the sinner to be righteous, but nothing in his life is changed [...] Justification, as an expression of God's reconciliation with man, leads man to the fellowship with God and a deep, perceptible union with Christ. Luther knew the words of the Apostle Paul, “so for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17).⁴

The sinner receives justification as a free gift, that is, by grace through faith and regardless of the works, “justification takes place by grace alone, by faith alone, the person is justified apart from works” (*Annex 2C*). This gratuitousness of justification was already emphasized by the Council of Trent, which made a statement that

When the Apostle says that ‘man is justified by faith’ and ‘gratuitously’, these words must be understood in the sense commonly accepted and explained by the

² Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, ‘*Annex*’ to the *Official Common Statement*, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-annex_en.html [accessed 29.09.2020].

³ T. Jaklewicz, *Święty grzesznik*, Lublin 2006, p. 37.

⁴ M. Uglorz, *Marcin Luter Ojciec Reformacji*, Bielsko-Biała 1995, p. 141.

Catholic Church. We say that man is justified ‘by faith’ as faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without it ‘it is impossible to please God or to reach the community of His Son’; we say that is justified ‘gratuitously’, for nothing that precedes justification, faith or works, deserves the grace of justification; ‘if it is grace, it is not out of works, otherwise (as the Apostle says) grace would no longer be grace’ (*Justification Doctrine* 8).

The Council of Trent, therefore, teaches about justification by grace, which exceeds the merit-reward scheme. Justification by grace does not exclude deeds. According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “grace and works are connected. There is no faith without good deeds, and there are no good deeds without faith [...]. Both Paul and Jacob are concerned about man living truly by grace, and not by himself”.⁵

The *Annex* sees the possibility for both Lutherans and Catholics to understand the principle of *simul iustus et peccator* (*Annex* 2A). A Christian would be mistaken if he maintained that he is sinless (1 Jn 1:8–10). Since there are no sinless Christians, every Christian should always pray in the words of the tax collector, “o, God, be merciful to me a sinner” (Lk 18:13). The Catholic liturgy of Mass is filled with this prayer of the tax collector in various forms, from the Confiteor through *Kyrie* and the request of the Lord’s prayer — “and forgive us our trespasses” — to the words of the centurion, “Lord, I am not worthy”, spoken just before receiving Holy Communion. In the context of liturgy, the principle of *simul iustus et peccator* can be understood in Catholic.

The *Annex* also shows a consensus on the understanding of concupiscence as a place of spreading sin. Due to this spread of sin, all man is permeated by a tendency to oppose God. Neither are justified Christians free of this tendency, and therefore, their lives are tantamount to a struggle against God (*Annex* 2B). The *Declaration* tries to combine the teaching of the Apostles John and Paul. The first of them teaches about triple concupiscence, which is sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life (1 Jn 2:16). The other of the Apostles teaches about the sin that dwells in man (Rom 7:17). The teaching of the Apostles John and Paul diversifies theological anthropology. Catholic anthropology, following the Apostle John, sees in concupiscence the consequence of original sin, which weakens man’s free will. However, this will can collaborate with grace. In turn, Lutheran anthropology follows the Apostle Paul. The indwelling of sin in man is a consequence of original sin, which makes the will unfree and thus, excludes its collaboration with grace. The *Declaration* does not reconcile the differences between Catholic and Lutheran anthropology, which is its weak point. The Lutheran-Catholic dialogue should, therefore, return to Luther’s discussion with Erasmus. The differences concerning the will, whether it is free or not, gen-

⁵ D. Bonhoeffer, *Naśladowanie*, tłum. J. Kubaszczyk, Poznań 1997, p. 222.

erate all the other differences concerning the teaching of justification. A helpful way of reconciling the differences between Lutheran and Catholic anthropology could be St. Augustine's principle, according to which grace "fills the one who is not willing with willingness, and when the willingness is there, then grace makes this willing purposeful".⁶

