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Cardinal Stanislaw Nagy's Ecumenical Ecclesiology

Abstract

The systematic theology of the 20th and 21st centuries has experienced revolutionary changes. The tremendous effort of theologians – which was already evident on the eve of *Vatican II* to experience order and confirmation during its deliberations – is still bearing fruit today. It seems that interpretations of the Council's teaching have now become more problematic than the doctrine of Vatican II itself.

One of the great figures of the theological world is Prof. Stanislaw Nagy, whose create efforts were honoured with a cardinalate, and to whom we are all indebted. Indeed, it is worth discovering his difficult path from the pre-council rigorous spiritual and intellectual formation to formal apologetics, thus paving the way for fundamental theology in Poland during the Communist period, to the ecumenical commitment of the times of freedom. In this respect, it is not without reason to speak of his ecumenical vision of the Church.

Keywords

Stanislaw Nagy, apologetics, fundamental theology, ecumenism, ecclesiology.

1. Introduction

Stanislaw Nagy was born in 1921. Poland's regaining of independence in 1918 did not automatically mean that there were ample opportunities for theological work. The inter-war period was too short a time for theological thought to develop seriously. As a comparison, let it suffice to state that when the famous German Jesuit Karl Rahner (1904–1984) published his first books¹, many Polish theological priests were being murdered in German concentration camps. It is probably sufficient to cite only such places of martyrdom as Dachau, Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen.

Also, the time after World War II until 1989 can hardly be described as a period of unfettered development of reflection on the mystery of Christian revelation between the Oder and Bug rivers. Representatives of the Church in Poland oppressed primarily by the ideology of German fascism and subsequently, for much longer, by Soviet communism were thinking of ways to survive and not about intellectual prodding into the content of Revelation or the sophisticated methodology of theological science. Despite the ruthless struggle against the Catholic Church, however, a theology of freedom and a Polish theology of the nation was slowly being hatched in these lands after World War II, as a form of responsible contextual theology, taking up above all the defence of man, rather than theodicy issues. When the young seminarian Stanislaw was ordained to the presbyterate in 1945, it did not cross his mind that he would write treatises on ecclesiology or ecumenism. Nor did he expect that this nakedness of his, which he derived not so much from his mother's womb as from his father's name, would be concealed by the cardinal's purple from the Polish Pope in 2003.

The historical background serves not only to discover the serious difficulties by which he shaped and created Polish fundamental theology, directing it from apologetic methods to methods of credibility, but to appreciate his unparalleled abilities and unheard-of diligence. In order to present the ecumenical ecclesiology of Card. Nagy and to understand and appreciate it properly, we must naturally first recall the understanding of the Church before the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Let the event of this Council itself and its ecclesiological doctrine be the thread. Into this context, I will frame the vision of the Church,

¹ For example, in 1939 / 1941, ie: Rahner publishes in print *Geist in Welt: Zur Metaphysik der endlichen Erkenntnis bei Thomas von Aquin*, Innsbruck 1939; *Hörer des Wortes. Zur Grundlegung einer Religionsphilosophie*, München Kösel 1941.

as developed by this wise Serbian. Further on, we will examine the elements of ecumenism in his theology in order to try and outline the unprecedented development of this Catholic theologian.

2. The pre-council ecclesiology taught to Stanislaw Nagy

Nagy received his first spiritual and intellectual formation at the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Felsztyn, where he began his novitiate in 1937. In 1948, at the Theological Faculty of the Jagiellonian University, the young priest was awarded a Master's degree in theology, on the basis of a thesis entitled "*Ecclesiastical Hierarchy in Clement of Rome*", written under the supervision of Prof. Michalski.

