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## Between Counter-Culture and the Imitation of Christ: Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions

Peter Šajda

In the present paper I discuss Kierkegaard's relations to the Patristic and Medieval traditions which is an area of research that has experienced dynamic development in the past decade. Despite its growing popularity in international Kierkegaard studies, Central European scholars have so far paid little attention to it. The paper is intended as a point of departure for Central European research of this area. First, I present the basic coordinates of Kierkegaard's reception of patristic and medieval authors. Second, I examine the four main themes of this reception. Third, I provide an overview of the newest research in the area and identify its two most dynamic strands. Finally, I suggest possible avenues for future research.

**Key words:** S. Kierkegaard, Patristic tradition, Medieval tradition, history of reception, 19<sup>th</sup>-century theology.

In the last two decades there has been a surge of interest in the Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) across Central Europe.<sup>1</sup> A large number of monographs and articles dealing with Kierkegaard's thought has been published by Slovak, Czech, Austrian, Hungarian, Polish, and Slovenian scholars. A series of new translations of Kierkegaard's works has appeared, too.<sup>2</sup> In the case of Slovakia it is even appropriate to speak of a "Kierkegaard Renaissance" which is a term originally referring to a large wave

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<sup>1</sup> The paper was produced at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Trnava University as part of the grant project VEGA 1/0871/18.

<sup>2</sup> Bibliographies of translations and secondary literature on Kierkegaard published in Central Europe can be found in STEWART, J. and ŠAJDA, P. (eds.): *Kierkegaard Bibliography*, Tomes 1 – 7 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 19). London/New York: Routledge, 2017.

of interest in Kierkegaard in the Germanophone world between 1909 – 1945.<sup>3</sup> Although Central European Kierkegaard scholars have explored a broad range of topics, from the historical perspective their research has focused mostly on Kierkegaard's relations to the Modern world. In the present paper I would like to focus on Kierkegaard's relations to the Patristic and Medieval traditions which is a topic that has recently resonated in international research but has received only limited attention in Central Europe. I have already addressed this topic in a series of specialized articles published in Central Europe and outside<sup>4</sup> but this time my objective is broader. I would like to present an overview of the main characteristics and themes of Kierkegaard's reception of patristic and medieval sources as well as the recent scholarly debate about this reception. I hope to provide an incentive for further research of this topic by Central European scholars. Given the fact that Kierkegaard studies have recently enjoyed considerable popularity in Central Europe it is a *desideratum* that they expand their historical scope by including the Patristic and Medieval traditions. The dynamic Central European discourse could thus contribute in a new way to the global discourse on Kierkegaard.

## 1. BASIC COORDINATES OF KIERKEGAARD'S RECEPTION OF PATRISTIC AND MEDIEVAL AUTHORS

An important catalyst for the recent international debate on Kierkegaard's relations to the Patristic and Medieval traditions was the fourth volume of the series *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources* entitled *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*.<sup>5</sup> It contains contributions by a number of international Kierkegaard scholars and is the first anthology to present a detailed picture of Kierkegaard's reception of individual patristic and medieval authors.<sup>6</sup> The volume presents Kierkegaard's inspiration by these

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<sup>3</sup> A comprehensive account of the German "Kierkegaard Renaissance" can be found in ŠAJDA, P.: *Kierkegaardovská renesancia. Filozofia, náboženstvo, politika*. Bratislava : Pre-media 2016.

<sup>4</sup> See the third section of this paper.

<sup>5</sup> STEWART, J. (ed.): *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions (Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources, vol. 4)*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. The series appeared between 2007 – 2018 with Jon Stewart as the general editor.

