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## **The concept of man's salvation in the thought of Saint John Paul II and Paul Tillich: similarities and differences**

### **Abstract**

The presented text aims to distinguish the understanding of the concept of salvation by two significant Christian scholars: John Paul II and Paul Tillich. They come from two separate Christian traditions: Catholicism and Lutheranism. The concept of salvation is so crucial that it is the essence of understanding Christianity and, if recognized as the goal of every human life, the effort of understanding it becomes even more important. An insight into the notion of salvation, based on the indication of similarities and differences in its understanding, makes it more comprehensible and accessible to every Christian.

### **Keywords**

John Paul II, Paul Tillich, salvation of man, ecumenism, Lutheranism.

### **1. The concept of salvation**

In Greek religion, hope and the concept of salvation were closely related to the philosophy of man, who was perceived with acute dualism: man consists of soul and body. In its essence and because of being intangible, the soul is divine, whereas the body, as a material medium, is a prison for the soul. Therefore, the idea of salvation in ancient philosophical and religious systems took the

form of longing for the salvation of the human soul from the bonds of the material body and the visible world. The most complete expression of this perception of reality is depicted in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"<sup>1</sup>, by leaving which (what is sensuous, carnal) man perceives what is real and unchanging in a true and irreversible way. Already in ancient times, at the beginning of Christianity, some theologians were inspired by the Plato's concept of man, the possibilities of saving, salvation, and tried to use it to explain the biblical doctrine of salvation. Platonic dualism, in which the soul is more important than what is material, changeable and limited, was imposed upon biblical anthropology, which regarded man as a strict and inseparable unity. Therefore, the salvation of man was understood as the salvation of the soul<sup>2</sup> rather than the salvation of man as a person composed of soul and body. The knowledge of salvation was interpreted in this way for many centuries. This interpretation has had a great impact on the later practice of the Church. Man's salvation is realized both in an individual and collective context through the creative participation of man in the community, thanks to which he can shape himself and, at the same time, the community in which he participates. However, this is a broader and more complex issue, and it is only referred to in this work.

Man alone cannot save himself, because he is limited, entangled in the existence in which he abides and which determines his alienation from which he wants to free himself, his alienation from death, its threats, and fear or meaninglessness. This is the basic philosophically interpreted truth of the Church's faith, to which Pope John Paul II gave life and which he enriched, drawing deep existential conclusions of pastoral and theological importance. At this point, Christian soteriology is fundamentally different from the soteriology proposed by other religions of the world. Ancient Greek and Hellenistic religions also promised liberation for man. According to some, the means of the salvation of the soul were Platonic contemplation or stoical impertinence – the balance of the spirit; in the Hellenistic and Gnostic mysteries, the means of liberation were music, dance, participation in mystery rituals, and secret knowledge (*gnosis*). In the abovementioned soteriological systems there is nothing supernatural, personified by what Christians call grace. What is more, these religions did not

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<sup>1</sup> See Plato, *Republic*, Vol. VII, chapter I, various editions.

<sup>2</sup> Mission crosses had the inscription: "Save your soul!"

define any plan for saving people.<sup>3</sup> And the salvation of man was achieved more by his own work or by independent effort (*autosoterism*). Similarly, the notion of salvation in Far Eastern Buddhism is understood differently than in Christianity. In Buddhism everyone has to be saved alone. Buddha is not a means of salvation, but only a teacher who gives his personal experience to people.<sup>4</sup>

The very term "salvation" comes from Latin word *salvus* and it means "healthy", "untouched", "saved", "salvaged", "unspoiled", "undamaged", or "preserved in its entirety". It can refer to every act of healing: to heal from disease, demonic possession, enslavement through sin, and the ultimate power of death over man, as well as being free from fear of death, senselessness, guilt, and loss of self<sup>5</sup>, as Paul Tillich understood it. While John Paul II and his works are fairly well-known, Paul Tillich's personality and works are less famous. Paul Tillich is a giant of Protestant theological thought in its Lutheran version. As a pastor, after graduation, he participated in the drama of the First World War as a front chaplain, he knew what fear of death and suffering is for everyone because he experienced it. He knew perfectly well that hope for salvation served as a compass for every human being, and as a force that could make him change his life. His later scientific career continued in the United States, where he had to flee in 1933 as an exile from the country dominated by the Nazis. In his impressive three-volume *Systematic Theology*, he tried to answer questions about man and the world around him. He re-synthesized philosophy and theology in the question of man about himself, about the meaning of his existence and salvation.

Etymologically, the concept of salvation means creating the whole from what was broken, split (from Latin: *salvus* and *saos* – as what is whole and healthy). Finally, according to Paul Tillich – more as a philosopher than

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<sup>3</sup> "The Gospels clearly describe the fatherly responsibility of Joseph toward Jesus. For salvation – which comes through the humanity of Jesus – is realized in actions which are an everyday part of family life, in keeping with that «condescension which is inherent in the economy of the Incarnation. The gospel writers carefully show how in the life of Jesus nothing was left to chance, but how everything took place according to God's predetermined plan. The oft-repeated formula, «This happened, so that there might be fulfilled...» in reference to a particular event in the Old Testament serves to emphasize the unity and continuity of the plan which is fulfilled in Christ", John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos* Apostolic Exhortation, 8.

<sup>4</sup> See P. Grelot, *Biblia i teologia. Stare Przymierze – Pismo Święte*, in: *Tajemnica Chrystusa*, collaborative publication, Poznań – Warszawa – Lublin 1969, Św. Wojciech, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> P. Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, New Haven 1952, p. 47 and next; see P. Tillich, *Pytanie o Nieuwarunkowane*, trans. J. Zychowicz, Kraków 1994, ZNAK, pp. 197–198.

a theologian – salvation is an act that closes the gap between man’s essential being<sup>6</sup> and his existential situation, between what man is in his alienated and fearful existence, and his calling and self – destiny and nature. According to Tillich, existence is unable to become free from the state of alienation by itself, in order to return to the essence expressing the fullness and essence of man – he needs a power that transcends it and is beyond its control. Only in the eschatological horizon, in which the reconciliation of the everyday, finite, and alienated existence of man with the unconditional power of being is made – only in such a perspective can man co-shape his own salvation and the salvation of others, and also have any thought of salvation.

Both the role of God’s grace and the will of man and his cooperation with grace proved to be for Paul Tillich and John Paul II decisive elements for the salvation of man in his existence. For John Paul II, the above-mentioned salvific principle for every man is set in the same way as it is meant by Paul Tillich in the Great Commandment.<sup>7</sup>

In the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, the Pope shows that through the experience of God’s love revealed in the redemption of every man by the death of Jesus,<sup>8</sup> the Son of God, on the cross, man is called upon to serve God, the Church, and his neighbor.<sup>9</sup> Christ became a man and He knew what was in man.

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<sup>6</sup> “A complete discussion of the relation of essence to existence is identical with the entire theological system. The distinction between essence and existence, which religiously speaking is the distinction between the created and the actual world, is the back-bone of the whole body of theological thought”, in: P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Chicago 1973, Vol. I, Edi. The University of Chicago Press, p. 204.