However, the proper deepening of his theological knowledge developed from 1950 onwards, at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Lublin. There he passed his bachelor's exam, and in 1952 he received a doctorate in theology, on the basis of his dissertation "*The Teaching Office in the Early Church*", which was written under the direction of Prof. Boleslaw Radomski (1904–1956). It is worth pausing for a moment on this thoroughbred scholar, who had nothing of the compiler in him and did not follow the beaten path, since he had the greatest influence on Fr. Nagy's theological formation. Prof. Radomski dealt with the systematization of the science of the act of faith and the systematic elaboration of religiology with the creation of a methodology appropriate to this science. The work in the field of religiology was Radomski's starting point for the construction of apologetics, in which he included the young scientist from the Congregation of the Sacred Heart.²

Despite attempts to renew the science of the Church and the reformist contributions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (*Tübingen School*, *Roman School*, *Saulchoir*, Fourvière³), there was still a static picture of the Church in operation. There was quite a significant concentration on the visible aspect of it, on its exterior and historical structure. Hence, during his undergraduate and doctoral studies, the young priest received knowledge of so-called "institutional ecclesiology".

² Cf. L. Grzebień, *Radomski Bolesław*, in: *Słownik polskich teologów katolickich*, Warszawa 1983, vol. 7, p. 13.

³ Cf. B. Sesbüé, Ch. Theobald, *Słowo zbawienia. Historia dogmatów*, Kraków 2003, vol. 4, pp. 385–399.

This is evidenced by the titles of his bachelor's degree and doctoral thesis. The Church was conceived in the light of ecclesiology and canon law as *societas perfecta*, that is, a perfect, visible community, which under the leadership of its shepherds, abiding in unity with the successor of St. Peter, maintains the unity of the faith and the sacraments, in line with the Tridentine vision developed by Robert Bellarmine, this conception of the Church wanted to emphasize its self-sufficiency and institutionality.⁴ According to this conception of ecclesiology, belonging to the Church meant inclusion in its external structures. As the aforementioned Bellarmine wrote in his treatise on the "Church Militant": "We do not think that in order to belong in some way to the true Church, internal virtue is necessary; the outward profession of faith and sacramental communion, all that is accessible to our senses, is sufficient." This clear identification of the Church as an institution and its excessive focus on the external aspects of the ecclesial community, led to a partial loss of the conviction that beneath the surface, the Church is a supernatural, eschatologically oriented community. The consequence of this position was the impoverishment, and sometimes even omission, of the Divine element.⁵

It should be said that ecclesiology in Poland at that time was not exploratory and pioneering on the scale of German, French or Belgian ecclesiology. The lack of international contacts and difficult access to foreign literature significantly affected the development of this science. Its dominant feature became the struggle for man, who is persecuted by the propagators of godless communism. This is more of an anthropological ecclesiology – defending man, and an apologetic ecclesiology – defending the Church. On the one hand: dominated internally by the schemes of Thomism and neo-Thomism, and externally by the lack of freedom in public and religious life, and on the other: gradually trying to respond to the challenges of liturgical and biblical renewal.

Educated in the spirit of such an ecclesiology, Fr. Nagy consistently focused on the visible structures of the Church, which during this difficult time, gave a sense of its historical permanence and immutability. Speaking of Peter as Christ's visible deputy on earth, Dr. Nagy exposes the primacy promise given to Simon – as recorded by St. Matthew in the pericope on the promise to build

⁴ R. Bellarmin, *De controversiis christianae fidei*, Liber III: *De Ecclesia militante*, c. 2.

⁵ Cf. A. Choromański, *Vaticanum II – Sobór eklezjologicznego przełomu*, "Studia Theologica Varsaviensia" 2 (2012), pp. 17–54 [pp. 1–38].

the Church on the rock of Peter, which the powers of hell will not destroy, and it will last until the end of the world.⁶

After specialised studies that oriented Dr. Nagy to classical apologetics, he undertook teaching, scientific, educational and organizational activities in his religious community. During those hard Stalinist years, he became rector of the Seminary of the Sacred Heart Fathers, contributing to the existence of the Theological Study of his congregation in Krakow in 1956. Among the essential elements of Nagy's apologia for the Church was the pointing to primacy, apostolate, collegiality and marks, which was to provide an argument for the truthfulness and authenticity of the Roman Catholic Church.⁷

