

The Image of Christ in the Preaching of Peregrine of Opole

Obraz Chrystusa w przepowiadaniu Peregryna z Opola

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Abstract: The article addresses the question of how the figure of Christ was presented in the preaching of this fourteenth-century Dominican. The study not only offers an interpretation of the salvific events from the life of Jesus but also provides a characterization of the Christology developed by the Dominican preacher. Particular attention is given to his use of sources—the Bible, the Fathers of the Church, and the liturgy—as well as to his knowledge of the world in interpreting the data of Revelation. The image of Christ is examined from a homiletic perspective, in the context of the distinctive features of Peregrine's preaching. The findings of the analysis contribute to our understanding of theology and the history of preaching in Poland at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Keywords: Christ, Peregrine of Opole, Middle Ages, sermons, theology, Dominicans

Abstrakt: Artykuł analizuje sposób przedstawiania postaci Chrystusa w kaznodziejstwie XIV-wiecznego dominikanina. Nie tylko zwraca uwagę na jego interpretację zbawczych wydarzeń z życia Jezusa, lecz także charakteryzuje chrystologię wypracowaną przez Opolczyka. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono wykorzystaniu źródeł, z których czerpał informacje dla swoich kazań: Biblii, pism Ojców Kościoła, tekstów zaczerpniętych z liturgii, a także wiedzy o ówczesnej florze i faunie. Przeprowadzone badania pozwalają stwierdzić, że postać Chrystusa została przedstawiona w ujęciu homiletycznym, a nie dogmatycznym, co pozwoliło dominikaninowi wydobyć i zaakcentować aspekty ważne dla słuchaczy jego kazań. Wyniki przeprowadzonej analizy kazań Peregryna z Opola są ważnym przyczynkiem do lepszego zrozumienia teologii i historii kaznodziejstwa w Polsce przełomu XIII i XIV wieku.

Slowa kluczowe: Chrystus, Peregryn z Opola, Średniowiecze, kazania, teologia, dominikanie

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Introduction

The figure of Peregrine of Opole, a Dominican preacher active at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, has been the subject of numerous scholarly studies, including research focused specifically on his homiletic output. His collection of sermons (*Sermones de tempore et de sanctis*) compiled between 1297–1304, constitutes a valuable testimony to the practice of medieval preaching in Poland. The recent publication of a critical edition of Peregrine's sermons,² accompanied by a Polish translation,³ represents a significant contribution to the field. Previous research has concentrated primarily on the *exempla* employed by Peregrine,⁴ examining their sources,⁵ analogues, and their connections to other contemporary sermons collections, such as the so-called *Gniezno Sermons*.⁶ Scholars have also explored the reception of Peregrine's preaching in the Silesian region,⁷ as well as specific thematic and rhetorical aspects of his work within the broader context of medieval Polish preaching.⁸

Most of this scholarship has been published in Polish and remains largely unknown to non-Polish audiences. A notable exception is Hervé Martin's monograph, published several years ago, which constitutes the first comprehensive study of Peregrine's sermons⁹ in a Western European language. Martin, situating

² Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis*, red. R. Tatarzyński, Warszawa 1997.

³ Peregryn z Opola, *Kazania de tempore i de sanctis*, red. J. Wolny, Kraków–Opole 2001.

⁴ J. Wolny, *Exempla z kazań niedzielnych Peregryna z Opola*, in: *Kultura elitarna a kultura masowa w Polsce późnego Średniowiecza*, red. B. Geremek, Wrocław 1978, pp. 243–282.

⁵ B. Kochaniewicz, *O źródłach dominikańskiego kaznodziejstwa XIII wieku na przykładzie kazań Jakuba z Voragine i Peregryna z Opola*, in: *Święty Jacek i dziedzictwo dominikańskie*, red. E. Mateja, A. Pobóg-Lenartowicz, M. Rowińska-Szczepaniak, Opole 2008, pp. 91–114.

⁶ J. Wolny, *Laciński zbiór kazań Peregryna z Opola i ich związek z tzw. „Kazaniami gnieźnieńskimi”*, in: *Średniowiecze. Studia o kulturze*, red. J. Lewański, t. 1, Warszawa 1961, pp. 171–238.

⁷ A. Pobóg-Lenartowicz, *Recepcja kazań Peregryna z Opola w klasztorach śląskich w świetle zachowanych zbiorów bibliotecznych*, in: *Święty Jacek i dziedzictwo dominikańskie*, red. E. Mateja, A. Pobóg-Lenartowicz, M. Rowińska-Szczepaniak, Opole 2008, pp. 115–123.

⁸ J. Wolny, *Uwagi o kaznodziejstwie dominikańskim w Polsce średniowiecznej*, in: *Studia nad historią dominikanów w Polsce*, red. J. Kłoczowski, t. 1, Warszawa 1975, pp. 543–552; S. Pawliński, *Średniowieczne kazania hagiograficzne na przykładzie kazań de sanctis Peregryna z Opola*, in: *Święty Jacek i dziedzictwo dominikańskie*, red. E. Mateja, A. Pobóg-Lenartowicz, M. Rowińska-Szczepaniak, Opole 2008, pp. 125–137. P. Kielar, *Studia nad kulturą szkolną i intelektualną dominikanów prowincji polskiej w średniowieczu*, in: *Studia nad historią dominikanów w Polsce 1222–1972*, J. Kłoczowski, t. 1, Warszawa 1975, pp. 271–515; J. Zagożdżon, *Symbolika roślin w kazaniach Peregryna z Opola*, in: *Święty Jacek i dziedzictwo dominikańskie*, red. E. Mateja, A. Pobóg-Lenartowicz, M. Rowińska-Szczepaniak, Opole 2008, pp. 139–151.

⁹ H. Martin, *Pérégryn d'Opole (vers 1260 – vers 1330). Un prédicateur dominicain à l'apogée de la chrétienté médiévale*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes 2008.

the sermons within their historical context, analyses them from narrative and pedagogical perspectives. He pays close attention to their biblical foundations, rhetorical structures, use of *exempla*, symbolism, and thematic content. The French historian highlights the presence in Peregrine's sermons of imagery drawn from both religious life and the everyday experiences of urban and rural society. Martin also identifies several dominant theological themes in Peregrine's preaching, particularly mariological, eschatological and soteriological motifs.

Despite the extensive and multifaceted research conducted to date, the image of Christ in Peregrine of Opole's sermons has not yet been the subject of systematic analysis. Yet a study of this theme appears essential for understanding the Christological dimension of his theology in the Polish lands during the 14th century.

Given that Peregrine's sermons constitute the primary source for examining his Christological thought, the present analysis will approach this issue within the framework of his homiletic method and theological priorities. The large corpus of his preserved sermons—128, in total—necessitates a narrowing of focus; therefore, this study concentrates specifically on the *sermones de tempore*.

1. Dominican Preacher

Peregrine of Opole was born around 1260 in Opole.¹⁰ He entered the Dominican Order in Racibórz in 1275¹¹ where he received his initial intellectual formation in the monastery school. He subsequently continued his studies abroad,¹² though the precise location remains uncertain due to a lack of surviving docu-

¹⁰ As noted by J. Wolny, no information has survived regarding the place and time of Peregrine's birth. The name *Peregrinus* was widespread in the Middle Ages. The nickname *opoliensis* appears in a papal bull of 1318, which allows us to presume that his birthplace was Opole in Silesia. See J. Wolny, *Laciński zbiór...*, p. 187.

¹¹ 'Racibórz was a city of great commercial importance. Already in the first settlement period, before 1235, it served as the seat of the highest court of German law. In the times of Peregrine, it had about 3,630 inhabitants, the leading group of whom was the German bourgeoisie. [...] The activities of Peregrine are first recorded in the sources in 1303, when he is mentioned as the prior of the Dominican convent of St James and the confessor of the princely family. The Racibórz convent was his home monastery and must have completed the conventional school there, which had already existed in Racibórz by 1267'; *ibid.*, p. 189. Cf. S. Pawliński, *Średniowieczne kazania...*, p. 127.