<sup>7</sup> “Here we touch upon the essential point by which Christianity differs from all the other religions, by which man’s search for God has been expressed from earliest times. Christianity has its starting-point in the Incarnation of the Word. Here, it is not simply a case of man seeking God, but of God who comes in Person to speak to man of himself and to show him the path by which he may be reached. (...). The Incarnate Word is thus the fulfillment of the yearning present in all the religions of mankind: this fulfillment is brought about by God himself and transcends all human expectations. It is the mystery of grace”, John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> “Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. This, as has already been said, is why Christ the Redeemer fully reveals man to himself”, John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> “The full truth about human freedom is indelibly inscribed on the mystery of the Redemption. The Church truly serves mankind when she guards this truth with untiring attention, fervent love and mature commitment and when in the whole of her own community

Nothing but sin is alien to Him in what is plaguing and afflicting man in his alienated existence. Christ is the power of man for his salvation.<sup>10</sup> He is his Way, his only Truth, and the guarantee of Life, also here and now in his alienated existence. Thus, man realizes his call to save and salvage himself by recognizing the saving love and will of God for him. The mystery of God's saving love for man anticipates his existential transformation towards an ethical transformation in his quest for salvation. Saint John Paul II expressed a similar understanding of the meaning of the salvation in the *Dives in misericordia* encyclical. God, rich in mercy,<sup>11</sup> reveals his saving power in the Church and through the Church.<sup>12</sup> Thus, every human being is called to imitate and practice God's mercy in his daily existence for himself and for the others.<sup>13</sup> In the Pope's interpretation of man's salvation, Jesus combined ethical imperatives with the proclamation of the coming of God's Kingdom (Mk 1, 15).

With the coming of Christ, time has come and God's dominion has come. The healing of the sick, the expulsion of evil spirits, the resurrection of the dead were the signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God and salvation. It is only in the reality of this salvation that Jesus sets the ethical requirements: conversion, faith, love,<sup>14</sup> and forgiveness. The salvific impact of God experienced by people in Christ becomes the basis of their human activities (Matt. 18, 23, Luke 7, 47). Moreover, the radical nature of these requirements has its source in the new relationship between God and man that occurred during the time of salvation. During this period, God demands a lot from people, because He Himself has done much for them in Christ, enabling them to maturely answer the ques-

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she transmits it and gives it concrete form in human life through each Christian's fidelity to his vocation". "Christ teaches us that the best use of freedom is charity, which takes concrete form in self-giving and in service", John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> "by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, and God raised from the dead (...), this man stands before you cured (...).for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved", Acts 4, 10. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Eph. 2, 4–5.

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Luk. 6, 36.

<sup>14</sup> "The world exists for the exercise of mercy and judgment, not as if men were in it as they came from the hands of God, but as the enemies of God, to whom he gives by grace light enough to return, if they will seek him and follow him, and to punish them, if they refuse to seek him and follow him" – Blaise Pascal, *The Thoughts of Blaise Pascal*, trans. of M. Auguste Molinier by C. Kegan Paul (London 1901: George Bell and Sons), <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2407> (22.02.2018).

tion about the importance of ethical imperatives and their role in human life. Similarly – but not the same – the understanding of salvation was expressed by the German philosopher in his original concept of ultimate concern. Ethical virtue and God’s love for every human being also play a fundamental role in the philosophical system of the Lutheran Pastor. However, ethical virtue, which is bravery, is prior to the concept of salvation and love, in which man reaches his fullness. This does not mean, however, that the Redemption of man discussed previously is unnoticed. When a man, in his existence, has what he cares for the most, what is crucial for him in life, there is a chance for salvation. However, Tillich’s thought is more developed and differs in a vector interpreting the relationship between God and man. When man cares for what is his final concern, he becomes the object of care<sup>15</sup> and achieves salvation.<sup>16</sup> This argument will be developed in a further part of the work.

God, according to John Paul II and – as it later transpires – Paul Tillich, figures the salvation of each man out of love through his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. In other words, God saves a man not from the bonds of the body, but from moral evil. He accomplishes this through history, placing in it specific possibilities for choosing the saving powers. God wants the salvation of all people and the whole person: his soul and body.

For the Lutheran philosopher, one and true is God who appeared „many times and in various ways”<sup>17</sup> in human history, before His self-revelation to the world reached the highest point in Jesus Christ. A similar intuition was expressed by the Second Vatican Council, stating that every man who, without knowing the Gospel of Christ and the Church’s teaching, seeks the truth and fully respects God’s will, as far as he knows it, can be saved.<sup>18</sup> It can be assumed that such people would certainly desire to be baptized if they knew about its necessity.

The Catholic philosopher also mentions Buddhism, which – like Christianity – is the religion of salvation. However, the concept of salvation in Buddhism is significantly different than in Christianity. In Buddhism everyone has to save himself alone. So, it is an individualistic autosoteric system in which Buddha

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<sup>15</sup> “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy”, Matt. 5, 7.

<sup>16</sup> M. Bogdalczyk, *Zbawienie człowieka w myśli filozoficznej Paula Tillicha*, Kraków 2014, Studio MOT.

<sup>17</sup> Heb. 1,1.

<sup>18</sup> The cooperation of man’s will with the will of God is of great importance in his salvation, compare: “The gift of freedom. Difficult gift of freedom. Only one who is free can also become a slave”, in: John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 8.

is not a medium of salvation, but only a teacher. The technique and spirituality of Buddhism, promising salvation through the liberation of man from the world, do not invoke any divine grace,<sup>19</sup> but are based on one's own strength and capabilities. Thus, the difference between Christian and non-Christian religions is fundamental. These soteriologies could be regarded as bottom-up. Man himself, through the use of various treatments and ascetic means, wants to beg, and even in some sense enforce, salvation from his god. In soteriology understood in this way, God becomes an object in the hands of man, and thus becomes a kind of magic. This means that man judges a god and decides what the god has to do to save man. In Christian soteriology, the direction is the opposite, as if from above. God willingly, according to his own plan of salvation, in the face of the ontologically limited and epistemologically limited man, offers him salvation out of love – *agape*, which descends towards man.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. Philosophical and theological inspirations of John Paul II and Paul Tillich

Paul Tillich, creating his own original theological system in reference to the mystery of salvation, referred to the ancient concept of *logos spermaticos* („the seed for the word”). The above means of universal salvation through the *logos* was developed in the first century AD by Saint Justin Martyr.<sup>21</sup> Later, this concept was forgotten and was not the subject of deeper analyses until the Second Vatican Council and the Constitution – *Lumen gentium*. Saint Justin Martyr, using in his *Apology* the stoic concept of *logos spermaticos*, shows that since Christianity is the truth, the great philosophers, while proclaiming the truth, already had their share in the divine word contained in the revelation. Therefore,

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<sup>19</sup> P. Grelot, *Biblia i teologia. Stare Przymierze – Pismo Święte*, in: *Tajemnica Chrystusa*, Poznań 1969, Edi. Św. Wojciech, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente 2* – “Here we touch upon the essential point by which Christianity differs from all the other religions, by which man's search for God has been expressed from earliest times. Christianity has its starting-point in the Incarnation of the Word. Here, it is not simply a case of man seeking God, but of God who comes in Person to speak to man of himself and to show him the path by which he may be reached. This is what is proclaimed in the Prologue of John's Gospel: «No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known», (1,18).