Although justification derives from grace rather than deeds, still the operation of grace does not exclude human action. Although God works in man both to desire and to work (Phil 2:12/13), it is possible for man to cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit. In support of this, the *Annex* quotes the words of *the Formula of Concord*, "the Holy Spirit has initiated His work of regeneration and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and must cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit" (*Annex 2C*). This concord concerning the possibility of man's interaction with grace by the power of the Holy Spirit comes close to Karl Barth's view of the possibility of man's interaction with the Holy Spirit. Barth rejects emanationism, according to which only the Holy Spirit is an active subject of the Christian's freedom, who is only a channel through which God's action flows. Barth also rejects synergism, according to which human freedom cooperates with the Holy Spirit, which results in salvation. Barth believes that the Holy Spirit does not deprive man of his activity or take it under control. Barth does not deny the possibility of man's cooperation with the Holy Spirit, but he denies that this cooperation results in salvation. Although the Holy Spirit enables human freedom to act, man can accept salvation as a gift.⁷

Good works are the fruit of a Christian's cooperation with the Holy Spirit. The *Annex* once again quotes the Formula of Concord, according to which "it is God's will and express command that believers should do good works which the Holy Spirit works in them, and God is willing to be pleased with them for Christ's sake and he promises to reward them gloriously in this and in the future life" (*Annex 2E*). However, good deeds do not give the right to this reward. This reward derives from grace, against which no claim can be made. Grace works beyond the merit-reward scheme. If it worked according to this scheme, it would not be grace. Therefore, in the conclusion of the Roman Canon there is a request to be admitted to the circle of the saved, not because of merit, but because of God's forgiveness. And the preface of the saints speaks of the fact that the saints, by grace, have gained merit which God rewards.

The *Annex* expresses in the shared language of faith the critical points of the doctrine of justification, which for centuries have divided Lutherans and Catho-

⁶ Quoted after: W. Granat, *O łasce Bożej udzielanej przez Chrystusa Odkupiciela*, Lublin 1959, p. 45.

⁷ Cf. G. Hunsinger, *The mediator of communion: Karl Barth's doctrine of the Holy Spirit* [in:] *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 182–187.

lic. The *Declaration* therefore represents, as Pope John Paul II said on the day it was signed, “this is a milestone on the difficult path to re-establishing full unity among Christians” (*Angelus*, 31 October 1999).

Reception of the *Joint Declaration*

The signing of the *Joint Declaration* raised hopes for a quick reunification of Lutherans and Catholics. This hope found expression in the postulate of a joint Eucharist. The Lutherans are of the opinion that the *Joint Declaration*, removing the misunderstandings about the justification, which for them constitutes the first and main article of faith, opened the way to a joint celebration of the Eucharist. The reason for the joint Eucharist is that today’s churches are not heretical communities of old since they are united by baptism and profession of faith. The theological differences between them do not affect the substance of the faith and do not go beyond the framework of apostolic tradition.⁸ Therefore, the joint Eucharist is not only possible, but also required. It will be a means to achieve unity.⁹ After all, it is Christ who is the cause of unity, and not unity the cause of communion with Christ.¹⁰ Therefore, the opposite concept: the first full unity and then the joint Eucharist, puts everything upside down.¹¹ However, Pope John Paul II advocated such a concept of unity in his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. The joint Eucharist must be preceded by joint faith. Since the Eucharist expresses the unity of the Church, the joint Eucharist of all Christians must be preceded by their unity in faith. For this reason, the joint Eucharist is the goal of ecumenism. Otherwise it would be an illegible, even a blurred sign of unity.

In addition to the postulate of the joint Eucharist, Lutherans suggested that Catholics should stop practicing indulgences. When the Catholics celebrated the Great Jubilee of 2000 with the usual attendant possibility of obtaining indulgences, some Lutherans called for the freezing of all ecumenical contacts with Catholics for the Jubilee Year. Evangelical Bishop Christian Krauze declared that

for Lutherans, the indulgences have unpleasant associations. We Lutherans must also deny today’s theology and practice of indulgences because they are irreconcilable with the doctrine of justification, even if we see that according to today’s official Catholic doctrine, obtaining an indulgence presupposes justification, rath-

⁸ A. Quadt, *Evangelische Ämter: gültig — Eucharistiegemeinschaft: möglich*, Mainz 2001, p. 106.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 117.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 98.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 117.

er than grants it. Nevertheless, the indulgence obscures the exclusive trust placed in God's mercy and wrongly values human action.¹²