<sup>6</sup> An earlier and more fragmentary attempt to achieve this goal can be found in volumes 1 and 6 of *Bibliotheca Kierkegardiana*. See especially MIKULOVÁ THULSTRUP, M.: *Studies of Pietists, Mystics, and Church Fathers*. In THULSTRUP, N. and MIKULOVÁ THULSTRUP, M. (eds.). *Kierkegaard's View of Christianity*. Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel 1978 (*Bibliotheca Kierkegardiana*, vol. 1), pp. 60 – 80.



authors, identifies the writings in which he referred to them, and discusses the topics present in the reception. The volume does not, however, provide a synthetic evaluation of Kierkegaard's reception and does not integrate his receptions of individual authors into a comprehensive narrative. In the following I aim to provide such a narrative and thus complement the research presented in the volume. Since my aim is to provide a point of departure for further research, I will focus only on the main characteristics and themes of Kierkegaard's reception. I will draw on both Kierkegaard's writings and secondary sources including *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*.

When examining Kierkegaard's relations to the Patristic and Medieval traditions we are immediately confronted with a mosaic of different forms of Christianity from the early post-New Testament period to the last phases of pre-Reformation Christianity. These traditions cover a long historical period stretching from the second to the fifteenth century. The earliest figure treated by Kierkegaard is Irenaeus of Lyons who knew personally the second generation Christians who had still witnessed the preaching of the apostles. The latest figure is Thomas à Kempis who died shortly before Martin Luther was born. The figures in this reception represent both the Christian West and East.

There are a few things that can be said about Kierkegaard's reception of patristic and medieval authors by way of introduction. An important point of commonality for a large part of these authors is that they held positions of ecclesial authority. John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus were patriarchs of Constantinople, Athanasius was the patriarch of Alexandria. Augustine, Basil the Great, Cyprian of Carthage, Gregory of Nyssa and Irenaeus were bishops, Bernard of Clairvaux and Anselm of Canterbury were abbots and Meister Eckhart was a prior provincial. By virtue of their offices they had direct responsibility for large ecclesial communities. In this respect their lives differed markedly from Kierkegaard's life, who as an independent theologian never held any position of ecclesial authority and did not elaborate a comprehensive ecclesiological vision.

It is important to note that Kierkegaard did not extend the critical disposition he had towards the Danish church leadership to ancient and medieval church leaders. He evaluated each figure separately and at times contrasted the earlier church leaders to the contemporary ones. He claimed, for instance, that in contrast to the Copenhagen bishop Jacob Peter Mynster the Constantinopolitan bishop John Chrysostom "gesticulates with his entire existence."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> SKS 24, 187, NB22:155 / JP 6, 6716. References to Kierkegaard's works are to the latest Danish edition, *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter* (vols. 1 – 28, ed. by CAPPELØRN, N. J. et al.

A common feature of many of the patristic authors is that they were involved in early doctrinal controversies that were decisive for the self-definition of Christianity. They helped conceptualize fundamental Christian beliefs and played a vital role in the development of Christian dogmatics. Thus, they laid a great emphasis on rational exposition of the Christian faith. As I will explain in more detail below, Kierkegaard viewed this emphasis with suspicion, since he was an opponent of natural theology and “limit[ed] the rule of reason concerning faith to the understanding of the impossibility of understanding.”<sup>8</sup>

Kierkegaard was interested not only in the works of the patristic and medieval thinkers but also in their lives. He studied their biographies in order to determine if they practiced “reduplication,” i.e., if they lived in accordance with their doctrine.<sup>9</sup> He paid special attention to their existential dilemmas which resembled in some ways his own dilemmas. He explored, for instance, Peter Abelard’s unhappy love story which bore some resemblance to his unfulfilled relationship with his ex-fiancée Regine Olsen.<sup>10</sup>

Kierkegaard’s evaluation of all the patristic and medieval figures is ambivalent with the ambivalence being more pronounced in cases when he treats the figures in more depth. The balance of positive and negative reception varies from figure to figure, but he does not uncritically approve of or completely dismiss any of them.