<sup>21</sup> St. Justin, *First Apology*, 46, 1–4; *Second Apology* 7 (8) 1–4; 10, 1–3; 13, 3–4, compare: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Vol. I, 19, 9194.

Justin demonstrates the conformity of Christianity with true philosophy. John Paul II, speaking about the particles of Truth present in other religions, refers to similar intuition of the Logos present in all people as an element that sees its reflection in the image of Jesus as the complete Logos.<sup>22</sup>

In the understanding of the concept of human salvation, John Paul II used a variety of philosophical tools, always emphasizing the unity of man being composed of soul and body. Undoubtedly, the Aristotelian vision of man is revealed here as he is considered an integrated and integrating being. Composed of body and soul, he is able to manage his behavior to a large extent and undertake development in the direction he specifies. The Lutheran theologian understood man in the same way, pointing out that the factor integrating each man is his own belief in the ultimate.<sup>23</sup> The ultimate, as Tillich's philosophical category, is identified as the Christian God. However, before man determines the object of his ultimate concern in Jesus Christ, his faith must be verified and purified. Thus, the source of reflection on God and His plan of salvation for each man derives its sources and justification from existential philosophy seeking answers to the questions: who is man? what is he to do? what is able to salvage and save?

For John Paul II, an outstanding theologian and philosopher, the human body is not a prison for the soul, but in its essence it is a temple of God.<sup>24</sup> And the very concept of the body is a symbol not only of the physical body, but also of the entire sphere of human vitality, including his social concerns. Before discussing the social context of human salvation according to John Paul II, it must be specified that man as an individual person, co-creating a wider community, should seek salvation in order to contribute to the community in a way that

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<sup>22</sup> "Although the Church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all people, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without fail Jesus Christ who is «the way, and the truth and the life»», in: John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, 55.

<sup>23</sup> "In proclaiming the Risen Lord, Christians present the One who inaugurates a new era of history and announce to the world the good news of a complete and universal salvation which contains in itself the pledge of a new world in which pain and injustice will give way to joy and beauty", in: John Paul II, *Pastores gregis*, 80.

<sup>24</sup> Human love is a perfect example of the unity of the human person: "As an incarnate spirit, that is a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, man is called to love in his unified totality. Love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love", in: John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 11, in: *Apostolic Exhortations of Pope John Paul II*, Kraków, pp. 89–205.



it strives for salvation. The principle of human participation and individualization in the community is based on the polar ontological structure of being, which is the man–world relationship. This relationship is embedded in the perspective of God who created the world and everything that lives in it, God who sustains it in existence, and God who constantly transforms and sanctifies the world with His presence.

The difference in the meaning of salvation between John Paul II and Tillich occurs in relation to the designate, from which Jesus saves man. For Tillich, an alienated existence can reach for salvation from the fears that shape it, from senselessness, despair, and non-existence. For the Pope, however, the understanding of salvation is purely theological: as a salvation from sin and a call to conversion.<sup>25</sup> Man “dies” when he loses eternal life and such a risk arises when man does not convert to God. So, the opposite of salvation is not just temporal suffering – any suffering – but the ultimate suffering: loss of eternal life, rejection of God, condemnation. Jesus Christ, in his salvific mission, confronted evil in its very transcendent roots, who co-creates every human being. The sin itself, but also its tragic and also existential consequences, are overcome in accordance with the principle of theonomy through obedience to the will of God until death.

Man, in Tillich's thought, through the integrating and centralizing function of faith, which he experiences himself<sup>26</sup> and whose source comes from his radical question about what he cares about the most, in the constant search for a way out of the threat of non-existence, despair and condemnation, neutralizes these fears by giving himself identity through ontological self-affirmation.<sup>27</sup> The form of the “self” of existence in relation to the world is created through the individualization and participation in the human community. This ontological “self” is the possessor of something common for every human being, in the sense of the individual's participation in what is universal (Plato – Republic, Laws).

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<sup>25</sup> “The liberation and salvation brought by the kingdom of God come to the human person both in his physical and spiritual dimensions. Two gestures are characteristic of Jesus' mission: healing and forgiving. Jesus' many healings clearly show his great compassion in the face of human distress, but they also signify that in the kingdom there will no longer be sickness or suffering, and that his mission, from the very beginning, is meant to free people from these evils. In Jesus' eyes, healings are also a sign of spiritual salvation, namely liberation from sin”, John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> P. Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith...*, pp. 37–38.

<sup>27</sup> P. Tillich, *Męstwo Bycia*, Poznań 1994, Rebis, p. 98.

According to Tillich, the concept of salvation is aimed at restoring man's hope to overcome fear of non-existence, fear of despair, and death. A vision of human salvation defined in this way can be realized in an adequate and realistic theological thought referring to man in his basic existential search for answers to the meaning of life, also after crossing the line of biological death. The threat of fear of total despair can lead people to eliminate the possibility of situations in which they could be defeated by it. Despair is a state of anguish in the awareness of being responsible for losing the sense of one's existence and being unable to reclaim it. In one's own "self" man is in conflict with himself.<sup>28</sup> Even the most radical solution which is committing suicide (also in the psychological or metaphysical sense) will not solve the problem the person is facing. Suicide is a decision that concerns not so much human life in the biological sense, but rather a decision that determines the condition of the soul also after biological death. Suicide can be a successful attempt to avoid despair, but only at a temporal level. The success of this solution does not result in eternity, because the problem of salvation includes and exceeds the level of worldliness, and the very experience of despair. This perspective, the struggle of each man for his own salvation, became the theological and philosophical area in which both John Paul II and Paul Tillich wanted to show the importance and weight of God's love for every human being.

In Tillich's theology, the question about the salvation of man can only be asked if salvation, as the wholeness of human being, functions even if only in a fragmentary, partial, or even insignificant dimension. Otherwise, the wholeness of salvation is not needed. Pure despair, resulting in condemnation and being opposed to man's hope for salvation, is incapable of the explorative departure from itself. It limits and closes man in himself, leaving him alone. Just as the search for the New Being, which is the appearance in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, implies the presence of the New Being, the search for the truth presupposes the presence of truth.<sup>29</sup> This means that the search for salvation presupposes the existence of its designatum, as well as the manner of its

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<sup>28</sup> P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, Chicago 1975, The University of Chicago Press, p. 75.