The declaration *Dominus Iesus*, which was issued in the year of the Great Jubilee, seemed to bury the hopes aroused by the *Joint Declaration of Justification*. *Dominus Iesus* aroused indignation especially among Lutheran theologians. Eberhard Jüngel stated that *Dominus Iesus* should be read from the end and then it would be entitled *Domina Ecclesia* as it puts the Catholic Church above others.¹³ The Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, however, only reminded us that today exists the one and only Church founded by Jesus Christ, otherwise it would be a victory for the gates of hell. The Declaration of *Dominus Iesus* did not identify this one and only Church of Christ with the Catholic Church at all, as Pius XII, who wrote in his encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* that the Catholic Church is the one and only Mystical Body of Christ. The Declaration *Dominus Iesus* expresses the relationship between the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church with the word *subsistit*. In this way it attempts to say that the Church of Jesus Christ can be found on earth in the Catholic Church as a concrete subject. The Church of Christ also acts outside the Catholic Church where there is apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist. Where there is apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, there are true particular Churches. Even those baptized in communities which do not have apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist are implanted in Christ by baptism and are therefore in a certain community, albeit imperfectly, with the Church of Christ (17). Outside the Catholic Church there are therefore many elements of the Church of Christ.

Despite the disappointed or even buried hopes for a quick reunification of Lutherans and Catholics awakened by the *Joint Declaration*, a tedious process of its reception began. This reception of the *Declaration* in Polish theology was noticed as early as in 2002 by a Protestant theologian Tadeusz Zieliński.

Until recently, Polish research on the issue of justification has presented itself very modestly. As Andrzej A. Napiórkowski stated, until the end of the twentieth century *articulus iustificationis* constituted a true *terra incognita* in Polish professional literature. The works on the already mentioned Catholic-Lutheran *Joint Declaration on the doctrine of justification* and its solemn signature were an incentive for the development of Polish theological thought on the widely understood *locus iustificationis*. The first monographs on this subject came out in Poland from the writings of Roman Catholic authors: Andrzej A. Napiórkowski,

¹² Quoted after: A. Skowronek, *Odpusty — zabytek religijnego muzealnictwa?*, "Jednota" 2 (2000), p. 14.

¹³ E. Jüngel, *Paradoxe Ökumene, Zeitzeichen*, "Zeitzeichen" 11 (2000) I.

Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski and Rajmund Porada [...] Among other leading Polish Roman Catholic authors dealing with the issue of justification one should mention in particular Alfons Nossol, Roman Karwacki and Alfons Skowronek.¹⁴

Later on, there were also publications trying to investigate the elements of Catholic theology related to indulgences¹⁵ or the dogma of immaculate conception¹⁶ which are controversial for Lutherans. *The Joint Declaration* is referred to in the treatise on the Holy Spirit and Grace in the textbook on dogma prepared by Polish theologians.¹⁷ However, since, according to Thomas Aquinas, the justification of the sinner is God's greatest work, even greater than the creation of Heaven and Earth¹⁸, the *Joint Declaration* should not only find its place in the treatise on grace, but should also inspire every treatise of dogmatic theology. For example, the final report of the third phase of the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue *Church and Justification: Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of Justification* (1993), which became the basis for the future *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, states that the doctrine of justification questions neither the institutional sense of the Church's structure, nor the existence of a particular ecclesial ministry, nor the existence of a binding institution of ecclesial teaching, nor ecclesiastical jurisdiction and the need for authority in the Church. This doctrine merely implies the need to subject the Church to the truth of the Gospel in the institutional dimension. The reception of this document, among others, was made in Catholic ecclesiology by the Opole theologian Rajmund Porad.¹⁹ Both the Council of Trent and the *Annex to the Joint Declaration* emphasise the charismatic aspect of justification. According to the Council, the justification of the sinner is made when, on the basis of the merit of the most Holy Passion, the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into the heart (*Justification 7c Declaration*). And according to the *Annex*, "we are truly and inwardly renewed by the action of the Holy Spirit" (*Annex 2A*). This charismatic aspect of justification could be developed within the framework of a treatise on the Holy Spirit and grace. The *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* does not solve the problem of the im-

¹⁴ T.J. Zieliński, *Iustificatio impii. Usprawiedliwienie sola fidei jako główny artykuł wiary protestancko-konserwatywnego nurtu Kościoła Anglii*, Warszawa 2002, p. 26.