¹² 'According to the resolutions of the general chapters of the Order, each province was obliged to send friars to study abroad. Three brothers from each province were to study in Paris, and from 1248 it was also possible to send them to Bologna, Cologne, Montpellier, and Oxford. The number of Polish students at French universities was considerable; however, due to the lack of registers, their names remain unknown. There is no information about Peregrin's studies, yet the composition of a collection of sermons required a solid knowledge of theology, which could only have been acquired through university education'; J. Wolny, *Laciński zbiór...*, p. 189.

mentation. It has been suggested that he may have studied in Prague.¹³ This hypothesis is supported by an ironic remark found in one of his sermons concerning the learned masters of Paris, implying that he did not pursue his studies in Paris, but possibly at the Dominican General Study at the Monastery of St Clement in Prague.¹⁴ Another argument previously advanced by Jerzy Wolny, is the absence of references to the thought of Thomas Aquinas in Peregrine's writings.

In 1303, Peregrine was elected prior of the Dominican convent in Racibórz and later served in the same role in the Wrocław monastery.¹⁵ Two years later, he was elected provincial of the Polish Dominican Province, a position he held until 1312. At the General Chapter held in Carcassone, he requested to be released from office,¹⁶ a request that was granted. Nonetheless, he was soon re-elected to the position by the provincial chapter.¹⁷ In 1318, Pope John XXII appointed him inquisitor for the dioceses of Kraków and Wrocław.¹⁸ In 1322, he was elected provincial for a third time, serving until 1327. He spent the last final years of his life in Wrocław and died around 1333.¹⁹

2. Characteristics of Peregrine's Sermons

Peregrine of Opole left behind a collection of sermons comprising two cycles: the *de tempore* and *de sanctis*.²⁰ The homilies, written in Latin, were compiled at the Dominican monastery in Racibórz between 1297 and 1304.²¹ The *de tempore* cycle consists of 65 sermons²² corresponding to the liturgical year, spanning from the First Sunday of Advent to the Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost. The *de sanctis* cycle, includes 63 sermons dedicated to various saints (this number includes homilies devoted to Polish and Slavic saints, that are not found in non-Polish editions of the collection).²³

¹³ Id., *Wstęp*, in: *Peregryn z Opola, Kazania...*, p. 30.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ A. Podsiad, *Wstęp edytorski*, in: *Peregrinus de Opole, Sermones...*, p. XIII.

²⁰ Th. Kaeppli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, vol. III, Romae 1980, pp. 211–212. J.B. Schneyer, *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150–1350. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters*, vol. XLIII, fasc. 4, Münster 1974, pp. 548–574.

²¹ A. Podsiad, *Wstęp...*, p. XIII.

²² Ibid., p. XV.

²³ Ibid. It is worth noting that the previously published list of Peregrine's sermons comprises 104 sermons from the *de tempore* cycle and 196 from the *de sanctis* cycle. To this collection should

An analysis of the *de tempore* sermons allows for the following thematic classification 32 focus on moral instruction, 21 are parenetic in nature (i.e. exhortatory or encouraging ethical behaviour), and 12 deal primarily with dogmatic or theological content.

The dogmatic sermons correspond to the principal feasts of the liturgical year, such as Christmas,²⁴ the Circumcision of the Lord,²⁵ Good Friday,²⁶ Easter Sunday,²⁷ the Ascension of the Lord,²⁸ Pentecost,²⁹ and the Feast of the Holy Trinity.³⁰ Naturally, doctrinal references also appear sporadically in sermons not directly linked to these celebrations.³¹ Nevertheless, it must be noted that the doctrinal—and by extension, Christological—dimension is only marginally developed in the sermons of Peregrine of Opole. His preaching is predominantly moral and parenetic in character calling, focusing on exhortations to conversion, the renunciation of sin, and the call to repentance. Despite this emphasis, the *sermones de tempore* remain a valuable source for the study of 14th-century preaching in Poland. As such, they constitute an important contribution to the history of theology and homiletics in the medieval Polish context.

3. Christ in the *Sermones de tempore* of Peregrine of Opole

The present analysis contributes to the broader body of research 13th-century Dominican Christology, including studies on figures such as Humbert of Romans,³² William Peraldus, Stephen of Bourbon,³³ Vincent of Beauvais,³⁴ Al-

be added 12 sermons outside these cycles (see *ibid.*, p. XVI). A different enumeration is proposed by H. Martin, who records 105 sermons from the *de tempore* cycle and 207 from the *de sanctis* cycle (see H. Martin, *Périgrin...*, p. 13).

²⁴ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in festo Nativitatis Domini*, pp. 26–28; *id.* *Sermo in Dominica infra octavam Nativitatis Domini*, pp. 29–31.

²⁵ *Id.*, *Sermo in Circumcisione Domini*, pp. 32–38.

²⁶ *Id.*, *Sermo in Parasceve*, pp. 561–570.

²⁷ *Id.*, *Sermo in festo Resurrectionis Domini*, pp. 111–116.

²⁸ *Id.*, *Sermo in Ascensione Domini*, pp. 156–159.

²⁹ *Id.*, *Sermo in festo Pentecosten*, pp. 164–168.

³⁰ *Id.*, *Sermo in festo Sacratissimae Trinitatis*, pp. 177–180.

³¹ One example is the second coming of Christ and its circumstances; see *id.*, *Sermo in Dominica prima Adventus*, pp. 3–6; *id.*, *Sermo in Dominica secunda Adventus*, pp. 7–10.

³² S. Tugwell, *Christ as Model of Sanctity in Humbert of Romans*, in: *Christ among the Medieval Dominicans: Representations of Christ in the Texts and Images of the Order of Preachers*, ed. by K. Emery, J. Wawrykow, Notre Dame, Indiana 1998, pp. 92–99.

³³ R. Newhauser, *Jesus as the First Dominican? Reflections on a Sub-theme in the Exemplary Literature of Some Thirteenth-Century Preachers*, in: *Christ...*, pp. 238–255.

³⁴ M. Paulmier-Foucart, A. Nadeau, *The History of Christ in Vincent of Beauvais' 'Speculum historiale'*, in: *Christ...*, pp. 113–126.

bert the Great,³⁵ Thomas Aquinas,³⁶ and Richard Fischacre.³⁷ These investigations have demonstrated the richness and diversity of medieval Dominican reflections on the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Among the various interpretations observed, particular attention has been given to the portrayal of Christ as a moral exemplar—a theme notably present in the works of Humbert of Romans, William Peraldus, and Stephen of Bourbon.

The analysis of the image of Christ in the sermons of Peregrin of Opole will be conducted from two complementary perspectives. The first will offer a concise presentation of the Christological content conveyed in his sermons. The second will examine the theological reflection on the figure of Jesus of Nazareth as developed within this homiletic corpus.

The Incarnation

In analysing Peregrine's teaching on Christ, it is evident that his sermons are structured around two central theological pillars: the mystery of the Incarnation and the Paschal mystery, encompassing the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension.

The event of the Incarnation is presented within the framework of Trinitarian theology. Peregrine emphasizes the eternal plan and will of God the Father, brought to fulfilment through the power of the Holy Spirit. The decision to implement this salvific plan is conveyed to the Archangel Gabriel and the Holy Spirit. God the Father, according to Peregrine, declares:

Say to Gabriel, who is to announce [the message] to the Virgin, and to the Holy Spirit, who is to prepare the conception of the Son: 'Bring me a new vessel'—that is, the holy Virgin, who was a steadfast vessel in her patience, pure in her virginity, adorned with many precious stones through the abundance of virtues. And put salt in it—that is, divine wisdom, which is the Son.³⁸

The Dominican preacher emphasized that God's eternal salvific plan also encompassed the humble Servant of the Lord, chosen to become the Mother of Jesus. In accordance with the prevailing Dominican position of the time, Peregrine taught that Mary was conceived in original sin, but subsequently purified and

³⁵ E.P. Mahoney, *Albert the Great on Christ and Hierarchy*, in: *Christ...*, pp. 364–392.

³⁶ J. Wawrykow, *Wisdom in the Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, in: *Christ...*, pp. 175–196.