<sup>29</sup> P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology...* Vol. II, ps. 80. The issue of the intentionality of salvation in Tillich's is precisely expressed by Max Scheler, who, when defining a religious act, states that faith in faith is not faith, just as the whim of some content is not a desire for this content; M. Scheler, *Problemy religii*, trans. Adam Węgrzecki, afterwords J.A. Kłoczowski, Kraków 1995, ZNAK, pp. 207–209.

realization and achieving. The search for the New Being, which gives hope for salvation and which is awaited as new, and at the same time is able to preserve reality by replacing and renewing alienated reality, is a universal desire expressed in every religion and autonomous culture.<sup>30</sup>

The concept of salvation in Paul Tillich's philosophical and theological thought is a fundamental issue. It is safe to say that it completes all the achievements of Tillich's philosophical and theological thought<sup>31</sup> and requires the adoption of several assumptions. First, the revelatory experience contained in Christianity has a universal character for everyone. Second, man receives revelation in the conditions of the consciousness of the finiteness of his human existence. The third assumption is that revelation, which simultaneously brings salvation, is accomplished through the process of human development limited by the possibilities of its adaptation and by possible errors resulting from it. The fourth assumption refers to salvation which, expressed with revelation, can be based on a unique revelatory event in history (in the person of Jesus Christ). The last of the assumptions establishes also the participation of broadly understood culture in shaping the history of religion.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. Similarities in understanding the salvation true for both thinkers

In Paul Tillich's thought, just like in the case of John Paul II, hope for the salvation of man is not limited only to a certain aspect or dimension in which man functions. The salvation of man includes who he is, both in the physical and spiritual dimension, through which God's love reaches the deepest parts of human selfhood and enables man to make a conscious and voluntary decision<sup>33</sup> to follow the guarantor of his salvation. The theory of thinking and its appropriate means expressed through the intellect is always represented by practice, specific action in life, the application of accepted ethics, a way to resolve disputes or to choose a particular type of interpersonal relations (Hegelian *ethos*).

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<sup>30</sup> B. Martin, *The Existentialist Theology of Paul Tillich*, p. 159.

<sup>31</sup> M. Bogdalczyk, *Zbawienie człowieka w myśli filozoficznej Paula Tillicha*, Kraków 2014, Studio MOT.

<sup>32</sup> P. Tillich, *Theology of the Boundaries*, Collins 1987, p. 313.

<sup>33</sup> P. Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice*, New York 1960, Oxford University Press, s. 86.

Otherwise – according to Heidegger – a specific way of living and thinking is realized in a specific manner of life.<sup>34</sup>

Pope John Paul II defines the existence of conditions for the salvation of man as one great intervention of God in human history.<sup>35</sup> This saving intervention in its central point is determined by Jesus Christ and the paschal mystery – passion, death, and resurrection. The historical vision of Christ saving every human being covers biblical history from creation, through choosing man in his destiny to salvation, to the final revelation of Jesus as the New Being. Salvation includes not only every person who has appeared on earth,<sup>36</sup> but also the whole person with his soul and body, and as such the Church should embrace him with its care<sup>37</sup>. In the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* the dignity and great significance of the whole man were emphasized, which was a great breakthrough in the meaning of Revelation as a soteriology of love. Everyone is and should be accepted as he or she was created – from conception to natural death, with lesser or greater disabilities.<sup>38</sup> The dignity of man and the significance of his salvation turned out to be greater when the Son of God came down, became man and died for our salvation. Understanding and appreciating this deed is extremely important for Christians. At the same time, this Christocentricity enables the proper understanding of man. Among the many visions and ways of understanding man, the proper one is that which, in the opinion of John Paul II, sees man from the perspective of the saving love of Christ.<sup>39</sup> How great

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<sup>34</sup> Compare: K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, Kraków 1985 – “The nature of the human person is the unity of the soul and body. Experience, as a phenomenological view, speaks first of all about the unity of the human person. Man is one.”, p. 52; “The analysis of the act leads to the statement that man not only acts consciously, but also knows that he is acting – and yes, that he acts consciously”, p. 33. “The function of consciousness does not consist in inquiring the truth, but in reflecting and subjectivizing, as well as in externalizing man and the world of objects”, p. 166; “It will be a study of an act that reveals a person. Study of a person by deed. This is because the nature of the correlation inherent in the experience, in the fact that „man acts”, that the act is a special moment of revealing the person”, p. 36. K. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, II Ed. Kraków 1985. p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> Compare: J. Kudasiewicz, *Teologia zbawienia w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, “*Verbum Vitae*” 1 (2012), pp. 280–282.

<sup>36</sup> 1 Tim. 2, 4.

<sup>37</sup> *Redemptor...*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> *Redemptor...*, 13 and 18.

<sup>39</sup> “Man cannot be fully understood without Christ. Or rather, man is incapable of understanding himself fully without Christ. He cannot understand who he is, nor what his

and important is human salvation, since it required such a great commitment of God? The appreciation of the whole man in the soteriology of love, the perception of his body, the elaboration of the ethos of the redemption of the body are great and original achievements of John Paul II.<sup>40</sup> So what is salvation in the thought of John Paul II in practice? An attempt to answer such a question can be found in the happiness of a man which comes from the union with God.<sup>41</sup> This is done by looking at God face to face<sup>42</sup> – it is a process whose ultimate goal and – as Tillich would say – the ultimate concern is to participate in the life of God Himself.<sup>43</sup> Undoubtedly, the future Pope was influenced by the Carmelite spirituality, especially the works and thought of Saint John of the Cross who, at the very beginning of academic development, as though, set the goal of the intellectual struggles of John Paul II.<sup>44</sup>

A common feature of Paul Tillich and John Paul II in understanding the salvation of man, next to the voluntary consent to God's grace in life, and the recognition of the weight and strength of love that God gave to man, is the intellectual acceptance of the content and meaning of salvation that man has been given by his Creator. This essential relationship between the Creation and the Creator, in order to have a positive meaning in man's salvation, should be confirmed by man. This means that man must not only recognize the gift of grace, but must also recognize and accept the plan of salvation as his and intended only for him. In the combinations of possibilities that can occur between divine reason and human reason, the most important state is theonomy in which nothing is imposed from the outside (the state of heteronomy), nor does man close himself, thus seeking salvation only within himself (the state of autonomy).

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true dignity is, nor what his vocation is, nor what his final end is. He cannot understand any of this without Christ", John Paul II, Homily During Holy Mass at Victory Square in Warsaw 02.06.1979, "Chrześcijanin w Świecie" 11 (1979), 8, pp. 28–32.

<sup>40</sup> John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, Roma 1986, pp. 195–199, and pp 387–458.

<sup>41</sup> Compare: "And what is this eternal life? It is happiness that comes from union with God". John Paul II, *Przekroczyć Próg Nadziei*, Lublin 2010, Wydawnictwo KUL, p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> 1 Cor. 13,12.

<sup>43</sup> Compare: "As a fullness of the good, God is the fullness of life. Life is in Him and from Him. It is a life that has no boundaries of time or space. It is the «eternal life», participation in the life of God Himself", in: John Paul II, *Przekroczyć Próg Nadziei*....

<sup>44</sup> J. Galarowicz, *Człowiek jest osobą. Podstawy antropologii filozoficznej Karola Wojtyły*, Kraków 1994, p. 31.