¹⁵ Cf. B. Ferdek, *Odpust w świetle „Deklaracji o usprawiedliwieniu”*, "Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny" 8 (2000) 1, pp. 37–45.

¹⁶ Cf. idem, *Nasza Siostra — Córka i Matką Pana*, Świdnica 2007, pp. 99–110.

¹⁷ Cf. Z.J. Kijas, *Traktat o Duchu Świętym i łasce* [in:] Z.J. Kijas, E. Piotrowski, *Traktat o Trójcy Świętej. Traktat o Duchu Świętym i łasce*, (Dogmatyka), t. IV, red. J. Majewski, Warszawa 2007, pp. 496–498.

¹⁸ Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, I–II, 113/9, red. S. Belch, tłum. R. Kostecki, Londyn 1973, pp. 194–196.

¹⁹ Cf. R. Porada, *Kościół w dziele usprawiedliwienia. Ekumeniczno-dogmatyczne studium dokumentów dialogu katolicko-luterańskiego na forum światowym*, Opole 2000, pp. 229–232.

portance of the sacraments in the process of justification. This problem arose in the Reformation era when justification by faith and justification by baptism and other sacraments began to be contrasted with justification by faith. It is reflected in *The Canons of the Sacraments*, “if any one said, that the sacraments of the New Law are not necessary unto salvation, but superfluous; and that, without them, or without the desire thereof, men obtain of God, through faith alone, the grace of justification; though all (the sacraments) are not indeed necessary for every individual; let him be anathema” (*The Council of Trent on the Sacraments 4*). It could be the task of sacramentology to show the link between justification by faith and justification by sacraments. This should be done along the following line: faith — sacrament — justification. Every sacrament presupposes faith, and it is a condition of the justification that comes through the sacraments. In Byzantine theology, Nicholas Kabasilas pointed to the link between justification and the sacraments: for him the sacraments are the bridge by which the justification acquired by Christ for all people reaches each one of them.²⁰ The *Joint Declaration* should also inspire eschatology. Justification also has an eschatological dimension. The sinner’s justification shows that God’s justice is different from that of Themis, the mythological goddess of justice. Consequently, such eschatological themes as the final judgment or the possibility of condemnation should be approached from God’s perspective, whose mercy is just, and justice is merciful, rather than from the perspective of Themis.

Polish Catholic theologians undertook the task of reception of the *Joint Declaration*, and it is still in progress. Many treaties pertaining to dogmatic theology have room for the interpretation of the doctrine of justification. The task of the reception of the *Joint Declaration* it is not a matter of reinterpreting of all dogmatic theology in the light of the doctrine of justification, but of broadening individual treaties by showing their connection with justification. This would certainly contribute to the *ecumenicalisation* of dogmatic theology.

Post-modernity and the *Joint Declaration*

The doctrine of justification, which evangelicals and Catholics can preach together today, is incomprehensible to many contemporary people who are no longer interested in Martin Luther’s question, “where can I find a gracious God?”, that is, the justification of a sinner by grace. A contemporary man does not con-

²⁰ Cf. Y. Spiteris, *Ostatni Ojcowie Kościoła. Kabasilas. Palamas*, tłum. B. Widła, Warszawa 2006, pp. 86–121.