Despite the complicated political, economic and cultural situation, it is possible to note the innovative style of the formation of Polish apologetic work, which was already revealed in the inter-war period. It is not without basis to distinguish three research trends: the first had a philosophical-religious character, the second aimed at building a strictly scientific apologetics (the so-called total apologetics of W. Kwiatkowski), while the third dealt with the defence of faith in practice.⁸

3. The post-conciliar vision of the Church in Nagy's theological thought

It is not superfluous to recall that the ecclesiological question has troubled theologians since the Gregorian Reformation, which was followed by numerous ecclesiastical crises. It was revived in an urgent manner in the 16th century. *Vatican I* attempted to resolve it, but ultimately the birth of a new view of the Church was revealed in the spirit and letter of *Vatican II* in 1962–1965.

⁶ Mt 16: 17–19: “And Jesus said to him, «Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven»”.

⁷ Cf. M. Rusecki, *Recenzja dorobku naukowego (...)*, in: *Kard. Prof. S. Nagy SCJ. Doktor honoris causa Papieskiego Wydziału Teologicznego we Wrocławiu*, Wrocław 2009, pp. 23–34.

⁸ Cf. A. Kumorek, *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa w pismach kard. Stanisława Nagy'ego SCJ*, Tarnów 2017, p. 291.

Not only because of the poor condition of Polish theology, burdened by serious historical ballast, but also because of the organized struggle against everything Christian in the native country, there was a significant lack of Polish presence in the final texts of the conciliar documents. Only a few were granted visas to travel to a foreign country to participate in the deliberations of *Vatican II*, and if they did it involved various types of obligations. However, it is appropriate to point out the participation of such bishops as Stefan Wyszyński, Karol Wojtyła, Piotr Kałwa, Czesław Falkowski, Kazimierz Kowalski, Antoni Pawłowski and others.⁹ Their contribution to the work of the Council still remains little elaborated, although in some respects it was significant. For example, Card. Wyszyński's already advocating the participation of lay people in the Council's deliberations, so that the only laymen in the hall were not just detached brothers. A similar, more spectacular achievement of the priest-bishops at the Council was the petition to proclaim the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mother of the Church.

The auditors eventually included Prof. Stefan Swierzawski of the Catholic University of Lublin. Another Polish auditor was Mieczysław Habich, an activist of the "Revival" in Cracow, who after the Council ended, held the position of vice-secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. On the other hand, Primate Wyszyński's unquestionably Polish contribution (as mentioned above) was to bring about Pope Paul VI's proclamation of Mary as Mother of the Church. This took place at the conclusion of the Third Session of the Council, on November 21, 1964. Given the specific conditions of the hierarchy of Catholic Church in the People's Republic of Poland, exposed as it was to unlawful restrictions on civil rights and liberties, many of them could show only participate partially in the various sessions of the Council. The Council assembly posed the question of the essence of the Church, so in describing its mystery and reality, it was embraced from within (*ad intra*) and from without (*ad extra*). Theology framed the Church as an earthly and heavenly, material and spiritual, sinful and

⁹ Archbishops and bishops made up as much as 95.5% of the Polish Council Fathers, an absolute majority. For example: as many as 46 archbishops and bishops out of the 63 members of the episcopate at the time participated in the Fourth Session of the Council. This group accounted for 73% of the members of the Polish Episcopal Conference. In contrast, the share of religious major superiors without episcopal sacraments was quite symbolic (4.5%). Cf. M. Białkowski, *Polscy ojcowie Soboru Watykańskiego II. Wstęp do badań nad episkopatem Kościoła katolickiego w PRL w latach sześćdziesiątych XX wieku*, "Nasza Przeszłość", vol. 132 (2019), pp. 269–315.