The concept of theonomy, which defines the relationship between God's reason and human reason, connects the two thinkers.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the Lutheran theologian differs from the majority of Protestant theologians, who essentially emphasize God's absolute omnipotence towards all people.

Another important element connecting both philosophers is the meaning and role of culture in the shaping of the dimension in which what is human, existential can connect with what is Unconditional,<sup>46</sup> as Tillich wants it, and with what is transcendent, as it is according to John Paul II. In the encyclical *Ecclesia in Europa*, John Paul II strongly emphasizes the importance of theocentrism with the anthropocentrism contained in the manifestations of culture. The Divine dimension, embedded in works of art and cultural objects, allows to preserve what is important for man in salvation.<sup>47</sup> A culture of no value leads to nihilism and thus causes threat to the desired human salvation.<sup>48</sup> What is more, for

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<sup>45</sup> "Perfection demands that maturity in self-giving to which human freedom is called. Jesus points out to the young man that the commandments are the first and indispensable condition for having eternal life; on the other hand, for the young man to give up all he possesses and to follow the Lord is presented as an invitation: «If you wish...». These words of Jesus reveal the particular dynamic of freedom's growth towards maturity, and at the same time *they bear witness to the fundamental relationship between freedom and divine law*. Human freedom and God's law are not in opposition; on the contrary, they appeal one to the other. The follower of Christ knows that his vocation is to freedom. «You were called to freedom, brethren» (Gal 5,13), proclaims the Apostle Paul with joy and pride", John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 17, "Revelation is the answer to the question implied in the existential conflicts of reason. (...) Revelation overcomes the conflict between autonomy and heteronomy by re-establishing their essential unity", in: P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology...*, Vol. I, p. 147.

<sup>46</sup> "Even a secularized culture, in order to reach the recipient (not necessarily at a specific point in time), must contain a transcendent and universal element that opens to the recipient something that he, as man, will find in him a dimension not so much indicative, diagnosing human existence, but also enabling him to transcend what limits man in his imagination. This "crossing" does not mean only that man thinks out into the matter of stunning beauty, deep existential move, or violent delight or terror, but "crossing" indicates human affirmation of the limited, according to its foundation, power, and what is an expression of hope for the salvation of man", in: M. Bogdalczyk, *Zbawienie człowieka w myśli filozoficznej Paula Tillicha*, Studio MOT, Kraków 2014, p. 206.

<sup>47</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 70, "Faith's encounter with different cultures has created something new. When they are deeply rooted in experience, cultures show forth the human being's characteristic openness to the universal and the transcendent. Therefore, they offer different paths to the truth, which assuredly serve men and women well in revealing values which can make their life ever more human".

<sup>48</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, 9, "Forgetfulness of God led to the abandonment of man". It is therefore "no wonder that in this context a vast field has opened for the unrestrained

John Paul II, man is essentially connected with culture, according to the words of Saint Thomas: "Genus humanum arte et ratione vivit".<sup>49</sup> Man lives a truly human life thanks to culture. Thus, for the Pope, culture is the shape of life as such, the proper way of existence and of human being, the ethos, the habitat which man co-creates in the community and which also shapes him. This means that man is the ontic subject of culture and its only proper object and purpose. Thus, every man, as a dynamic being, in his development becomes more and more human through culture, thanks to which, the primacy of being more than having more, is preserved.

Further understanding of the threat caused by the closure of culture on the state of theonomy, which connects the human with the Divine, is expressed by Paul Tillich. For him, the negation of the religious dimension in shaping what in the sense of the ultimate is shaped by the soteriological dimension is a tacit acceptance of the affirmation of quasi-religious ideas<sup>50</sup> – personified in the notion of temporary concern, often false, such as communism, fascism, or scientism,<sup>51</sup> because the need for existence and expression of transcendence is very strongly inscribed in the existential structure of alienated man.

Another element connecting the thought of the Pope and the Lutheran thinker is that for them man and his alienated existential situation is the starting point. For Tillich, this is the aforementioned concern about the ultimate, which in the formal dimension does not explicitly indicate Jesus Christ. On the other hand, for John Paul II, man with his worries and fears is presented as the way the Church is to follow. The re-interpretation of the notion of the missionary nature of the Church. The church, its mission, is still valid, except that the emphasis has been transferred to a specific man who is often unconsciously seeking a community in the Church.<sup>52</sup>

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development of nihilism in philosophy, of relativism in values and morality, and of pragmatism – and even a cynical hedonism – in daily life". European culture gives the impression of «silent apostasy» on the part of people who have all that they need and who live as if God does not exist."

<sup>49</sup> See Speech of Pope John Paul II at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on June 2, 1980.

<sup>50</sup> The place of God in communism was taken by the cult of the individual, party or collective, as an idea that completely subordinates every single person.

<sup>51</sup> P. Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, Augsburg Fortress Publishing, Minneapolis 1994; first edition: P. Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, Columbia University Press, New York 1953, p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> "The Church cannot abandon man, for his «destiny», that is to say his election, calling, birth and death, salvation or perdition, is so closely and unbreakably linked with Christ", John

However, the key element that connects the two, essentially theologically different, worlds is the love in its Christian adaptation mentioned above, that is *agape*. Both Paul Tillich and John Paul II stressed its key importance in the soteriological dimension. For the Pope, *agape* expressed the unity of the disciples gathered in His name.<sup>53</sup> The everyday practice of a Christian's life in the soteriological dimension should also manifest itself through the ability to "reach down to every prodigal son, to every human misery, and above all to every form of moral misery, to sin. When this happens, the person who is the object of mercy does not feel humiliated, but rather found again and restored to value."<sup>54</sup> Tillich understands the concept of *agape* in a similar way, it liberates man from the empty formalism expressed in the state of theonomy and fills him with the content that determines the salvation of a particular man who follows *agape*.<sup>55</sup> *Agape* is the ultimate norm of the moral law, it is shaped without the distinction between moral law and formal law. The material element of *agape* reveals the ambiguity of the law and it does so through the "law of love"<sup>56</sup> which enables man to achieve his salvation.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, the concept of *agape* is crucial. However, it coexists with the threats that are present in the structure of human existence, such as fear, despair, or senselessness. The presence of fear and its interpretation can be a dimension in which *agape* reveals its presence. This does not mean, however, that fear, suffering, or despair are a *sine qua non* condition, without which *agape* reveals its saving power.<sup>58</sup> Fear, senselessness, or despair

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Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 14, and "This man is the way for the Church—a way that, in a sense, is the basis of all the other ways that the Church must walk—because man—every man without any exception whatever—has been redeemed by Christ, and because with man—with each man without any exception whatever—Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it", John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 14.

<sup>53</sup> John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, 9.

<sup>54</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 6.

<sup>55</sup> M. Bogdalczyk, *Zbawienie człowieka w myśli filozoficznej Paula Tillicha...*, p. 362.

<sup>56</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology ...*, Vol. III, s. 46.