sider himself to be a sinner at all, but a victim of various circumstances²¹ and therefore, he reverts the problem: it is God, not man, who needs justification, e.g. God should justify Himself before people because He allowed Auschwitz. Thus, Benedict XVI rightly pointed out that today we are facing a complete reversal of the perception of God and justification since Luther. For today it is no longer man who needs justification, but it is God who needs to justify Himself, to explain Himself from all the horrors that are happening in the world. This reversion is also winding its way to Catholic theology, where, according to some theological ideas, Christ suffers no longer so much for man's sins as to erase God's guilt towards man.²² While in the field of theology we find this reversal of the understanding of justification, outside theology, the terms used in the *Joint Declaration* no longer belong to the idiolect of the contemporary man. This applies above all to such terms as grace, sin and justification. Instead, we are witnessing a reinterpretation of these terms in the spirit of *deep ecology* promoted by the New Age movement. The essence of deep ecology is aptly captured in a Vatican document on the New Age, quoting cyberneticist James Lovelock, co-creator of the Gaia hypothesis, "the whole spectrum of living matter, from whales to viruses, and from oaks to algae, can be considered as one living being, capable of manipulating the Earth's atmosphere in such a way that it meets its needs and is supported by abilities and forces that go beyond those of its constituent parts".²³ This one living creature is Mother Earth, whose incarceration is Pachamama. It is to her that in the Vatican gardens a cult equal to that due to the Blessed Sacrament was given through proskinesis and procession. Mother Earth knows no grace, but equal rights for all who live on her, from whales to viruses, and from oaks to algae. The man is an inseparable part of this one living being. He is, therefore, not unique with just one exception — he is the only one to commit an ecological sin by equating nature with its purely functional or instrumental value. The ecological sin committed by the man is not excusable. Instead, a criminal act against those who commit ecological sin is justified. This New-Age reinterpretation of grace, sin and justification can be illustrated by the Olga Tokarczuk novel, *Drive Your Plough Over the Bones of the Dead*. Janina Duszejko, the protagonist, with the tacit support and understanding of her friends and acquaintances, murders one by one hunters entangled in the death of her beloved dogs and bitches called *sons* and *daughters*. Amid these events, a service is held for the hunters on the occasion of the consecration of their St. Hubert's chapel, during which Father

²¹ P. Lüning, R. Miggelbrink, H.J. Urban, J. Wanke, *Zum Thema: "Gerechtfertigt durch Gott — Die Gemeinsame Lutherisch/Katholische Erklärung"*, Paderborn 1999, p. 44.

²² *Czym jest wiara? Odpowiedź papieża seniora Benedykta XVI*, "Przewodnik Katolicki" 13 (2016), p. 22.

²³ Papiéska Rada ds. Kultury, Papiéska Rada ds. Dialogu Międzyreligijnego, *Jezus Chrystus dawcą wody żywej. Chrześcijańska refleksja na temat New Age*, Kraków 2003, p. 49.

Szelesta, their chaplain, preaches the primacy of man over animal. Duszejko's actions are justified in the book by the fact that an adequate punishment — death for death — ought to be meted out to men. While murdering hunters, Duszejko is convinced that the heartless law that puts animals lower than man and therefore allows shooting at them is overcome by the opinion that animals are equal to people. This New-Age reinterpretation of grace, sin and justification fits in with the temptation to save Christianity by following models from this world, against which the Apostle Paul warned (Rom 12:2). Amid the idolatry in the Vatican Gardens, it is difficult to find there a warning against following models from this world in relation to grace, sin and justification. Perhaps the following statement by Leszek Kołakowski will be a warning,

How many times you hear such remarks: 'Christianity is doomed to fall because it has turned out to be incapable of recognizing as its own one or another secular matter'. The Church is given advice: she it should vigorously support one cause or another — feminism, agricultural reforms, political revolutions, homosexual rights, disarmament — because only in this way will she recover what she has lost. Illusions! [...] She has no special task to fulfil other than to talk about God and Jesus that people in the Church are looking for²⁴.

The Church's task is, therefore, to help people find the gracious God in the "Gospel of God's grace" brought by Jesus (Acts 20:24), which justifies sinners. This Gospel is ecumenically explained by the *Joint Declaration*. Twenty years after it was signed, it must not only be remembered, but it must also continue to be received, and it must be defended against reinterpretation in the light of the New-Age models of this world.