holy, fulfilled and eschatological reality. This in itself distinctly – ecclesiological Council ultimately turned out to be an anthropological Council.¹⁰

The revolutionary view of the Church was the result not only of the dissolution of the Ecclesiastical State and the social, cultural or political changes of the 19th and 20th centuries, but it was the fruit of the prayers of the saints, the spirituality of mystics, the witness of the lives of ordinary believers and their families, and many decades of painstaking work by theologians, involving an appreciation for the importance of Revelation, the liturgical movement, biblical and historical research. This new, comprehensive conciliar view of ecclesial reality resulted in taking into account both its external (*societas visibilis*) and internal dimensions. Moving away from the claim that Jesus founded the Church, the beginning of the Church began to be seen more clearly in the Triune God, meaning that the whole Trinity is present in the mystery of the Church. The study of Old and New Testament ecclesiology developed. Ecclesiology began to be combined differently with Mariology and Marianism¹¹, with sacramentology, with pneumatology or eschatology. To sum up: it is necessary, first of all, to know the Church as a mystery of the self-giving of the Triune God to sinful man, who either opens himself in his freedom to God's offer of divine life, or rejects it.

The conciliar doctrine was received by Catholic theological centres in Poland with some distance and also with an ovation. However, evidence of changes in theological reflection about the Church itself became its structural transformation, which took place at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Lublin. Ecclesiology was no longer taught just within the framework of dogmatics, but in 1958 the Second Chair of Fundamental Theology was erected at the Catholic University of Lublin as the Chair of Ecclesiology, where the lectures in this discipline were entrusted to Nagy. He would also be its Head from 1964 to 1991.¹²

Nagy not only followed the conciliar deliberations, but, as far as he possibly could, he introduced their results into his own thinking and propagated them among his listeners. This was all the more inspiring for him, since the Council's primary focus coincided absolutely with his main object of scientific research.

¹⁰ Cf. A. Napiórkowski, *Kościół i człowiek: tajemnica, wspólnota, misja*, in: *Kościół i człowiek*, ed. A. Napiórkowski, Kraków 2021, pp. 227–251.

¹¹ Cf. A. Napiórkowski, *Koncepcje Kościoła i ich wpływ na stan mariologii i maryjności*, in: *Kościół i Maryja*, ed. A. Napiórkowski, Kraków 2020, pp. 305–327.

¹² Cf. *100 lat teologii na KUL*, eds. S. Nowosad, J. Mastej, Lublin 2018, p. 65.

Indeed, Nagy initially focused on apologetic ecclesiology, which later, under the influence of the Council's teaching, he combined with fundamental Christology. Committed to presenting the place and tasks of the Church's teaching office in the infallible transmission of the content of Revelation, he gradually began to emphasize the mysterious dimension of the Church. Initially exposing its visible institutional-structural elements, he increasingly grasped and emphasized its theandric character. In time, the development of his scholarly reflection would reveal even more clearly the conciliar postulates, when, moving from apologetic to fundamental ecclesiology, he would address ecumenism in constructing a new post-conciliar vision of the Church.¹³

An important date was 1968, when Nagy was awarded a doctoral degree in Lublin on the basis of his academic achievements and a dissertation entitled "*Via notarum*" in modern apologetic ecclesiology. In his work, he devoted his attention to such characteristics of the Church as unity, holiness, universality and apostolicity, in order to demonstrate its truthfulness. At the time, these hallmarks of the Catholic Church were still understood by the author in a rather matter-of-fact and static and tripartite way. So, Jesus, – in establishing the Church, gave it these characteristics, which were then constituted in the original community of believers and continued through the centuries, subsequently marking the Church until the end of the world. His development includes a scholarly sojourn from 1968 to 1969 at the Catholic University of Leuven, where he made contact with a wealth of foreign-language literature.¹⁴