Although Kierkegaard read a number of primary works by patristic and medieval authors, secondary literature influenced him in a decisive way. This aspect of his reception requires further elaboration in future research. Kierkegaard owned works by approximately half of the patristic and medieval thinkers whom he referenced in his writings. Even these authors he knew, however,

Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1997 – 2013), abbreviated to *SKS* and followed by volume and page numbers, and to the English translation in the series *Kierkegaard’s Writings* (vols. 1 – 26, ed. and trans. by HONG, H. V. and HONG, E. H. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978-1998), using standard abbreviations of Kierkegaard’s works. References to Kierkegaard’s unpublished *Journals and Notebooks* are also to *Søren Kierkegaard’s Skrifter*, followed by volume and entry numbers, and to the English translation *Søren Kierkegaard’s Journals and Papers* (vols. 1 – 6, ed. and trans. by HONG, H. V. and HONG, E. H. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1967-1978), abbreviated to *JP* and followed by volume and entry numbers. See also STAN, L.: Chrysostom: Between the Hermitage and the City. In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> CZAKÓ, I.: Abelard: Kierkegaard’s Reflections on the Unhappy Love of a Scholastic Dialectician. In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, p. 161.

<sup>9</sup> *SKS* 20, 418, NB5:117 / *JP* 3, 3667. PUCHNIAK, R.: Augustine: Kierkegaard’s Tempered Admiration of Augustine. In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, *SKS* 6, 375 / *SLW* 3, 405.

mostly through secondary literature. In several cases there is no evidence that he ever read the primary sources that he owned.

By far the most quoted secondary source is Friedrich Böhrringer's historical-biographical work *Die Kirche Christi und ihre Zeugen*.<sup>11</sup> This work shaped Kierkegaard's views on Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Cyprian of Carthage, the Cappadocian Fathers, Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, and Anselm of Canterbury. With regard to some of these authors Böhrringer was Kierkegaard's main source of information. Given Böhrringer's formative influence it would be useful to research his impact on Kierkegaard in a more systematic way. Other influential secondary sources include the works and lectures of the Danish theologians Henrik Nicolai Clausen and Hans Lassen Martensen, as well as the works of the German church historian August Neander.

## 2. FOUR MAIN THEMES OF KIERKEGAARD'S RECEPTION

There are four main themes that Kierkegaard addressed repeatedly in his reception of Patristic and Medieval traditions: (1) the character of the early church, (2) the relation between reason and faith, and between Greek philosophy and Christianity, (3) soteriology, (4) the existential transformation effected by the Christian message. These themes constitute the fundamental framework of his reception.

(1) Patristic and medieval sources influenced substantially Kierkegaard's view of the early church. Through authors like Cyprian of Carthage Kierkegaard became acquainted with the persecuted church of the pre-Constantinian period which was radically different from the established church of his own time. The early church was a community of confessors and martyrs and Christian existence was inextricably linked to spiritual discipline and resilience in times of persecution. Christianity was genuinely counter-cultural and conversion to it came with a risk.<sup>12</sup> Those desiring baptism were bound to undergo a period of testing in order to be adequately prepared for the difficulties of Christian life. The theology of this age was born out of the practical needs of the ecclesial community and lacked a speculative agenda. For Kierkegaard the early church and its theology had a number of qualities which were evidence of its earnestness and authentic witness.

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<sup>11</sup> BÖHRINGER, F.: *Die Kirche Christi und ihre Zeugen*. Zurich: Meyer & Zeller 1842-58.

<sup>12</sup> SKS 24, 258-9, NB23:106 / JP 3, 2662; SKS 24, 259, NB23:106.a / JP 3, 2663; SKS 25, 267, NB28:59 / JP 2, 1924. MULDER, J. Jr.: Cyprian of Carthage: Kierkegaard, Cyprian, and the "urgent needs of the times." In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, pp. 79 - 88.

Kierkegaard was highly critical of the theological turn which followed in the wake of the Constantinian reforms that brought an end to the persecution of the church by the state. His criticism was aimed against the theologians who saw the political changes as a chance to elaborate a new self-understanding of Christianity. Prominent representatives of this new direction were the Cappadocian fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus. Kierkegaard accused them of a “Constantinization” of Christianity and argued that the ideal of martyrdom for faith was replaced with the ideal of asceticism. The slackening of moral rigor had liturgical, sacramentological and other consequences. Christmas replaced Easter as the main festival of the ecclesial year and neophytes were urged to receive baptism as soon as possible, which ultimately led to the practice of infant baptism. A state-sactioned Christendom was born in which all are members and the link between baptism and conversion is eliminated.<sup>13</sup> The differentiation between Christianity and Christendom became necessary.