Summary

The *Joint Declaration on Justification* is the greatest achievement in the Catholic-Lutheran theological dialogue. In connection with the 20th anniversary of the signing of the *Joint Declaration*, the critical points of this document will be recalled. However, the document deserves much more than a reminder: its reception should continue. The lack of reception of the *Joint Declaration* would be a step backwards for Lutherans and Catholics on their way from conflict to community. Therefore, this paper will indicate the selected attempts of the reception of the *Declaration*. A threat to the *Declaration* would be not only the lack of reception, but also the context of post-modernity. Polish Catholic theologians have undertaken the task of reception of the *Joint Declaration*, and so it is in progress. Many treaties of dogmatic theology have room for the doctrine of justification. The task

²⁴ L. Kołakowski, *Jezus ośmieszony. Esej apologetyczny i sceptyczny*, Kraków 2014, pp. 32–36.

of the reception of the *Joint Declaration* it is not a matter of reinterpreting the whole of dogmatic theology in the light of the doctrine of justification, but of broadening individual treaties by showing their connection with justification. The teaching of justification is incomprehensible to many contemporary people, who are no longer interested in Martin Luther's question, "where will I find a gracious God?", that is, where will I find justification of a sinner by grace. The contemporary man does not consider himself to be a sinner at all, but a victim of various circumstances, and therefore, he seems to be reversing the problem: it is God, and not man, who needs justification, e.g. God should justify Himself before people because He allowed Auschwitz. While in the field of theology we find this reversal of the understanding of justification, outside theology, the terms used in the *Joint Declaration* no longer belong to the idiolect of the contemporary man. This applies above all to such terms as grace, sin and justification. Instead, we are witnessing a reinterpretation of these terms in the spirit of *deep ecology* promoted by the New Age movement.

Keywords

Joint Declaration on Justification, reception of the *Declaration*, a reinterpretation of terms: grace, sin, and justification in the spirit of *deep ecology* promoted by the New Age

Deklaracja na temat nauki o usprawiedliwieniu — 20 lat później

Streszczenie

Wspólna deklaracja o usprawiedliwieniu jest największym osiągnięciem w katolicko-luterańskim dialogu teologicznym. W związku z 20. rocznicą podpisania *Wspólnej deklaracji* zostały przypomniane krytyczne punkty tego dokumentu. Przełomowy dla relacji ewangelicko-katolickich dokument zasługuje jednak na coś zdecydowanie więcej niż przypomnienie, a mianowicie wciąż powinna się dokonywać jego recepcja. Brak recepcji *Wspólnej deklaracji* byłby krokiem wstecz na drodze luteranów i katolików od konfliktu do wspólnoty. Dlatego też niniejsze opracowanie wskazuje na wybrane próby recepcji *Deklaracji*. Zagrożeniem dla *Deklaracji* jest nie tylko brak recepcji, lecz może nim być również kontekst ponowoczesności. Polscy teologowie katolicy podjęli zadanie recepcji *Wspólnej deklaracji*, choć nie zostało ono jeszcze ukończone. Niejeden traktat dogmatyki oferuje niezagospodarowane przez naukę o usprawiedliwieniu pola badawcze. W wypełnianiu zadania recepcji *Wspólnej deklaracji* nie chodzi bynajmniej o reinterpretację całej dogmatyki w świetle nauki o usprawiedliwieniu, lecz o poszerzenie poszczególnych traktatów przez ukazanie ich związku z usprawiedliwieniem. Nauka o usprawiedliwieniu jest niezrozumiała dla wielu współczesnych ludzi, których nie interesuje już pytanie Marcina Lutera: „gdzie znaleźć łaskawego Boga?”, czyli usprawiedliwienie grzesznika z łaski. Współczesny człowiek wcale nie uważa się za grzesznika, lecz za ofiarę różnych układów, i dlatego odwraca problem: to Bóg, a nie człowiek, potrzebuje usprawiedliwienia, np. Bóg powinien usprawiedliwić się przed ludźmi z tego, że dopuścił Auschwitz. O ile na gruncie teologii można spotkać odwrócenie perspektyw w rozu-

mieniu usprawiedliwienia, o tyle poza teologią pojęcia, którymi operuje *Wspólna deklaracja* nie należą już do słownika współczesnego człowieka. Dotyczy to przede wszystkim takich pojęć jak: łaska, grzech i usprawiedliwienie. Ewentualnie można zauważyć reinterpretację tych pojęć w duchu *głębokiej ekologii* propagowanej przez ruch New Age.

Słowa kluczowe

Wspólna deklaracja o usprawiedliwieniu, recepcja *Deklaracji*, reinterpretacja łaski, grzechu i usprawiedliwienia w duchu *głębokiej ekologii* promowanej przez New Age

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