³⁷ J. Long, *The Cosmic Christ: The Christology of Richard Fischacre, O.P.*, in: *Christ...*, pp. 332–343.

³⁸ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Circumcisione Domini*, p. 35. See also id., *Sermo in vigilia Nativitatis Domini*, pp. 22–25.

sanctified by the Holy Spirit.³⁹ Therefore, her holiness was not innate but rather a supernatural gift bestowed by God to prepare her for the mystery of the Incarnation—so that the Son of God, in uniting Himself with human nature, might ‘receive a clean and new body from a new vessel’.⁴⁰

By the power of the Holy Spirit, and without the participation of her husband, the Blessed Virgin, conceived Jesus virginally in her womb.⁴¹ ‘For from the mystical breath, that is, by the power of the Holy Spirit, from the purest blood of the Virgin, and without the participation of a man, this body was created.’⁴² The event that took place within the Virgin bore both spiritual and physical dimensions. First, through her faith and love, Mary conceived the Son of God in her heart;⁴³ as a consequence of this faith, she then conceived Christ in her virginal womb.⁴⁴

Mary’s virginal motherhood was interpreted through allegorical references, notably the burning bush in the desert (Exodus 3:2) and the image of the star emitting light:

The fire in the bush is the virgin birth. The bush was lit with fire, and it did not burn up, because Mary’s virginity was not violated, but shone with full light. That is why she is called the one who brightens, that is, the Star of the Sea. Just as the sun is not affected when it emits a ray, so Mary remained a virgin when she gave birth to her Son. How many sinners has this star enlightened?⁴⁵

The union of the two natures—divine and human—accomplished at the moment of the Incarnation was illustrated by a verse from the Book of Proverbs (Prov-

³⁹ Id., *Sermo in festo Nativitatis Domini*, p. 26. Peregrine adopts the position typical of the Dominican Order, asserting that Mary was conceived in original sin and subsequently freed from it through sanctification.

⁴⁰ Id., *Sermo in Circumcisione Domini*, p. 35.

⁴¹ Id., *Sermo in vigilia Nativitatis Domini*, p. 25.

⁴² Id., *Sermo in Circumcisione Domini*, p. 35.

⁴³ Id., *Sermo in festo Nativitatis Domini*, p. 27.

⁴⁴ This theme is well attested in the patristic tradition, appearing, among others, in the writings of St Augustine. See Augustinus, *Sermo CCXV*, PL 38, 1074; *Sermo CXCVI*, PL 38, 1019; *Contra Faustum*, lib. XXIII, cap. IX, PL 42, 471; *Enchiridion*, cap. XXXIV, 10, PL 40, 249.

⁴⁵ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in festo Nativitatis Domini*, p. 27. The analogies used by Peregrine are attested in the writings of the Fathers of the Church and medieval authors. Augustinus, *Sermo* 4.2, PL Suppl. 2.718; S. Alvarez-Campos, *Corpus Marianum Patristicum*, Burgos 1974, vol. III, 2688. ‘Maria inluminatrix sive stella maris, sed sermone Syro Domina’. Eucherius Lugdunensis, *Instructionum liber* 2.1, PL 50, 873. S. Alvarez-Campos, *Corpus Marianum Patristicum*, Burgos 1981, vol. VI, 6239. The title *Stella maris* also appears in the writings of medieval preachers, e.g. Bruno of Asti, *Commentarius ad Matthaeum*, PL 165, 340–341. St Bernard of Clairvaux devotes much space to this title in his sermon *Super Missus est*: see id., *Sermo II Super Missus est*, 17, in: *Testi Mariani del secondo Millennio. Autori medievali dell’Occidente — secoli XI–XII*, a cura di L. Gambero, vol. III, Roma 1996, pp. 226–227.

erbs 22:2). ‘The rich, that is, God, and the poor, that is, man, met in the womb of the Virgin.’⁴⁶ This event was understood as salvific,⁴⁷ not only for the Chosen People, but also for the Gentiles: ‘The Son of God, who was born to save those who believe in Him, both Jews and Gentiles, appeared on the day of his birth to the Jewish shepherds, and today, on the thirteenth day, He appeared to the Magi. They were the first among the pagan peoples to believe in Him.’⁴⁸

The *Sermons de tempore* indicate that the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord held a significant place in the liturgical calendar. In his exposition of this celebration, Peregrine, emphasized the humanity of Christ: the blood shed during the rite of circumcision was seen as a foreshadowing of the redemptive sacrifice that would be fulfilled on the cross.⁴⁹ Drawing on the liturgical context, Peregrine called the faithful, urging them to renounce both mortal and venial sins, particularly those committed through the senses.⁵⁰

The rite of circumcision also was also associated with the revelation of the name divinely appointed for the Child. According to Peregrine, the name *Jesus* existed in the mind of God before being conferred upon the Son.⁵¹ Although he does not provide an etymological explanation of the name, he underscores its salvific power for Christians: ‘strengthens us in adversity’, inspires good actions, and ‘protects us against the assaults of evil spirits.’⁵²

In conclusion, the mystery of the Incarnation in Peregrine’s sermons, is inseparably linked to the mystery of the Resurrection.⁵³ This interpretative approach reflects a broader patristic tradition, in which the Incarnation is viewed in light of the Paschal mystery.⁵⁴

The Suffering of Christ

In his sermons, the Dominican preacher places greater emphasis on the Passion and death of Christ than on the mystery of the Incarnation. He draws particular attention to the *kenosis* of the Son of God and the salvific nature of His suffering. Christ’s Passion is portrayed as shameful, undeserved, and intensely prolonged. The torments inflicted upon Him are described as exceeding those endured by the martyrs: ‘Jesus was beaten like a thief, mocked like a madman,

⁴⁶ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in festo Nativitatis Domini*, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Id., *Sermo in Circumcisione Domini*, p. 35.

⁴⁸ Id., *Sermo in Epiphania Domini*, p. 39.

⁴⁹ Id., *Sermo in Circumcisione Domini*, p. 35.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 37.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Id., *Sermo in festo Nativitatis Domini*, p. 26.

⁵⁴ See Gregory of Nyssa, *In Christi Resurrectionem Oratio II*, PG 46, 633–634.

rejected like a leper, and crucified like a criminal. [...] Christ's punishment was not only ignominious but also more painful than the sufferings of the martyrs. [...] All His senses were afflicted in order to atone for the sins committed through the five senses.⁵⁵

Peregrine presents the Passion of Christ as an expiatory act for human sinfulness, particularly the sins committed through the senses. Drawing on the typology of Eve's fall—who sinned through hearing (listening to the serpent), sight (gazing at the tree), smell (enjoying the fruit's fragrance), touch (taking the fruit), and taste (consuming it)⁵⁶—Peregrine explains that these very senses were redeemed through the Saviour's Passion. Christ, he writes, listened to insults, allowed Himself to be blindfolded, struck and slapped, had beard pulled, was stripped of His garments, crowned with foul-smelling thorns, given vinegar and gall to drink, and ultimately died with His arms outstretched on the Cross.⁵⁷ The *kenosis* of the Son of God, according to Peregrine, is also evident in Christ's concealment of His divine power from sinners and His patient endurance as He awaited their conversion.⁵⁸

The Passion of Jesus on the Cross

The sermon for Good Friday, beginning with the words from Exodus 9:29, is devoted to the theme of Christ's Passion. In these words, according to Peregrine,

we can notice three things, namely the place, the manner and the fruit of the Passion. The place of torment, when He says: 'When I leave the city', is Calvary. The manner of the Passion, when He says: 'I will lift up My hands to the Lord', that is, I will be crucified. The fruit of the Passion, when He says: 'And the thunders will cease', signifies the end of eternal damnation.⁵⁹

In describing Christ's suffering, Peregrine explains that Jesus, nailed to the cross, stretched out His hands to the Father in order to appease divine justice. In doing so, He became the mediator between the living and the dead—counting among the living the angels endowed with grace and among the dead, those burdened by sin. The sacrifice of Christ is presented as an act of atonement for the sins of humanity.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Parasceve*, p. 565.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 565–566.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 565.

⁵⁸ Id., *Sermo in Dominica in Passione Domini*, p. 102.