(2) The theme which was of highest importance to Kierkegaard was the relation between reason and faith, and between Greek philosophy and Christianity. The exploration of this theme was part of Kierkegaard’s search for a viable “Christian gnoseology.”<sup>14</sup>

Kierkegaard paid especially close attention to the combination of Christianity and Greek philosophy in patristic authors. He was interested in how they combined philosophical reflection with the suprarational elements of the Christian doctrine, such as Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. In Chrysostom and Tertullian he appreciated the emphasis on the fact that Christian doctrine contains the elements of paradox and absurdity and thus is a source of offense for discursive reason. Kierkegaard praised ancient apologetics for avoiding the danger of explaining the Christian message with recourse to probability which was a common practice in modern apologetics.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, Kierkegaard identified in some patristic authors a tendency to interpret faith as a matter of knowledge, which weakened the existential potential of faith. He criticized, for example, Augustine for situating

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<sup>13</sup> SKS 26, 238-9, NB32:146 / JP 3, 2667; SKS 26, 286, NB33:45; SKS 25, 255-6, NB28:53 / JP 1, 543; SKS 25, 256, NB28:53.a / JP 1, 544. BALLAN, J.: Gregory of Nyssa: Locating the Cappadocian Fathers in Kierkegaard’s Church-Historical Narrative. In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, pp. 97 - 98.

<sup>14</sup> I have adopted this term from STAN, p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> SKS 24, 174, NB22:138 / JP 1, 575; SKS 24, 169, NB22:127; SKS 4, 256-257 / PF, 52-54. STAN, pp. 57 - 59.

faith within the sphere of intellectuality.<sup>16</sup> Under Platonic influence Augustine rehabilitated the Greek philosophical concept of faith, which had enormous consequences for Christian theology.

Kierkegaard was critical also of medieval attempts to reconcile faith with reason and Christianity with philosophy. He was suspicious of Anselm's principle *credo ut intelligam*, as well as of his ontological argument for God's existence, which was popular among German idealist philosophers. Kierkegaard saw in Anselm "a progenitor of the mistaken notion that faith must be perfected in a cognitive grasp of God" and considered the ontological argument "a prototype of speculation's unfortunate displacement of faith into the realm of ideality and possibility."<sup>17</sup>

The suspicion of excessive intellectualization of faith may have been the reason why Kierkegaard refrained from a deeper study of scholastic philosophers like Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas. In a letter to Frederik Christian Sibbern Kierkegaard likened Aquinas' philosophical and theological works to Hegel's speculative system of science.<sup>18</sup>

(3) Although Kierkegaard criticized patristic and medieval authors for excessive focus on the doctrinal side of Christianity he did not discard their exposition of Christian doctrine altogether. This is evidenced by his keen interest in their views on soteriology, or more specifically on the issues of grace, original sin and predestination, which were linked to the Pelagian controversy. Kierkegaard's assessment of the Pelagian theological positions was ambivalent: on the one hand, he had reservations about Augustine's interpretation of original sin and rejected the doctrine of predestination, on the other hand he distanced himself from the soteriological self-sufficiency of the individual. He considered the need for grace man's highest perfection.<sup>19</sup>

When reflecting on the problem of predestination Kierkegaard availed himself of a variety of sources exploring, for instance, Origen's exegesis of

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<sup>16</sup> SKS 25, 432 – 434, NB30:57 / JP 1, 180. PUCHNIAK, R.: Augustine: Kierkegaard's Tempered Admiration of Augustine, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> BARRETT, L. C.: Anselm of Canterbury: The Ambivalent Legacy of Faith Seeking Understanding. In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, p. 177.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. OLIVARES BØGESKOV, B.: Thomas Aquinas: Kierkegaard's View Based on Scattered and Uncertain Sources. In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, p. 199.