<sup>57</sup> "By sacrificing himself for us on the cross, Jesus instituted the principles of the judgment of salvation, revealing the Father's plan of mercy. This court announces today: identifying with «the least of brothers», Jesus demands that we receive him and serve him with love. On the last day he will tell us: «I was hungry and you gave me food» (compare, Mt 25, 35) and he will ask us whether we preached the Gospel of love, whether we lived it", in: John Paul II, homily during mass for the disabled, 6. Jubilee of the Disabled, 12/03/2000.

<sup>58</sup> "In the language of the Bible, «grace» means a special gift which, according to the New Testament, comes from the trinitarian life of God Himself – God who is love (compare, 1 J 4, 8).



are not radically negative. They are not a real obstacle for every man who seeks what has the saving power for him. If it is an authentic fear, meaning one that is a real threat to a man. One can say that John Paul II, similarly, interprets fear as something that really exists. However, his interpretation is completely and directly theological and it refers to Christ. Man is afraid of suffering, he wants to avoid it – just as Christ himself was afraid of suffering and death – and he has the right to do so. Suffering, however, exists in the world and it affects us.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the Pope describes and interprets fear as a positive opportunity to show *agape* to oneself and other people.<sup>60</sup> The common intuition of both shepherds of souls is expressed most fully by Hannah Arendt, who characterized love, understood as *agape*, as fear which sculpts the constituent of the principle of salvation, which cannot be achieved and developed without fear if it is not available – as a potential realized in the act of sculpting.<sup>61</sup>

The full, soteriologically significant meaning of the concept of love understood as *agape* has been defined and made present to Christians in the person

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The fruit of this love is the choice – the one referred to in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Thus, the choice is God's eternal will to save man by participating in God's life (compare, 2 P 1, 4) in Christ: it is salvation through participation in the supernatural life. The consequence of this eternal gift, this grace of God's choice of man, is like a leaven of holiness, as if it were a spring gushing in the soul of man as a gift of God Himself, who through grace revives and sanctifies the chosen ones. Through this everything is accomplished – that is, becomes a reality – this «filling» of man with all «spiritual blessing», that «adoration as sons in Christ», in: John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 15.

<sup>59</sup> John Paul II, speech delivered at the pediatric hospital 09/06/1979, Cracow, 3; or “This is the next mystery which is the world of the sick, that you, weak, physically weak, subjected to suffering, you are at the same time – in any case you can be – a source of power for others, for healthy people, sometimes for those who have bad health they use those who offend God, using their health and their strength. You, sick, suffering, you are not only a reproach for them, but also a conversion. The conversion of sinners goes through your suffering. I am deeply convinced of this. As the salvation of the world, the redemption of the world, or the conversion of man in the world, goes through the cross of Christ, so the constant conversion of sinners in the world goes through your cross, through your suffering. You indeed, as Saint Paul wrote, «you fill in your members what you do not supply Jesus with», in: John Paul II, Speech to the sick gathered in the church of Franciscan, 12/03/2000.

<sup>60</sup> Compare: “We live in a difficult world in which the anguish of seeing the best creations of man slip away from him and turn against him creates a climate of uncertainty. In this world catechesis should help Christians to be, for their own joy and the service of all, “light” and “salt”, John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, 56.

<sup>61</sup> H. Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago – London 1996, p. 12.

of Jesus Christ. And faith in Him expresses what constitutes the full formal and material content of the final Tillich's ultimate concern. Philosophically interpreted belief in God expressed as ultimate concern enables man to abandon, but not to deny, what is low and to reach towards what is high, but without excluding concerns and other persons. Paul Tillich's views perfectly harmonize with the theological vision of John Paul II, for whom the passion of Jesus testifies to the fact that God "is not the Absolute that remains outside of the world, indifferent to human suffering. He is Emmanuel, God-with-us, a God who shares man's lot and participates in his destiny".<sup>62</sup> The crucified and suffering Christ is the theological proof of God's solidarity with every suffering man.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the God of Christians in a radical way is on the side of man. The real theology of the cross is shown by the Pope in the encyclical *Dives in misericordia*.<sup>64</sup> Thus, in the drama of the Cross, both for Paul Tillich and for John Paul II, a salvific judgment over not only every human being but, historically and paradoxically, judgment over God is shown.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, the salvation of man is no longer a future possibility, but it already happened 2000 years ago. Thanks to this, every person here and now can participate in the saving sacrifice of Christ on the cross as part of the alienated existence depending on his knowledge, consciousness, and actions in accordance with

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<sup>62</sup> John Paul II, *Przekroczyć Próg Nadziei...*, p. 63.

<sup>63</sup> "Between the cross and the resurrection," writes John Paul II, "there is certainty that God saves a man, that he saves him through Christ, through his cross and resurrection.", in: *Przekroczyć Próg Nadziei...*, p. 67.

<sup>64</sup> John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 7, 8: "In the passion and death of Christ for our sins the absolute justice of God is expressed. The cross on Calvary emerges from the very heart of the love that man, created in the image and likeness of God, has been given as a gift, according to God's eternal plan. The cross speaks and never ceases to speak of God the Father, who is absolutely faithful to His eternal love for man (...) The cross is the most profound condescension of God to man".

<sup>65</sup> Compare: "«sin», in this passage, means the incredulity that Jesus encountered among «his own», beginning with the people of his own town of Nazareth. Sin means the rejection of his mission, a rejection that will cause people to condemn him to death. When he speaks next of «righteousness», Jesus seems to have in mind that definitive justice, which the Father will restore to him when he grants him the glory of the Resurrection and Ascension into heaven: «I go to the Father». In its turn, and in the context of «sin» and «righteousness» thus understood, «judgment» means that the Spirit of truth will show the guilt of the «world» in condemning Jesus to death on the Cross. Nevertheless, Christ did not come into the world only to judge it and condemn it: he came to save it (see John 3, 17; 12, 47). Convincing about sin and righteousness has as its purpose the salvation of the world, the salvation of men", John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 27.

*agape*. The starting point for understanding the concept of salvation for both the Pope and Tillich are Letters of Saint Paul, in which the salvific and eschatological deed of God, accomplished in Christ (Gal 4,4; 1 Cor 7,25; 2 Cor 4,14), through which people were taken out from the present world (Gal 1,4) and from the power of darkness and moved to the kingdom of the beloved Son of God, becomes a limitless reward from God. However, in order to receive salvation, the gift of faith and immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ is needed. Man purified by the water of baptism becomes a new creature (Rom 6, 2-22; 2 Cor 5, 17). From this new creation and justification, two ethical imperatives emerge which enable man to realize the theological virtues. According to the Bishop of Rome, the ethical action leading to salvation is achieved through faith, with the power of the Spirit of Jesus and God, who Himself causes willingness and the ability to act in man (Rom 14,23; Phil 2,13). Here, it is worth emphasizing, once more, the difference in the interpretation of the soteriological process between John Paul II and Tillich, as for the latter, the ethical virtue precedes temporally in the sense of man's existential cognition *agape* leading to salvation. The goal is understood by the two in the same way, but the detailed analysis of this process is different. It should be noted, however, that Tillich also acknowledges the transhistoric character of the previous sacrificial love of God on the Cross for every human being.