⁵⁹ Id., *Sermo in Parasceve*, p. 562.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Continuing his reflection on the Passion, Peregrine characterizes it as shameful, prolonged, and undeserved.⁶¹ It was disgraceful because Jesus was treated as a criminal: ‘Seized like a thief, mocked like a madman, rejected like a leper, crucified like a murderer.’⁶² The form of death—crucifixion—is described as the most shameful and painful, especially for one of delicate constitution: ‘Christ’s punishment was not only shameful, but also more painful than the sufferings of the martyrs. And this is because of His delicate body. For the more delicate a person is, the more he suffers.’⁶³ Peregrine’s depiction of Christ’s Passion on the cross is marked by vivid imagery and emotional intensity, designed to evoke compassion and sorrow in the hearts of his listeners:

His Passion was therefore extremely painful and cruel. Pain penetrated all His limbs from the sole of His foot to the top of His head (Isaiah 1:6). His entire body was filled with suffering [...]: His head was pierced with thorns, driven so deeply that they reached the brain; [...] His heart was wounded by the spear thrust into His side; His hands and feet were nailed to the cross, and all His blood was drained. His body on the cross seemed completely wasted. All His senses were tormented to redeem the sins committed through the five senses.⁶⁴

In listing the salvific fruits of Christ’s Passion on the cross, the Dominican preacher emphasized several key outcomes: the victory over death, the limitation of Satan’s power over humanity, the restoration of spiritual sight to humankind, the resurrection of the dead, and the opening of the gates of heaven to all believers.⁶⁵

The Mother of Jesus at the Cross

In his Good Friday sermon, Peregrine of Opole devoted considerable attention to the presence of Mary on Calvary. Her role was portrayed as active participation in the work of salvation accomplished on the cross. Peregrine emphasized Mary’s co-suffering with the Crucified, distinguishing between the physical suffering endured by Christ and the spiritual torment experienced by His Mother. He expressed this deep union with the words: ‘Everything that Christ suffered in the body, she suffered in the heart.’⁶⁶ This statement underscores the profound connection between Mother and Son.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 565.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 566–567.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 568.

Peregrine further reflected on the intensity of Mary's sorrow, noting that

the enormity of her pain and tears was due to the fact that she was the mother of an only son. It is easier to console a mother who has lost a son but has other children or believes she will have them. This one, however, had no other child and knew that she would not have one. Her pain was intensified by the fact that she watched with her own eyes how her Son was crucified, pierced, and wounded. They tormented Him and killed Him.⁶⁷

The suffering of Mary's heart was intensified by her helplessness and inability to bring relief to her Son:

How great was the pain that pierced Mary as she looked upon the Passion and death of her Son! Her pain was all the greater because she could not help Him, for she was powerless. A mother's heart longs to be with her beloved child, to kiss and embrace him. Mary could do nothing to help her Son. She heard that He was thirsty, but she could not give Him water. She saw His wounds, but could not bind them. She saw His bloody body, but could not wipe it clean. She saw His head falling, but could not support or cradle it. She saw His blood flowing to the ground, but could not collect it. She saw her Son weeping on the cross, and she could not dry His tears. Could she not have said these words of herself, 'I am a very unhappy woman!' (1 Samuel 1:15). Her pain was further intensified by the absence of support or counsel. All the apostles had fled, leaving her alone; thus, she could say, 'I looked for people's help, but there was none' (cf. Sirach 51:10). Her friends stood at a distance. And when Mary saw Jesus weakened from the flow of blood, she stretched out her white hands and, tore her beautiful hair, embraced the cross, and cried out: 'Woe to me, that I had ever given birth to a son whom I now see so tormented! Pray, all mothers, that you never see your sons so afflicted. Pity me, poor mother!'.⁶⁸

In order to intensify the tragic nature of the drama unfolding on Calvary, Peregrine of Opole introduced a dialogue between the Mother and her Son dying on the cross. Looking upon her Son, she exclaimed:

'My dearest son, where is the joy that the angel announced to me, saying: "Hail, full of grace"? (Luke 1:28). All my members are full of pain, not grace! Where is the joy of Your birth, when You came promised, and now I see You swooning? Son, You are

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 569. The theme of the lamentation of Mary, the witness of the Passion of Her Son, appears in the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus* (early 4th century). See *Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu. Ewangelie apokryficzne*, red. M. Starowieyski, t. 2, Kraków 2003, pp. 634 and 668–671. The motif of Mary's lamentations is also well attested in medieval authors; see H. Suso, *Księga Mądrości Przedwiecznej*, tłum. W. Szymona, Poznań 1983, 17, pp. 130–134. E. Susone, *Libro della Saggezza eterna*, in: *Testi...*, pp. 555–556.

struggling with death! To whom will You leave Your mother? What shall I do? There is no father; I have lost my mother, and now You, my only consolation, are dying before my eyes! Therefore, merciful Son, as You have said—have mercy on me! Why do You wish to die without Your mother? Send death, which many find bitter, but which I find sweet, because life without You is death to me, and death with You is life'. The son did not respond. The mother continued: 'Dearest son, why do you not speak? Hear your weeping mother! Remember that I carried you under my heart, surrounded you with tenderness, and carefully guarded you. Pain interrupts my words, it does not allow me to stand'. Having said this, she sat down and sighed instead of speaking. As she gazed upon her Son with sighs, she uttered from the depths of her heart: 'Son, the conversation ending, for neither shall I be able to speak, nor You can answer. Speak but one word, and we shall both die!'⁶⁹

The words of the Crucified addressed to His Mother (Jn 19:27) were interpreted as both the entrustment of His beloved disciple and a gesture of compensation for the hope she had placed in Him. Conversely, the words spoken to John were understood as a request to for His Mother:

Then Christ, opening His blood-stained eyes, said to His mother: 'Woman, behold your son' (Jn 19:26), as if to say: 'Because you have placed your hope in Me, take him for your son instead of Me'. Then, comforting the disciple, He said: 'Behold your mother' (Jn 19:27), as if He had said: 'Take care of her as if she were your own mother.' Having said this, Christ revealed the anguish of His soul, declaring: 'O all you who pass by the way, look and see if there is any sorrow like My sorrow' (Lam 1:12), as though to say: I am pierced and wounded for you. He wept over His death, and crying out, gave up His spirit. After his death, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear.⁷⁰

The celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday becomes an opportunity for the faithful to enter into the suffering of Christ with their hearts. As Peregrine preached:

Since today we celebrate the Passion of Christ, we should share in His suffering by weeping over His passion, for there are many reasons that should move us to tears. Today Christ wept because He could not console His Mother. That is why He uttered these words of Jeremiah: 'Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land!' (Jeremiah 15:10). And she, because of her great pain, could not respond. Christ also wept because of the agony of His flesh and the meagre fruit of His cruel Passion. For on that day, He won only one thief to heaven. And when He opened His eyes with great effort to entrust His Mother to the disciple,

⁶⁹ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Parasceve*, p. 569.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 570.

He wept because of the distraction and unfaithfulness of His disciples. That day, too, the disciple wept bitterly when he went out as it is written: ‘And he went out and wept bitterly’ (Luke 22:62).⁷¹

The inclusion of dramatic elements in the sermon serves as a precursor to the development of liturgical drama, which would later take form in the Passion liturgies celebrated during Lent.

The Resurrection of the Lord

The salvific perspective also dominates Peregrine’s presentation of the mystery of the Resurrection. According to him, it was a victory over all the power of the devil, the opening of the previously closed gates of the kingdom of heaven, and above all, a revelation of God’s omnipotence. Jesus, ‘being Lord of life and death, died and rose again.’⁷² To strengthen the faith of the apostles in the reality of the Resurrection, Christ ate and drank in their presence, remaining with them for forty days and forty nights.⁷³ This event also reveals its implications for the Christian life: the disciples are called to rise from sin through participation in sacramental confession.⁷⁴

In the second part of the sermon, references to Christophanies were cited, addressed both to individuals (such as Mary Magdalene and Peter) and to groups of disciples (the women returning from the tomb, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, all the apostles gathered in the Upper Room).⁷⁵ The three appearances of Jesus to Mary Magdalene were explained, with an emphasis on her extraordinary love. These appearances served to recall that Christ had sacrificed Himself on the cross for sinners and to highlight her new mission of proclaiming the Resurrection.⁷⁶

It should be noted that the aforementioned arguments explaining the appearance of the Risen Christ to Mary Magdalene were drawn from the *Legenda aurea*.⁷⁷ Similar borrowings can be observed in the other Christophanies cited by Peregrine. However, it is worth noting that the *Legenda aurea* includes many more accounts of the apparitions of the Risen One.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 568.