When world ecclesiology, under the influence of the Council, will decisively move away from the thesis that Jesus directly and directly founded the Church and proclaim that further development of this discipline will not be possible without taking into account ecumenism, our theologian from Lublin will also make changes in his ecclesiology. In his reflection on the nature of the Church's marks, he will move away from their static understanding (*stigmata ecclesiae*) to describe their dynamics and the Church as a sign. Consequently, this meant understood dynamically, the Church's stigmata are not once and for all imprinted on the nature of the Church, but are a gift and a task to be continually realized. On the other hand, understood in the category of a sign, the marks demand that they be interpreted, taking into account, on the one hand, the

¹³ Cf. M. Rusecki, *Recenzja dorobku naukowego*, p. 31–32.

¹⁴ Cf. R. Łukaszka, *Pięćdziesięciolecie teologii fundamentalnej na Katolickim Uniwersytecie Lubelskim 1918–1968*, "Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne", vol. 15 (1959), z. 2, p. 16.

empirical-historical nature of these marks, and on the other their supra-empirical, or supernatural, nature, which ultimately expresses their proper meaning. Here Nagy developed an original method of demonstrating the Church's truthfulness, namely, the structural identity of the Church of Christ with the modern Roman Catholic Church. This Silesian from Stary Bierun, who loved the Church as few others, demonstrated in a scientific way that this community of believers in Jesus as the Messiah, is most credibly realized and fulfilled in the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁵

While holding the position of Associate Professor, he also became Head of the Comparative Theology Section in 1970–1975, which, thanks to his efforts, was transformed into the Ecumenical Institute of the Catholic University of Lublin. In 1985–1991, he served as Chairman of the National Section of Fundamental Theology. During this time, he was also curator of the Department of Comparative Theology and the Department of Catholic Principles of Ecumenism, and in 1972–74 he was vice-dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of Lublin. At this scientific centre, he organised the Ecclesiological Weeks, which were gaining considerable notoriety, and which brought together both young and older ecclesialogists from all over Poland. At the same time, he was the supervisor of the Academic Circle of Theologians of the same university. He was also invited to join the editorial board of the “Rocznik Teologiczno-Kanoniczne” that was published there.

His ecumenical teaching and literary commitment were also recognised in the area of doctrinal arrangements, whilst he was a member of the International Commission for Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue from 1972 to 1973. For several years he was a member of the Episcopal Commission on Ecumenism. Rev. Nagy became an Associate Professor in 1979, and in 1985 he received the habitual conferral of his professorship.

From his pen, the first post-conciliar textbook on fundamental ecclesiology in Poland, entitled ‘*Christ in the Church. Outline of Fundamental Ecclesiology*’ (1982), where we find a classic ecclesiological-fundamentalist argument, and which is a justification of the claim of the Divine origin of the Church and its structure.¹⁶ The theological diligence and results achieved by Prof. Nagy achieved recognition, hence he was appointed to the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1985 and 1991. His reputation was confirmed by his membership on the Board

¹⁵ Cf. M. Rusecki, *Recenzja dorobku naukowego*, pp. 31–32.

¹⁶ Cf. S. Nagy, *Chrystus w Kościele*, Wrocław 1982, TUM.

of the International Theological Commission for two terms from 1986 to 1996, where he became acquainted with Card. Ratzinger.

4. Prof. Nagy's ecumenical ecclesiology

One should not be surprised that Nagy, educated in the spirit of apologetic ecclesiology, took a long time to make serious changes in his understanding of the Church, which had been in place for many centuries. In discussing Nagy's oeuvre, Prof. Rusecki even stated that Nagy's focus on the structure of the Church and its visible elements were evident in his work right up to the end, although it would evolve over time to gain deeper theological interpretations.¹⁷