<sup>19</sup> SKS 4, 340 / CA, 34; SKS 2, 143 / EO1, 144; JP 1, 51; SKS 22, 332, NB13:88. PUCHNIAK, R.: Kierkegaard's Use of Pelagius and Pelagianism. In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, pp. 123 – 128.

Biblical narratives and Boethius' considerations on the compatibility of divine foreknowledge with human freedom.

In medieval soteriology he was particularly interested in the relation between grace and merit. Although he criticized medieval theologians for defining human action as the decisive factor of salvation, he acknowledged positive aspects of the medieval doctrine of self-perfection. He presented his position in more detail in *Judge for Yourself*: "However great the errors [of the Middle Ages] were, its conception of Christianity has a decisive advantage over that of our time. It conceived of Christianity along the lines of action, life, existence-transformation.... It is another matter that.... they came up with the idea of meritoriousness, thought that they earned merit before God through their good works."<sup>20</sup> Jack Mulder contends that Kierkegaard oversimplified medieval soteriology and quotes a statement by Bernard of Clairvaux who unequivocally presented salvation as God's gift.<sup>21</sup>

(4) The aspect which Kierkegaard valued the most in patristic and medieval authors was their insistence on the existential-transformative character of the Christian message. He commented favourably on both patristic and medieval practices of preaching which emphasized the need for conversion and self-denial. He counterposed them to the more rhetorical and artistic sermons common in modern Lutheranism.<sup>22</sup> He claimed that older spiritual authors – such as Tertullian and Anselm – were unambiguously theocentric and Christocentric which was an effective prevention against attempts to redefine Christianity as a human project for human purposes.<sup>23</sup>

The *doctrina practica* developed by the medieval mystics stressed the need for the transformation of the individual's will in accordance with God's will. This was part of the tradition of *imitation of Christ* about which Kierkegaard read extensively in the Pseudo-Taulerian work *The Imitation of the Poor Life of Christ* and in Thomas à Kempis' classic *On the Imitation of Christ*. After 1849 the ideal of imitation became for Kierkegaard the key criterion for authentic Christian discipleship.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> JFY, 192. MULDER, J. Jr.: Bernard of Clairvaux: Kierkegaard's Reception of the Last of the Fathers. In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, pp. 40 – 41.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>22</sup> SKS 24, 170, NB22:129 / JP 3, 3161; SKS 24, 187, NB22:155 / JP 6, 6716.

<sup>23</sup> BARRETT, L. C.: Anselm of Canterbury: The Ambivalent Legacy of Faith Seeking Understanding, p. 177.

<sup>24</sup> SKS 20, 335, NB4:102 / JP 2, 1844; RASMUSSEN, J. D.S.: Thomas à Kempis: *Devotio Moderna* and Kierkegaard's Critique of "Bourgeois-Philistinism." In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, p. 289, p. 291.

Ascetic ideals promoted by the medieval mystics and the authors of *devotio moderna* influenced the works of Protestant Pietist authors whom Kierkegaard held in high regard. Among these authors were Johann Arndt, Philipp Jacob Spener, Gottfried Arnold, Christian Scriver and Gerhard Tersteegen.

### 3. THE NEWEST RESEARCH OF KIERKEGAARD'S RECEPTION

The anthology *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions* provided a vital impetus for new international research of Kierkegaard's reception of patristic and medieval literature. Monographs, articles and dissertations have since been published – mostly in English – exploring further the issues discussed in the anthology and contributing with new perspectives. Previously, there had been traditions of research of Kierkegaard's relations to Augustine, Tertullian, Thomas Aquinas and the German mystics. The newest research has continued these traditions and created new ones.

Two traditions of research have recently expanded more rapidly than others: the research on Kierkegaard's relations to (1) Augustine and (2) the German mystics.