⁷² Id., *Sermo in festo Resurrectionis Domini*, p. 112.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 115.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ See Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda aurea*, vol. I, Firenze 1998, p. 362.

In his analysis of the Christophanies, Peregrine refers to two apparitions of Jesus that are not recorded in the Holy Scriptures but are known through the Tradition of the Church. The preacher first describes the appearance of the Risen Christ to His Mother. In addressing the silence of the Gospels on this event, Peregrine attributes it to the will of Jesus Himself: Mary was the first to receive the privilege of seeing her Son, as she had participated in a unique way in the mystery of the Cross.⁷⁸

The second Christophany described in the sermon concerns the revelation of Jesus to James the Apostle:

Christ also appeared to James, as is recounted on Saint Walburga's day. James made a vow that he would eat nothing until he had seen the Risen Lord. On the very day of the Resurrection, on which James had eaten nothing, the Lord appeared to him and said to all who were with him: 'Prepare the table!' Then, taking bread, He blessed it and gave it to James, who was a righteous man, and said, 'Eat, My brother, for the Son of Man has risen from the dead.'⁷⁹

When examining the source of Peregrine's inspiration, it should be noted that the *Legenda aurea* makes only a brief reference to this episode, directing the reader to another apocryphal work. It follows that the Dominican from Opole also drew on other apocryphal writings in the composition of his sermons.⁸⁰ This raises the question of the credibility of apocryphal literature as a source for medieval preaching and highlights the fact that, when commenting on the mystery of Christ's Resurrection, the preacher does not once appeal to the authority of St Paul the Apostle (cf. 1 Cor. 15).

Explaining the appearance of the Risen One in the Upper Room, the preacher does not dwell on analysing the qualities of the glorified body of Christ. Rather, the new reality is presented as a foretaste of the glorified Church. Christ's departure from the sealed tomb and His entry into the Cenacle despite the closed doors

⁷⁸ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in festo Resurrectionis Domini*, pp. 115–116. The theme of the revelation of the Risen Christ to His Mother Mary appears in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. See Ambrose, *De Virginitate*, III, 14, PL 16, 269–270; Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo LXXIV*, 3, PL 52, 409; Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio II in Christi Resurrectionem*, PG 46, 633; John Chrysostom, *Commentarium in s. Mathaeum Evangelistam*, PG 58, 777. Moreover, this theme is present in medieval hagiographic literature, exemplified by the *Legenda aurea*. Cf. Iacopo da Varazze, *De Resurrectione Domini*, in: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda...*, vol. I, p. 364.

⁷⁹ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in festo Resurrectionis Domini*, p. 115.

⁸⁰ The Story of the Apparition of the Resurrected St James the Apostle does not appear explicitly in the *Legenda aurea*, although Iacopo de Voragine (Varazze) makes an allusion to it. Therefore, the source of inspiration for this narrative should be sought outside the work of the Dominican hagiographer. See Iacopo da Varazze, *De Resurrectione Domini*, in: Iacopo da Varazze, *Legenda...*, p. 363.

herald a new quality of the disciples' bodies after the resurrection: subtle, radiant, agile, and incorruptible.⁸¹

The greeting 'Peace be with you' is interpreted as an announcement of peace, the fruit of the victory won on the cross.⁸² The pierced hands and side of the Risen Jesus also bear a message: the signs of the Passion of the Son of God are intended to move the Father to mercy. The wounds visible on the glorified body of Christ are a perpetual testimony of His remembrance of humanity. Furthermore, Christ 'has signed us also in His hands, to imprint on our hearts the signs of His Passion.'⁸³

It should be emphasized that the Dominican preacher did not address complex theological questions requiring detailed explanation, but rather concentrated on the pastoral dimension, presenting the saving fruits of Christ's paschal mystery, and proposing Him as a model for Christians life.

The Ascension of the Lord

The preacher, in characterizing the celebrated feast, notes that this event crowns Christ's earthly mission and explains its salvific meaning.⁸⁴ The Ascension of Christ, body and soul, into heavenly glory reveals above all His obedience:⁸⁵ having fulfilled the will of the Father, He announced the end of His earthly mission and His return to heaven.⁸⁶ The reasons for His Ascension also included presenting the petitions of humanity to the Father⁸⁷ and preparing a place in the kingdom of heaven for His disciples.⁸⁸

The Ascension was likewise the inauguration of His solemn reign in heaven.⁸⁹ The victorious King, having 'gained victory over the enemy and taken his booty', entered His kingdom.⁹⁰ The acquired booty was identified as 'souls in limbo, which Satan had held for many years'.⁹¹ Peregrine did not explain the meaning of the term *abyss* (*limbus*), which he employed in his sermon. In the same sermon, the Dominican emphasized once again that 'He ascended to heaven amidst the

⁸¹ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica prima post Pascha*, p. 130.

⁸² Id., *Sermo in feria tertia post Pascha*, p. 124.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 126.

⁸⁴ Id., *Sermo in Ascensione Domini*, p. 156.

⁸⁵ Id., *Sermo in Dominica quarta post Pascha*, p. 143.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 144. In addition, Christ in the kingdom of heaven listens to the requests of His people. See id., *Sermo in Dominica quinta post Pascha*, p. 147.

⁸⁸ Id., *Sermo in Dominica quarta post Pascha*, p. 144.

⁸⁹ Id., *Sermo in Dominica quinta post Pascha*, p. 147.

⁹⁰ Id., *Sermo in Ascensione Domini*, p. 156.

⁹¹ Ibid.

joy of the captives whom He had brought out of the abyss and who rejoiced at their release,⁹² thereby opening the way for His disciples to attain the same reality.⁹³ Christ entered heaven, surpassing all the choirs of angels, to sit at the right hand of the Father.⁹⁴

The preacher did not provide detailed descriptions of heaven, merely noting the existence of seven heavens.⁹⁵ Citing the authority of St Gregory the Great, he observed: ‘After the day of judgment, heaven will be divided into two parts; the saints will reside in one, and the angels in the other. There will be as many angels as there are saints, and thus all the saints, alternating with the angels, will praise God without ceasing.’⁹⁶

The Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment

The themes of eschatology appear only occasionally in the Dominican’s sermons. The preacher, mindful of the salvation of souls, addresses a specific listener, seeking to shape his virtues and character, and presenting Christ as the model to be followed. Nevertheless, his sermons do contain certain eschatological elements that cannot be overlooked.

In this sermon for the second Sunday of Advent, Peregrine of Opole drew attention to the circumstances surrounding Christ’s Second Coming. Referring to texts from the New Testament, he emphasized that this coming will be accompanied by signs in the sun and in the heavens (Jl 2:31; Rev 6:12; 24:29 and Mt 24:21).⁹⁷ The Son of Man will come accompanied by angels, apostles, virgins, holy confessors and martyrs, to judge the world.⁹⁸ In this sermon, Peregrine employed dramatic elements, introducing Christ’s solemn speech that crowns His judgment. In it, he highlighted God’s love for humanity, from the moment of creation through to the Passion and death on the cross. In this perspective, the accuser of humanity is not Christ, but the world itself, which, though placed under human dominion, was misused by humankind:

Man, look at the cross where I was hanged for you! Look at the spear that opened My side! Look at the crown of thorns I was crowned with! Look at My scourged back! Look at the wounds on My head! I was tortured from head to toe. And all this, man,

⁹² Ibid., p. 158.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 157.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 159.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 157.