Another common feature for Tillich and John Paul II is that God not only wants the salvation of all people, but also the whole person. The Pope pointed out that the Secret of the Redemption was encompassed by every specific, historical, and whole man with his soul and body.<sup>66</sup> For Tillich, the concept of salvation must both integrate the whole man as a person, and be an integrated concept that includes, in its scope, the human intellect, as well as his feelings and will. What is more, for the Lutheran theologian the search for an answer to a philosophical question on salvation of a man does not so much integrate a person in search of what will save him, but is a question already integrated, combining the human being, intellect, as well as his will and feelings. The preceding existential element that defines man also finds its chronological precedence in the reflection on the understanding of salvation.

It is necessary to indicate what the salvation of man is in a positive sense. According to John Paul II, "It is happiness that comes from union with God".<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> John Paul II, *Przekroczyć Próg Nadziei ...*, p. 54; and *Redemptor Hominis* 13, 18.

<sup>67</sup> John Paul II, *Przekroczyć Próg Nadziei ...*, p. 69.

Salvation understood in this way refers undoubtedly to Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, in which he writes that salvation is accomplished by seeing God's being "face to face".<sup>68</sup> In this vision the pursuit of the truth is fulfilled, and therefore it brings happiness. The second important element, this time of final salvation, is eternal life as "participation in the life of God Himself",<sup>69</sup> at a time when human existence, using Tillich's language, confronts his essence with what man should become, what he was called to. Such a situation is possible only thanks to Christ, whose "[...] victory over death embraces every man".<sup>70</sup>

#### 4. Differences in understanding the concept of salvation

Despite the fact that Paul Tillich and John Paul II very strongly refer to the rich heritage of philosophy in their works and theological thought, they have shown fundamental differences in their theological narratives. For both thinkers, the philosophical background was a very important element inspiring the theological considerations in the debates and disputes, crucial for the contemporary world, on the understanding of the message of Jesus of Nazareth.

The first essential element that differentiates the theological and philosophical thought of the Pope and the Lutheran theologian is the teaching of the Eucharist. The different heritage and way of understanding of the Church that characterize the environment of John Paul II and Paul Tillich also influenced the way of understanding the teaching of the Eucharist. For the Catholic Church and its earthly supreme pontiff, such as John Paul II, the Eucharist is the real presence and union of the body and blood of Jesus Christ with man. For the Pope, the Eucharist is "the most perfect Sacrament of this union. By celebrating and also partaking of the Eucharist we unite ourselves with Christ on earth and in heaven who intercedes «for us with the Father» (Heb 9, 24; 1 J 2, 1) but we always do so through the redeeming act of his Sacrifice, through which he has redeemed us, so that we have been bought with a price (1 Cor 6,20)".<sup>71</sup> For the viceroy of Christ on earth, it is the Eucharist as the Body and Blood of Christ that is given to the salvation of man, of whole man and of all people. This salvation is integral and

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<sup>68</sup> 1 Cor. 13,12.

<sup>69</sup> John Paul II, *Przekroczyć Próg Nadziei ...*, p. 69.

<sup>70</sup> John Paul II, p. 70.

<sup>71</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, 20.

at the same time universal, because no one, unless he freely chooses, is excluded from the saving power of Christ's blood.<sup>72</sup> However, for the Lutherans to whom Paul Tillich belonged, the way of understanding the Eucharist is different. For Tillich, indeed, the Eucharist renews the communion with the crucified and resurrected Christ, it is the assurance of eternal life, it gives forgiveness of sins and salvation. The Eucharist is also a sacrament that renews the community between the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Thus, the Eucharist becomes the Supper of unity between individual believers and the whole Church. This sacrament "gives us a foretaste of eternal life."<sup>73</sup> However, differences in the meaning of the Eucharist are revealed in two main points. This sacrament, unlike what it means for Catholics, is not understood as a bloodless repetition of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and it cannot be sacrificed for the dead because the Eucharist, in the Lutheran tradition, is perceived more as God's sacrifice of his Son for man for his salvation, rather than as a sacrifice through which man sacrifices Jesus to God for all living and dead people. This fundamental difference in the philosophy of both giants of theological thought results from their different ecclesial affiliation and comes naturally from the environment in which they were born and raised. The next difference is similar and also refers to the understanding of the sacrament of confession. For John Paul II, confession is a sacrament *par excellence*, in which "the availability and superabundance of mercy should not obscure the fact that it is only the premise of salvation, which reaches fulfillment to the extent that it meets a response in the human being. In fact, the forgiveness granted in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not some external action, a kind of «legal remission of the penalty», but a real encounter of the penitent with God, who restores the bond of friendship shattered by sin. The «truth» of this relationship requires that we welcome God's merciful embrace, overcoming all the resistance caused by sin."<sup>74</sup> For Paul Tillich, an active Lutheran pastor, confession is also an important element through which man can achieve salvation. However, confession does not have such a strong legal authority as in the Roman Catholic canons defining its minimum frequency. Confession is only and exclusively a response to the need of man wanting to throw off the burden of sin and receive the promise of forgiveness under the word of Christ in the absolution. Thus, the importance and meaning of confession is different and

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<sup>72</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to priests for Holy Thursday 2005*, 4.

<sup>73</sup> John Paul II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*, 0.

<sup>74</sup> John Paul II, *Letter to priests for Holy Thursday 2002*, 8.

its understanding differs for the Bishop of Rome from that of the Lutheran pastor. For every Catholic confession, just like the Eucharist, is a real encounter with God and the moment of man's conversion to God, the source of his real inner transformation with the power of God's grace, while Lutheran confession is a more individual, subjectively desired encounter between man and God, analogously leading to salvation.

The next major difference between the thought of Paul Tillich and John Paul II is the way of understanding the Church in relation to possessing the full truth about Revelation. For the Bishop of Rome, beyond the structures of the Catholic Church there is no "ecclesial vacuum. Many elements of great value (*eximia*), which in the Catholic Church are part of the fullness of the means of salvation and of the gifts of grace which make up the Church, are also found in the other Christian Communities".<sup>75</sup> This means that the Church of Christ "subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him"; and at the same time acknowledges that "many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside her visible structure. These elements, however, as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism towards Catholic unity".<sup>76</sup> And these Churches and disconnected Communities, in the Pope's conviction, have their weaknesses but they are not without meaning and importance in the mystery of human salvation. In the opinion of the head of the Catholic Church, the Spirit of Christ does not refuse to use these Communities as means of salvation, whose complete power comes from the fullness of grace and the truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.<sup>77</sup> The uniqueness of the Catholic Church is emphasized in the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, which states that "the task [...] of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether in its written form or in that of Tradition, has been entrusted only to those charged with the Church's living Magisterium, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ". The Church, in her life and teaching, is thus revealed as "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim 3,15), including the truth regarding moral action. Indeed, "the Church has the right always and everywhere to proclaim moral principles, even in respect of the social order, and to make judgments about

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<sup>75</sup> John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, 13.