Nevertheless, Nagy quickly realized that the development of Church doctrine was not possible without engaging in ecumenical dialogue. On the one hand, oriented in this way, Catholic ecclesiology will itself not only experience verification and gain new inspirations, but will also protect ecumenism both from Irenicism with its excessive doctrinal concessions and from denominational conservatism. This is what he wrote in his ecumenical monograph *"The Church on the Roads of Unity"*: "Ecumenism has entered deeply into Christian life, becoming an integral element of its essence and action. With all the difficulty of defining it unambiguously, it is clear that any form of Christianity without it would be incomplete and painfully mutilated, if one could still speak of Christianity at all in such a case. For a Christianity indifferent to ecumenism is a Christianity indifferent to the matter of its lost unity, and therefore to the profound drama of it, which devastates Christianity itself and tragically limits its salvific radiation to that part of the human family which remains outside its orbit. And this means indifference to oneself, to one's own being and the tasks and duties that result from it."¹⁸ This monograph is Fr. Cardinal's greatest work. It filled a noticeable gap in Polish theology, as no such systematic and in-depth study of Catholic doctrine in its theoretical and practical layers, based on the conciliar decree on ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, had existed until then.¹⁹

¹⁷ Cf. M. Rusecki, *Recenzja dorobku naukowego*, p. 28.

¹⁸ S. Nagy, *Kościół na drogach jedności*, Wrocław 1985, p. 11.

¹⁹ Cf. H. Seweryniak, *Recenzja dorobku naukowego (...)*, in: *Kard. Prof. S. Nagy SCJ. Doktor honoris causa Papieskiego Wydziału Teologicznego we Wrocławiu*, Wrocław 2009, pp. 35–58.

In his ecumenical treatise, the Cardinal addressed several important issues. First of all, he explained why it is necessary to engage ecumenically. The concern for unity flows primarily from the request of Jesus, who in the High Priestly Prayer (cf. John 17) asked not only for his contemporary disciples and followers, but also implored the Heavenly Father for the unity of all those who would believe in him. Thus, he prayed for us, too, so that we would form a community. Not the kind of community which we want, but the kind that He wants. Jesus also gives a model for this unity, indicating that just as He is one with the Father in the Holy Spirit, so all the baptized should form a unity. The main motive, then, is the love of God as expressed by the Holy Spirit. After the will of Jesus, the influence of the Holy Spirit is the second reason for regaining lost unity. The third is the evangelization of the world. As the fourth reason, we can cite the socio-political situation and the so-called signs of the times, such as globalization, pandemics or other challenges posed by modern times.²⁰

In this significant monograph, the Professor also pointed to the causes of lost unity. Speaking about the mystery of the Church's unity, he explicitly mentioned the sources of this evil, namely sin, difficulties in interpreting Revelation and existential dimensions. Importantly, Nagy wrote that the responsibility for the schism lies with all Christians. The blame is mutual.²¹

Another of his significant achievements is the distinction between the unity of the Church and the unity of Christians. By the latter, he means the efforts of all followers of Christ belonging to different denominational groups to remove obstacles to mutual reconciliation, brotherhood and co-operation on many fronts, such as in the struggle against illiteracy, hunger, disease or concern for the life of the unborn or for peace. This long and arduous stage, in which one must entrust to the guidance of the Holy Spirit rather than to one's own achievements, is to lead ultimately to the kind of unity of Christ's Church that will be concretized in Eucharistic unity.²²

Already in the spirit of the Council's teaching, it also described the ecclesial status of the separated brethren. Despite the wounded and incomplete ecclesiality of the Christian churches and communities, their ecclesiality is sufficient for salvation, but only because its fullness exists in the Roman Catholic Church.

²⁰ Cf. S. Nagy, *Kościół na drogach jedności*, pp. 125–131.

²¹ Cf. S. Nagy, *Kościół na drogach jedności*, pp. 147–159.

²² Cf. A. Kumorek, *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa w pismach kard. Stanisława Nagyego SCJ*, p. 296.