⁹⁷ Id., *Sermo in Dominica secunda Adventus*, p. 7.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

I endured for you! Where's your compassion? When all creation sympathized with Me on the cross, you man, showed none! I, your Creator, created you out of nothing, and when Satan betrayed you, I redeemed you. Everything in the world I have made for you: the moon, the sun, the stars, the day, the earth with its firmament, animals, trees and fruits, fire to warm you, waters filled with fish, and over all of these I have made you lord. And you have misused all this, and therefore the whole world raises a cry of complaint against you.⁹⁹

The judgment of mankind will expose the iniquities committed by all people.¹⁰⁰ Those who have committed them will face the following punishments: their sins will be made manifest, hell will be opened to consume them, they will see an angry Judge ready to punish them; angels prepared to separate the righteous from the unrighteous; and evil spirits awaiting their demise. The final punishment they will endure will be the awareness of their ultimate state and the loss of any hope of salvation.

Peregrine returned to the topic of the Last Judgment in his sermon for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost. He emphasized the price that Christ had paid to accomplish the redemption of the human race. In this perspective, the principal accuser is Christ: 'He will reproach, saying: "For you I was made man; for you I was bound; for you I was mocked; for you I was scourged; for you I was nailed to the cross. This is the price of my blood, which I shed for you. Where, then, is your obedience, which you gave me at the price of blood?"'.¹⁰¹

The theme of the Last Judgment appears again in the sermon for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost. In it, Peregrine referred to the general resurrection of the faithful to eternal life, which he presents as a manifestation of God's mercy: 'So does Christ. After inflicting punishment on the holy bodies underground—as if in captivity—showing mercy, He will bring them back to life and clothe them in garments that will never grow old. And He will call them to a heavenly banquet, where they will reign with Him for ever.'¹⁰²

In this sermon, Peregrine also recalls the doctrine of purgatory as a place of punishment and a state of the soul, after death, is stripped of all goods. According to Peregrine, release from purgatory is itself an expression of God's mercy.¹⁰³

The Dominican further describes heaven, interpreting it as a permanent union between the Divine Bridegroom and the souls united with Him, sharing in His happiness. Saints who put on wedding garments are admitted to His heavenly

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 9–10.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁰¹ Id., *Sermo in Dominica vicesima secunda post Pentecosten*, p. 284.

¹⁰² Id., *Sermo in Dominica septima post Pentecosten*, p. 218.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

kingdom, but all who persist in sin are excluded.¹⁰⁴ Peregrine elaborates at length on the image of the heavenly feast. The guests, clothed in festive garments, will be served by Christ Himself. Uniquely, he also attributes a particular role to the Mother of Jesus: since her whole life was subordinated to her Son, and Christ serves the invited guests in His kingdom, Mary likewise serves the guests—offering them drinks—at the heavenly banquet. The originality of this interpretation warrants quotation in full:

The Queen of Sheba is every faithful soul who, being in her country, that is, in this world, either only hears what great joy God has prepared for His chosen ones in heaven, or does not believe it. But when she comes there herself, she will see Solomon, that is, Christ, and she will also see the dwellings of the saints. There she will also see that the apostles and their successors are dressed differently, mothers differently, monks differently, widows differently, virgins differently, husbands differently. She will also see the dishes of the heavenly table, which no one can number. She will also see that Christ Himself will serve them as He passes by (Luke 12:37), and Mary will give them drinks. Then the soul will say first: 'All that I have heard from the preachers is true, but I have not heard from them a tenth of what I now see with my eyes.'¹⁰⁵

4. Characteristics of the Christology of Peregrine of Opole

Soteriological Perspective

One of the key characteristics of Peregrine's Christological reflection is its soteriological, or salvific dimension. In one of his sermons, the Dominican interprets the mission of Christ in the light of God's saving plan:

It was not enough for our Creator to send an angel for lost humanity; rather He sent His only-begotten Son into the world—and into a world full of misery. Moreover, He sent Him to hell to deliver the souls of the righteous from there. He sent Him into the world, being sold, He might redeem us, who had been sold because of the sin of our first parent, and so that, being killed, He might restore us to life. [...] Yes, the rock means Christ, who was struck with the wood of the cross, and water flowed out, which means the Holy Spirit, with which we are washed from our sins. And indeed, blood and water flowed from His side: blood for our redemption, water for the washing away of our sins, for the human race should be washed by this water.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Id., *Sermo in Dominica vicesima post Pentecosten*, p. 276.

¹⁰⁵ Id., *Sermo in Dominica tertiary decima post Pentecosten*, p. 245.

¹⁰⁶ Id., *Sermo in feria secunda post Pentecosten*, pp. 169–170.

The Saviour's coming into the world offered humanity a path contrary to the one by which Satan had led it away from God. He opposed the path of pride with humility, obedience to disobedience, and life in truth to falsehood.¹⁰⁷ The coming of the Son of God into the world was intended to accomplish the redemption of humankind: 'Then He has come to save our damned world.'¹⁰⁸

In the fulfilment of the divine plan of salvation, an essential element was the union of the Son of God with human nature. By becoming man, the Son of God submitted Himself to suffering and torment in order to appease His Father.¹⁰⁹

Commenting on the words 'Behold, this one is placed as a sign' (Lk 2:34), Peregrine observed that Christ was a sign for all who had distanced themselves from Him. He stretched out His hands on the cross so that those who had lost their way might turn back to it.¹¹⁰ He also emphasized the spiritual significance of the cross for the Christian: 'We should engrave this sign in our heart, as a seal is imprinted in wax. This can only be done when the wax is hot. Similarly, Christ's Passion can only be engraved in the heart when it is warm and set on fire by the Holy Spirit.'¹¹¹ The Passion of Christ, Peregrine taught, must be imprinted in the life of the Christian—in all conduct and behaviour.

This cross is also a sign in the struggle that Christians wage against the enemies of salvation. When they face temptations, they look to the Crucified One, who supports them in their spiritual combat: 'Warriors, when they see the mark of the king, their spirits rise and they do not think of fleeing, especially when the king himself is in the fight and the fight is just. Our King, though wounded, takes part in the fight so that the Christian will fight bravely. But if he is wounded, let him look at the wounds of Christ, and he will be healed immediately.'¹¹² The preacher also underscored the universality of the gifts merited by Christ on the cross, which He bestows upon both the good and the wicked, desiring the salvation of all.¹¹³

Christological Titles

The Dominican used in his sermons various titles characterizing the mission of Christ: Mediator (*Mediator*), Good Shepherd (*Pastor bonus*), Sacrifice Guar-

¹⁰⁷ Id., *Sermo in Dominica quarta Adventus*, pp. 19–20.

¹⁰⁸ Id., *Sermo in Circumcisione Domini*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁹ Id., *Sermo in festo Rogationum*, pp. 153–154; id., *Sermo in Dominica in Quinquagesima*, p. 77.

¹¹⁰ Id., *Sermo in Dominica infra octavam Nativitatis Domini*, p. 29.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 29–30.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹³ Id., *Sermo in feria tertia post Pascha*, pp. 123–129.

antor (*fidelis Fideiussor*), Kind Physician (*benignus Medicus*), Mighty Warrior (*fortis Pugil*), True Friend (*verus Amicus*), Wise Defender (*sapiens Advocatus*) and King (*Rex*).¹¹⁴

Drawing on Paul's teaching on the unique mediation of Christ, Peregrine affirms¹¹⁵ that Christ, true God and true Man, unites the divine and human natures, interceding for His people so that God the Father might withhold His righteous anger.¹¹⁶ The lost sheep, found by Christ, owes to Him its return to the flock; hence He is rightly called the Good Shepherd.¹¹⁷

As Kind Physician, Christ cares for the sick,¹¹⁸ healing both body and soul.¹¹⁹ In Peregrine's description, He is a trustworthy, benevolent, and exceptional healer.¹²⁰ The title 'True Friend' underscores being His loving and caring relationship with humanity¹²¹—a friendship gained through obedience to the commandments.