(1) Within the literature on Kierkegaard's relation to Augustine the works by Robert Puchniak, Simon Podmore and Lee C. Barrett are the most important. Puchniak authored the chapter on Augustine in *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions* and shortly before defended his dissertation *Kierkegaard and Augustine: A Study in Christian Existence*.<sup>25</sup> In the dissertation he explored thematic affinities between Augustine and Kierkegaard focusing on the concept of despair. Puchniak continued his exploration of Augustinian motifs in Kierkegaard in his article *Kierkegaard's "Self" and Augustine's Influence*.<sup>26</sup> Building upon his earlier investigations of the notion of despair he identified intersections between Augustine's concept of self-transformation in the *Confessions* and Kierkegaard's concept of selfhood in *The Sickness unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*.

Thematically related investigations can be found in Simon Podmore's monograph *Kierkegaard and the Self Before God: Anatomy of the Abyss*.<sup>27</sup> Podmore's theological project does not focus primarily on interpreting Kierkegaard, but rather on developing an original conception of a God-related self and

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<sup>25</sup> Puchniak defended his dissertation at Drew University in 2007.

<sup>26</sup> PUCHNIAK, R.: Kierkegaard's "Self" and Augustine's Influence. In *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2011, pp. 181 – 94.

<sup>27</sup> PODMORE, S. D.: *Kierkegaard and the Self before God: Anatomy of the Abyss*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011.

a theology of forgiveness. Kierkegaard is placed in a productive dialogue with other thinkers, including Augustine.

The most recent and the most important contribution to the research of Kierkegaard's relation to Augustine is Lee C. Barrett's monograph *Eros and Self-Emptying: The Intersections of Augustine and Kierkegaard*.<sup>28</sup> Barrett pays close attention to the historical context of Kierkegaard's reception of Augustine's thought. He highlights the centrality of the journey motif in both thinkers who were intensely concerned with the individual's journey to God and God's journey to humanity in Christ. Barrett examines the convergence and divergence of Augustine's and Kierkegaard's thinking on the relations between doctrine and passion, and edification and speculation. He explores how both thinkers appropriated the classical concept of eros for the divine and highlights the overlaps in their understanding of Christian pathos. Barrett's in-depth analysis uncovers the basic logic of Kierkegaard's agreements and disagreements with Augustine.

Barrett returned to the motif of an existential journey in the article *Moral Implications of Augustine's Philosophical and Spiritual Journey in his Confessions* which he co-authored with Michal Valčo and Roman Králik.<sup>29</sup> Marcio Gimenes de Paula introduced the debate on Kierkegaard and Augustine to the Portuguese-speaking scholars in his article *Mundanidade e Secularização: um Diálogo entre Kierkegaard e Agostinho* which analyzes different forms of secularity.<sup>30</sup>

(2) The other strand of research which has experienced a lively debate focuses on Kierkegaard's relation to the German mystics. The research has been carried out especially by Hjördis Becker, Christopher Barnett, M.G. Piety and myself.

Hjördis Becker's article *Mirroring God. Reflections of Meister Eckhart's Thoughts in Kierkegaard's Work*<sup>31</sup> represents a response to the discussions initiated in the volume *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*. Becker investigates Kierkegaard's explicit treatment of medieval mystics as well as his implicit indebtedness to the concepts they created. She identifies

<sup>28</sup> BARRETT, L. C.: *Eros and Self-Emptying: The Intersections of Augustine and Kierkegaard*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2013.

<sup>29</sup> VALČO, M., KRÁLIK, R. and BARRETT, L.: *Moral Implications of Augustine's Philosophical and Spiritual Journey in his Confessiones*. In *Communications: Scientific Letters of the University of Žilina*, 2015, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 103 – 8.

<sup>30</sup> PAULA, M. G. de: *Mundanidade e Secularização: um Diálogo entre Kierkegaard e Agostinho*. In *Philosophica*, 2010, vol. 35, pp. 33 – 44.