However numerous elements of sanctification and truth are found in them (baptism, Scripture, certain sacraments, faith, the gifts of the Holy Spirit), members of such communities should seek and strive for the fullness of Catholic unity.²³

The professor maintained that in ecumenical or interreligious dialogue, we are all equal both with regard to the dignity of being sons and daughters of God, resulting from the act of creation, and with regard to the dignity of being Christians, emanating from the sacrament of baptism. However, he did not give up, in the name of false ecumenism, the assertion that there are differences among us Christians, arising from the possession of salvific truth, the fullness of which is found in the Roman Catholic Church. Recognising certain forms of ecclesiality found in Christian communities which are not in communion with Rome, he unequivocally stated that there is a lack of apostolic succession and, consequently, a validly celebrated Eucharistic mystery. This depiction of the true Church – not denying the term naturally to the Orthodox Churches and the ancient Churches of the East – would be found years later in the declaration, entitled *Dominus Iesus*, where we read: 'There is, therefore, one Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church governed by the Successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Churches which, while not in full communion with the Catholic Church, nevertheless remain united to it by very close ties, such as apostolic succession and the valid Eucharist, are true particular Churches. Therefore, also in these Churches the Church of Christ is present and active, although they lack full communion with the Catholic Church, as they do not recognise the Catholic doctrine of primacy, which the Bishop of Rome holds objectively by divine appointment and exercises over the entire Church. On the other hand, Ecclesial Communities that have not preserved the legitimate Episcopate and the proper and total reality of the Eucharistic mystery are not Churches in the strict sense; however, the baptised in these Communities are by baptism grafted into Christ and are therefore in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Church. For baptism in itself aims to achieve fullness of life in Christ through integral profession of faith, the Eucharist and full communion in the Church.'²⁴

Professor Nagy's ecumenical theology was neither liberal nor integrist. It can be described as "conservative ecumenism." What does this mean? Prof. Nagy

²³ Cf. S. Nagy, *Kościół na drogach jedności*, pp. 160–186.

²⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, Vatican 2000, nr. 17.

professed that the opening to other Christians was to be as great and strong, but only as large as its scope was determined by the Second Vatican Council. And not a step further! Why? Because, as he himself stressed: ecumenism is to be first and foremost a work of the Holy Spirit, not of human compromises or agreements.

5. Theological development of Nagy's ecclesiology

Among the main representatives of ecclesiology in Poland of the last decades, we will certainly include Stanislaw Nagy.²⁵ Let's say more: our professor can undoubtedly be considered to be an outstanding theologian of the 20th century, and of the same measure as J. Ratzinger, H.U. von Balthasar, Y. Congar, J. Danielou, H. de Lubac. His entire life was a confession of faith in the one holy, universal and apostolic Church. The undoubted merit of all these theologians is that they sought to deepen the mysterious character of the Church by emphasising its Trinitarian, Christological and pneumatological dimensions.²⁶

Cardinal's scholarly achievements were complemented by his spiritual attitude, from which emanated his humility, and which seems to have been the proper drive for theological development. One cannot fail to mention here his reticence and the unapologetic friendship he enjoyed with John Paul II. Great discretion always concealed his contribution in co-editing and proofreading many official papal texts. No one knows the extent of Prof. Nagy's this quiet work in this area. He has clearly entered the list of unnamed theological collaborators of the long and remarkable pontificate of Wojtyła. He served the Pope and numerous Vatican dicasteries with his knowledge.

Quite a lot has already been written, such as insightful reviews, about our professor's theology. Hence, not only because I have the honour of being a researcher at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, I would like

²⁵ In addition, ecclesiologists such as: Edward Ozorowski of the Bialystok center (the Church as a family), Adam Kubiś of Krakow (the sacramentality of the Church), Edward Kopeć and Marian Rusecki of Lublin (miracles and credibility of the Church), Henryk Seweryniak of UKSW, Piotr Jaskóła, Zygfryd Glaeser and Rajmund Porada of Opole or Piotr Liszka and Bogdan Ferdek of Wrocław and several others.