The designation Mighty Warrior is linked to the work of salvation: the purpose of Christ's coming into the world was deliver those enslaved by Satan from his power.¹²² This victory is also reflected in the titles: Wise Defender¹²³ and Sacrifice Guarantor, by which Peregrine highlights Christ's self-offering to free humanity from the consequences of the sin of the first parents.¹²⁴

The term Lord (*Dominus*) denotes His humility,¹²⁵ while the designation Teacher (*Magister*) reflects the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that dwell within Him.¹²⁶

Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture

Medieval exegesis traditionally distinguished four senses of Scripture: the historical (literal) and the spiritual, the latter comprising the moral, allegorical, and anagogical senses. As S. Pawliński observes, 'Peregrine employs all exegetical senses, although he primarily favours the spiritual sense so characteristic

¹¹⁴ Id., *Sermo in Dominica prima Adventus*, p. 3

¹¹⁵ 1 Tim 2:5; Romans 5:10. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica prima Adventus*, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica prima Adventus*, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Id., *Sermo in Dominica vicesima prima post Pentecosten*, p. 281.

¹²¹ Id., *Sermo in Dominica none post Pentecosten*, p. 227.

¹²² This title is explained in the context of Isaiah 63:1. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica prima Adventus*, p. 6.

¹²³ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica prima Adventus*, p. 6.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

¹²⁵ Id., *Sermo in Dominica in Palmis*, p. 103.

¹²⁶ Id., *Sermo in Cena Domini*, p. 108.

of the Middle Ages, which becomes a kind of key to his sermons. Within this key, the typological and allegorical interpretation of the Holy Scriptures occupies a special place.¹²⁷

Commenting on the Book of Numbers, Peregrine interprets the fruits brought back by the spies from the Promised Land in the light of the mystery of Christ:

These were presented in the Book of Numbers in the form of figs, grapes, and pomegranates that the spies brought from the Promised Land (Num. 13:24). The fig symbolizes the sweetness of the divinity of Christ; the grapes signify His human nature pressed in the winepress of the cross; the pomegranate represents communion with the saints.¹²⁸

In the same Christocentric perspective, Peregrine reads the invitation to the banquet of King Ahasuerus as fulfilled in the wedding feast that Christ has prepared for all people. His invitation embraces both those still in their mothers' wombs (e.g., John the Baptist) and those punished for their deeds by secular authority (e.g., the thief alongside Him).¹²⁹

The allegorical interpretation was also applied to the parables of the New Testament. Using this method, the Dominican explained how the Good Shepherd feeds his sheep:

First, Christ feeds His sheep, that is, faithful Christians, in three ways—namely with grass, flowers, and dew. [...] Grass is a sacred science mentioned in the Book of Genesis (Gen. 1:11). [...] Christ also feeds us with flowers, that is, by His holy example, of which we read: 'Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example so that you may follow in His footsteps' (1 Pt 2:21). [...] He also feeds us with dew, that is, with His Body. For the dew falls so gently and imperceptibly that it does not disturb either the grass or the ground. The Body of Christ descends into the human soul in a way that is shrouded in mystery so that no one can see it. [...] Thus Christ feeds the faithful with His own flesh. That is why He says: 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven' (John 6:51). Who today is such a caring shepherd as to feed his sheep with his own flesh?¹³⁰

The aforementioned method, applied to the scene of Peter's denial, led Peregrine to conclude that the hen symbolizes the preacher, while Peter represents the repentant sinner.¹³¹ The three young men in the fiery furnace symbolise the

¹²⁷ S. Pawliński, *Średniowieczne kazania...*, p. 130.

¹²⁸ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica secunda post Pentecosten*, p. 188.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Id., *Sermo in Dominica secunda post Pascha*, p. 136.

¹³¹ Id., *Sermo in Dominica quinta post Pentecosten*, p. 205.

suffering souls in purgatory,¹³² while the boat represents the journey towards the cross of Christ, through which one arrives at the promised heavenly homeland.¹³³ In this interpretative framework, the mountains signify the saints of the Lord (such as St Nicholas and St Dominic), among whom the highest and most powerful is the Blessed Virgin Mary: ‘Oh, how many sinners this mountain has saved! To this mountain, therefore, we should raise the eyes of our heart, so that, sheltered by her, we may come to the mountain of God, Horeb (cf. 1 Kings 19:8)—that is, to the kingdom of heaven, where He Himself lives and reigns, Jesus Christ. Amen.’¹³⁴

Old Testament Figures of Christ

Peregrine frequently drew upon Old Testament realities, relating them in a distinctive way to Christ. Thus, Christ is prefigured not only by Joseph sold into slavery,¹³⁵ but also David.¹³⁶ At times, the figures symbolizing Christ appear mutually exclusive—for example, the Pharaoh,¹³⁷ Moses,¹³⁸ and Aaron.¹³⁹ This did not prevent the preacher from identifying certain analogies, without concern for their internal coherence.

Christ is also foreshadowed by Joshua, who, as Peregrine explains, ‘told the twelve men—that is, the apostles—to take the twelve stones, that is, the twelve articles of faith, and to carry them on their shoulders by action, and on their lips by preaching the word of God.’¹⁴⁰ Other Old Testament figures pointing to Christ include Tobias,¹⁴¹ Elijah,¹⁴² Judith,¹⁴³ and Jacob.¹⁴⁴ The analogies and similarities Peregrine observes in these characters are imbued with strong homiletic emphasis.

Peregrine’s sermons also abound in references to certain natural phenomena described in the Old Testament, interpreted in the light of Christ. The rainbow—presented in Genesis as the sign of the covenant between God and Noah—is read

¹³² Id., *Sermo in Dominica septima post Pentecosten*, p. 219.

¹³³ Id., *Sermo in Dominica quinta post Pentecosten*, p. 207.

¹³⁴ Id., *Sermo in Dominica vicesima quinta post Pentecosten*, p. 304.

¹³⁵ Id., *Sermo in Dominica in Sexagesima*, p. 74; id., *Sermo in Dominica quinta post Pascha*, p. 150; id., *Sermo in Dominica sexta post Pentecosten*, p. 211.

¹³⁶ Id., *Sermo in Dominica in Palmis*, p. 105; id., *Sermo in Dominica quarta post Pascha*, p. 144.

¹³⁷ Id., *Sermo in Dominica quinta post Pascha*, p. 149; id., *Sermo in Dominica tertia post Pentecosten*, p. 197.

¹³⁸ Id., *Sermo in Parasceve*, p. 561.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 562. Cf. H. Martin, *Pérégryn...*, p. 57.

¹⁴⁰ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in feria tertia post Pentecosten*, p. 173.

¹⁴¹ Id., *Sermo in Dominica decima post Pentecosten*, p. 232.

¹⁴² Id., *Sermo in festo Resurrectionis Domini*, p. 112.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

in a Christocentric perspective: it is the rainbow that Christ has placed in heaven, so that, when looking upon His wounds, the Father might remember the covenant sealed by the dying Son upon the cross.¹⁴⁵

5. Sources of Theological Reflections of Peregrine of Opole

The sermons of Peregrine of Opole are grounded in *auctoritates*, which, from the twelfth century onwards, came to encompass an ever-wider range of sources. In addition to these drawn from the writings of the Church Fathers, they include references to the opinions of medieval theologians. Such citations were intended to reinforce the theological claims formulated by Peregrine.

In expounding the mystery of Christ, the Dominican made frequent use of the works of the Church Fathers. His sermons contain messages from St Gregory the Great (*Dialogues, Moralia*)¹⁴⁶ and St Augustine,¹⁴⁷ while he drew only occasionally on the writings of St Ambrose (*Hexaemeron*),¹⁴⁸ St Jerome,¹⁴⁹ and St Isidore of Seville.¹⁵⁰ The *Sermones de tempore* also contain sporadic references to medieval authors such as St Anselm¹⁵¹ and St Bernard of Clairvaux.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁵ Id., *Sermo in feria tertia post Pascha*, p. 125.