<sup>76</sup> John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, 10.

<sup>77</sup> John Paul II, 2.

any human matter in so far as this is required by fundamental human rights or the salvation of souls”<sup>78</sup>

Paul Tillich understood Church differently. In his conviction, the Church is a community of Jesus Christ believers based on an individual relationship between man and God in relation to the Word of God. The significance of the uniqueness of the Lutheran Church is not as strong as in the case of the Catholic Church. Thus, the salvation of man, the all means of salvation, are available to him often outside the structures of the Lutheran Church. Of great importance here is the individual faith of man in Jesus Christ as the only Mediator in the salvation of man in his relationship with God. At this point, one cannot immediately mention another important difference in understanding the salvation of man between John Paul II and Paul Tillich in the matter of the mediation in the salvation of man. While the Marianism of John Paul II is widely known – the role and importance of the Mother of God in the salvation of man is emphasized by the Pope in an exceptional way even in the history of the Church – for Paul Tillich, the significance and position of Mary is almost imperceptible. Only the way in which the articles of Lutheran faith refer to the Mother of God can be a reflection of the role of Mary in the matter of human salvation. For Lutherans, the cult of Mary does not exist. Indeed, the Evangelical Church honors and respects Mary as the Mother of Jesus and places her as a model of faith and obedience, but that ends the role and significance in the understanding of man's salvation in the Word of God alone. Lutherans disapprove defining the Mother of God as a co-mediator, co-participant in human salvation. Thus, Mariology is an essential point of contention between Lutheran and the Bishop of Rome in the field of salvation of man. The opinion of John Paul II is completely different in this matter. The meaning and role of the Mother of God in the salvation of every human being is essential.<sup>79</sup> The intercession of Mary under the

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<sup>78</sup> *Veritatis Splendor*, 41 and 42.

<sup>79</sup> “Behold the handmaid of the Lord» (*Lk* 1:38), says Mary in the Gospel passage which we have just heard. She speaks to the Angel Gabriel who communicates to her God's call to become the mother of his Son. The Incarnation of the Word is the decisive moment in that «project» made known by God from the beginning of human history, after the first sin. His will is to communicate to mankind his very life, by calling men and women to become his children. This call awaits the response of each person. God does not impose salvation; he proposes it as an initiative of love, to which one must reply by free choice, prompted by love.

The dialogue between the Angel and Mary, between heaven and earth, is in this sense paradigmatic: let us draw from it some indications for ourselves”, in: John Paul II, Homily of John Paul II during Holy Mass in Banská Bystrica on 12 September 2003, 2.

cross, on which the salvific sacrifice of Jesus to God for the remuneration for the sins of man has been accomplished, is crucial in understanding the concept of salvation in the thought of John Paul II.<sup>80</sup> In the Message for the 12<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Sick in 2004, the Catholic Bishop highlights that the prodigy of the Immaculate Conception reminds believers of a fundamental truth: it is possible to reach salvation only through docile faithful participation in the project of the Father, who wanted to redeem the world through the death and Resurrection of His only-begotten Son. Through Baptism, the believer becomes part of this design of salvation and is freed from original sin. Sickness and death, although present in earthly existence, lose their negative sense.<sup>81</sup> This means that Mary's compassion is crucial in God's saving plan for every human being.

## 5. Conclusions

The differences described above were of the greatest importance in understanding the concept of salvation perceived by John Paul II and Paul Tillich. Certainly, these are not the only differences and – due to the limitations of the publication – they are only sufficiently developed. The purpose of this work, however, is not only to indicate the dissimilarities between the two important thinkers. The confrontation of views on the basis of their differences is not only to emphasize the richness and development of theological thought inspired by contemporary philosophical trends, but also to define the identity and coherence of the aforementioned theological narratives. This is provided by the explication and indication of constitutive features, both in relation to the personal views of John Paul II and Paul Tillich, as well as the specific heritage and theological achievements of Catholicism and varied Protestantism present in Lutheranism. Undoubtedly, apart from fundamental differences, crucial and irreconcilable, such as the importance and role of Tradition, understanding of the sacraments, supremacy and primacy – the authority of the Bishop of Rome, or even very contemporary differences such as understanding the

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<sup>80</sup> “Beneath the cross, Mary suffers in silence, she is involved in the suffering of her Son in a particular way, she was made Mother of humanity, ready to intercede for every human being, so that he may achieve salvation”, in: John Paul II, “Salvifici doloris”, 11/02/1984, “L’Osservatore Romano”, 1–2 (1984), pp. 6–7.

<sup>81</sup> John Paul II, Message for the 12th World Day of the Sick in 2004, 5.



priesthood, the author of this work thinks that there are more factors that unite the heroes protagonists? of this article than there are which divide. The theological heritage of both philosophers was given to them somewhat involuntarily. They found themselves in these theological traditions, not out of their own will, just like children, but they developed in these conditions and found something that allowed them not only to reach the heights of theological reflection on salvation, but also, thanks to an authentic and philosophical attitude seeking the ultimate Truth, they were able to justify the concept of human salvation as part of their religious denomination and, through the power of arguments, they led many through the path of salvation, the end of which is the person of Jesus Christ. The above arguments undoubtedly include the aforementioned concept of *Logos spermaticos* scattered all over the world and present in every human being. These elements of Truth enable each person to creatively search for their destiny, which is his salvation. The salvation of man, in both narrations, refers to the consent of man to the action of love in him, which in its fullness appeared in the person of Jesus Christ. It is this saving love that has loved every human being, before he was created, which is the beginning of man's creative and saving action in his relationship with another man. The consent of man, his openness to the existence, action, and saving power of God is for him a challenge, a task, and the purpose of his existence. Man, I repeat it once again, cannot save himself, he is not able to bestow on what exceeds his existential possibilities. It is logically impossible. Therefore, salvation is a gift from the outside, which is not only superior to him ontologically, but which also offers love stronger than death. The second important link connecting the two theologians is their understanding of culture, which expresses the unconditioned, to which religion refers in its external expression. Tillich's thesis that culture is a form of religion, and religion is a substance of culture, is as true for the poet, actor, playwright, and teacher in the person of Karol Wojtyła, later John Paul II. These two fundamental connections linking both theologians were, and still are possible to make, only thanks to the excellent philosophical workshop. For John Paul II, these were often phenomenological tools characterized by excellent skills in capturing the essence of things and what exists. While for Paul Tillich, the foundations of his impressive systematic theology were inspired by the analysis of human existence, what man is struggling with in everyday life, current and conditioned, and a courageous search for what this conditioning exceeds and, finally, in its dimension as the unconditioned, points to Jesus Christ. The work

indicates the human need to overcome the alienation, which is also present today due to fear and various forms of manipulation aimed at distorting reasonableness, feelings, and, the same time, man's will. Man's salvation is again a philosophical issue, not in the horizon of the widely understood philosophy that is supposed to be only *ancilla theologiae*, but within the very philosophy of existence.

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