²⁶ Cf. A. Napiórkowski, *Reinterpretacja integralnego powstawania i rozwoju Kościoła. Niektóre aspekty trynitarniej i antropologicznej eklezjogenezy*, "Roczniki Teologiczne" 9 (2020), vol. 67, pp. 21–36.

to emphasise the personal and spiritual dimension of the influence of the Pope from Krakow on Prof. Nagy. Like the Great Wanderer, John Paul II travelled the world, becoming the greatest evangelist of the turn of the millennium. Similarly, Fr. Nagy – *homo viator* – created and taught a new vision of the Church not only in Lublin, Krakow and Wroclaw. It was no coincidence that Nagy, as a fundamental theologian focused upon ecumenical dialogue, was interested in common understandings of papal primacy. He first approached issues in the light of Lutheran theology (see *The Gospel and the Church*, the so-called *Malta Report*, 1972), seeking rapprochement in a biblical view. Later, he was inspired by the outlook of Anglicans (see *Authority in the Church* [Venice Document] 1976), who see the papal office as a kind of circular oversight. However, John Paul II's framing of the Petrine ministry in his encyclical *Ut unum sint* became his most innovative and realistic contribution for the service of ecclesial unity.²⁷

Nagy, as an unconfident witness to many events in the life of St. John Paul, was part of his close circle, along with Joseph Ratzinger, Marian Jaworski, Jean-Marie Lustiger, André Frossard, Christoph Schönborn, and Tadeusz Styczeń, where not only guiding ideas for the post-conciliar Church were worked out, but new paths for modern man were drawn. This papal anthropology, which at the end of his life so captivated our Cracow Purpurate, wanted to promote spirituality, lead to holiness, defend marriage, the family and human life from the moment of conception. In his many speeches, encyclicals and other documents, Wojtyła also set out new paths for the relationship of Christians to democracy and the globalising economy, called upon believers to be present in modern media, the arts and science, and worked out principles of ecumenism and dialogue with other religions, especially Judaism, whose biblical form is the matrix of Christianity.

Receiving the cardinalate in 2003, Nagy did not treat it as the culmination of his rich life, but he became an ardent promoter of the thought and person of the holy Pope. Numerous proofs of such commitment can be found in a sizable series of conferences, articles, papers and homilies. These have been collected into such book entries as: “On the Threshold of the Third Millennium”, “The Pope from Krakow”, “You are Peter”, “The Problem of Man the Problem of God”, “John Paul II after Leaving for the Father's House”, “To Live True Hope.”²⁸

²⁷ Cf. A. Kumorek, *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa w pismach kard. Stanisława Należyego SCJ*, pp. 296–297.

²⁸ Cf. H. Seweryniak, *Recenzja dorobku naukowego*, pp. 48–49.

Following John Paul II, the Cardinal's theological thinking delved more and more into the mystery of man, but in light of the mystery of the Church. After the Saint of Krakow, he repeated: "man is the way of the Church", which means that the human person is not only the main focus of the Church, but it is the baptised man in community with others and with the Risen Lord who constitutes the Church.

6. Conclusion

We can speak of a great integrity of spiritual and scientific development about Polish theologian, Cardinal Stanislaw Nagy. Charting the framework of Prof. Nagy's theological thought, we started from his grasp of apologetics, understood as a defence of Christianity and the Church in particular. We then discovered his transition to fundamental theology, where he remained focused upon ecclesiological issues. He advocated an approach to fundamental theology that represented a kind of integration of the two great models of the discipline developed in the West, namely the Roman model – emphasizing Revelation – and the German model – emphasizing the Church. Developing such an integral view of fundamental theology, however, the thinker from the Congregation of the Sacred Heart consistently dabbled in the subject of the Church. And going deeper into ecclesiological analysis, he discovered that the development of these issues was inextricably linked to ecumenical dialogue. At the final stage of his scientific work, he did not so much engage in journalism as in interpreting and bringing the teachings of John Paul II to the widest possible audience.

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