¹⁴⁶ See Gregorius, *Dialogorum libri IV*, cap. 43, PL 77, 401. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica secunda Adventus*, p. 9; Gregorius, *In primum Regum Expositiones*, lib. II, PL 79, 137. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica tertia Adventus*, p. 11; Gregorius, *Dialogorum libri IV*, cap. 38, PL 77, 389–392. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in festo rogationum*, p. 154; Gregorius, *Dialogorum libri IV*, cap. 26, PL 77, 361–364. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in festo Pentecostes*, p. 167; Gregorius, *Moralia*, lib. 26, cap. 13, PL 76, 360. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica secunda post Pentecosten*, p. 189; Gregorius, *Moralia*, lib. 1, cap. 37, PL 75, 554. Peregrinus de Opole, *Dominica quinta post Pentecosten*, p. 210; Gregorius, *Moralia*, lib. 25 cap. 9, PL 76, 334. Peregrinus de Opole, *Dominica quarta decima post Pentecosten*, p. 250. Gregorius, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia*, hom. XIV, PL 76, 1130; Peregrinus de Opole, *Dominica secunda post Pascha*, p. 136.

¹⁴⁷ Augustinus, *Sermo CLXXV*, PL 38, 945; Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica prima Adventus*, p. 5. Augustinus, *Sermo XCVII*, PL 38, 590; Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo Dominica tertia post Pascha*, pp. 139–140. Augustinus, *Sermo CCXLIX*, PL 38, 1162; Peregrinus de Opole, *Dominica prima post Pentecosten*, p. 181.

¹⁴⁸ Ambrosius, *Hexaemeron*, lib. VI, cap. IV, PL 14, 268. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica prima in Quadragesima*, p. 82.

¹⁴⁹ Hieronymus, *Epistula CXXX*, PL 22, 1115. Peregrinus de Opole, *Dominica quinta post Pentecosten*, p. 206.

¹⁵⁰ Isidorus, *Sententiarum libri III*, cap. VII, PL 83, 671–672. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in festo rogationum*, p. 155.

¹⁵¹ Anselmus, *Meditationes*, VII, PL 158, 740. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica quinta post Pentecosten*, p. 208.

¹⁵² Bernardus, *Sermo XXX*, PL 183, 622; Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica quarta post Epiphaniam Domini*, p. 58. Bernardus, *Sermo de passione Domini*, PL 183, 269; Peregrinus de

Peregrine's *Sermones de tempore* likewise reveal frequent recourse to the *Vitae Patrum*. He illustrated his teaching with examples from the life of hermits such as Sisoes, Silvanus, Paul, and Macarius.¹⁵³

Particular emphasis must be placed on the significant influence of the works of Iacopo da Varazze on the preaching of the Polish Dominican. Analysis shows that Peregrine drew upon both the *Sermones quadragesimales* and the *Legenda aurea* of the Italian Dominican.¹⁵⁴ The *Legenda aurea* was an invaluable source of preaching examples (*exempla*), drawn from, among others, the legends of St Mary Magdalene,¹⁵⁵ St John the Apostle and Evangelist,¹⁵⁶ St Benedict,¹⁵⁷ St Dominic, St Bartholomew,¹⁵⁸ and St Felix.¹⁵⁹

Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the vast majority of sermons contained in Peregrine of Opole's *de tempore* cycle belong to the category of moral or parenetic homilies. Their dominant message is the spiritual struggle against sin and the pursuit of salvation, whereas explicitly dogmatic sermons are

Opole, *Sermo in feria tertia post Pascha*, p. 126; Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in vigilia Nativitatis Domini*, p. 25.

¹⁵³ *De Vitis Patrum*, lib. VI, PL 73, 1007; id., *Sermo in Dominica quarta post Pascha*, p. 146. *De Vitis Patrum*, lib. III, PL 73, 795–796; Peregrinus de Opole, *Dominica septima post Pentecosten*, p. 219. See *De Vitis Patrum*, lib. V, PL 73, 862. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica undecima post Pentecosten*, p. 237. *De Vitis Patrum*, lib. III, PL 73, 795–796. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica undecima post Pentecosten*, p. 239. *De Vitis Patrum*, lib. VI, PL 73, 1013–1014. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in feria tertia post Pascha*, p. 126.129. Jerzy Wolny pointed to *Vitae Patrum* as a source for Peregrine's sermons. See id., *Uwagi...*, p. 547.

¹⁵⁴ The influence of the writings of the Dominican from Varazze—both the *Legenda aurea* and the *Sermones de tempore* and *de sanctis*—on Peregrine's preaching was also noted by J. Wolny; see id., *Uwagi...*, p. 547.

¹⁵⁵ Iacopo da Varazze, *De sancta Maria Magdalena*, in: id., *Legenda...*, vol. I, p. 636. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica decima quinta post Pentecosten*, p. 255.

¹⁵⁶ Iacopo da Varazze, *De sancto Johanne evangelista*, in: id., *Legenda...*, vol. I, p. 95. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica decima octava post Pentecosten*, pp. 267–268.

¹⁵⁷ Iacopo da Varazze, *De sancto Benedicto*, in: id., *Legenda...*, vol. I, pp. 311–312. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica tertia in Quadragesima*, p. 93. Iacopo da Varazze, *De sancto Benedicto*, in: id., *Legenda...*, vol. I, pp. 311–312. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in feria III post Pentecosten*, p. 175.

¹⁵⁸ Iacopo da Varazze, *De sancto Dominico*, in: id., *Legenda...*, vol. II, p. 734; id., *De sancto Bartholomeo*, in: id., *Legenda...*, vol. II, p. 833. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in feria II post Pentecosten*, p. 170.

¹⁵⁹ Iacopo da Varazze, *De sancto Felice*, in: id., *Legenda...*, vol. I, p. 152. Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Dominica decima octava post Pentecosten*, pp. 268–269.

comparatively rare. The image of Christ they present is grounded in the events of the Incarnation and the mystery of the Passion and Resurrection. The preacher, while underscoring the humanity of the Son of God, also highlights the salvific significance of His life.

Christ is depicted as a model for imitation. Peregrine exhorts the faithful to strive for holiness, understood not merely as the absence of venial and mortal sins,¹⁶⁰ but also the cultivation of personal relationship with the Eucharistic Christ and the development of Christian virtues. This dimension of Christology is consistent with Dominican preaching of the thirteenth century.

The portrayal of Christ in the *sermones de tempore* draws upon material from both the Old and New Testaments. Through allegorical exegesis, numerous Old Testament figures are presented as types and prefigurations of Christ while many Gospel parables are interpreted in the light of salvation. Despite the biblical character of these sermons, they also contain references to the writings of the Church Fathers (St Ambrose, St Jerome, St Augustine, St Gregory the Great) and medieval authors (St Anselm, St Bernard of Clairvaux). Nevertheless, the relatively infrequent of patristic sources may suggest that the monastery library in Racibórz was poorly stocked. Moreover, the absence of references to the theology of St Thomas Aquinas supports the conclusion that Peregrine did not study in Paris.

Liturgical elements also appear in the sermons of the Polish Dominican. Peregrine of Opole quotes liturgical texts and adds comments on the feasts being celebrated. Such practices were already well established in preaching of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The sermons of Peregrine of Opole also contain *exempla*—preaching stories introduced to illustrate theological truths, depict human behaviour in various circumstances, and demonstrate the consequences of moral choices. For this purpose, he drew extensively on works such as the *Vitae Patrum* and *Legenda aurea* of Jacob of Varazze. In the *sermones de tempore*, Christ is consistently presented as a model for Christian life, placing Peregrine firmly within the Dominican tradition that cultivated this aspect of Christology.

The preacher also employed dramatic devices to heighten the impact of his message, such as imagined dialogues between Christ and Mary on Calvary. This, however, was not an original innovation of Peregrine; similar techniques are found in the *Sermones quadragesimales* of Jacob of Varazze, from which Peregrine directly quotes an extensive passage.

The analysis indicates that Peregrine's Christology was not innovative, as his primary concern was to call his audience to conversion. The moral emphasis of his sermons shaped his portrayal of Christ chiefly an example for believers to follow.

¹⁶⁰ Peregrinus de Opole, *Sermo in Circumcisione Domini*, p. 35.

The value of these findings lies in presenting, for the first time, a coherent image of Christ emerging from Peregrine's sermons. This image sheds light on Dominican theological reflection in Poland at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, enriches our understanding of medieval theology in Poland, and constitutes a valuable contribution to the history of preaching in the region.

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