<sup>31</sup> BECKER, H.: *Mirroring God: Reflections of Meister Eckhart's Thoughts in Kierkegaard's Work*. In *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2012, pp. 3 – 24.



a number of motifs adopted from Eckhartian and Pseudo-Eckhartian works in Kierkegaard's discourse *One Who Prays Aright Struggles in Prayer and is Victorious—in that God is Victorious*. She also elucidates Hans Lassen Martensen's role in mediating Eckhart's thought to Kierkegaard.

Christopher Barnett's monograph *Kierkegaard, Pietism and Holiness*<sup>32</sup> develops a theme that was central to several chapters in *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*. Barnett presents a detailed study of Kierkegaard's encounter with the spiritual legacy of the mystics in Protestant devotional literature, especially in the works of Johann Arndt and later Pietist authors.

This theme figures prominently also in my article *Kierkegaard's Encounter with the Rhineland-Flemish Mystics. A Case Study*<sup>33</sup> in which I expanded my original focus on Eckhart and Tauler by including Kierkegaard's other mystical sources. I present a systematic analysis of Kierkegaard's knowledge and use of these sources and compare my findings to Marie Mikulová Thulstrup's general theses about Kierkegaard's relation to mysticism. I expand my research even further in *Kierkegaard's Mystical and Spiritual Sources. Meister Eckhart to Tersteegen*<sup>34</sup> in which I examine a broad spectrum of Kierkegaard's spiritual sources.

In my article *Martensen's Treatise Mester Eckart and the Contemporary Philosophical-Theological Debate on Speculative Mysticism in Germany* I analyze the Hegel-inspired controversy on speculative mysticism which took place in the first half of the nineteenth century and was known to Kierkegaard.<sup>35</sup> I pay special attention to the origin and the early stages of this controversy in the article *Does Hegelian Philosophy of Religion Distort Christian Dogmatics and Ethics? (The Debate on Speculative Mysticism)*.<sup>36</sup>

M.G. Piety has used the historical research of Kierkegaard's relation to medieval mysticism as a foundation for developing a systematic line of research in the field of epistemology of theology. In *The Stillness of History: Kierkegaard*

<sup>32</sup> BARNETT, C.: *Kierkegaard, Pietism and Holiness*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> ŠAJDA, P.: Kierkegaard's Encounter with the Rhineland-Flemish Mystics. A Case Study. In *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2009, pp. 559 – 84.

<sup>34</sup> ŠAJDA, P.: Kierkegaard's Mystical and Spiritual Sources. Meister Eckhart to Tersteegen. In STEWART, J. (ed.). *A Companion to Kierkegaard*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2015, pp. 167 – 179.

<sup>35</sup> ŠAJDA, P.: Martensen's Treatise *Mester Eckart* and the Contemporary Philosophical-Theological Debate on Speculative Mysticism in Germany. In STEWART J. (ed.). *Hans Lassen Martensen. Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press 2012, pp. 47 – 72.

<sup>36</sup> ŠAJDA, P.: Does Hegelian Philosophy of Religion Distort Christian Dogmatics and Ethics? (The Debate on Speculative Mysticism). In *Acta Kierkegardiana*, 2009, vol. 4, pp. 64 – 83.

and *German Mysticism*<sup>37</sup> she points out striking affinities between Eckhart's and Tauler's mystical epistemology and Kierkegaard's religious epistemology. She continues these explorations in her chapter on Kierkegaard in *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*.<sup>38</sup>

Kierkegaard's relation to medieval mystics was briefly treated in two other English-language publications: Karsten Harries' monograph *Between Nihilism and Faith. A Commentary on Either/Or*<sup>39</sup> and Eric Ziolkowski's monograph *The Literary Kierkegaard*.<sup>40</sup> Both authors drew inspiration from the articles published in *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*. Y. Meeussen introduced the debate on Kierkegaard and medieval mysticism to the French academic public in his article *Eckhart et Kierkegaard – la Percée et l'Instant*.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from Augustine and the German mystics several other patristic and medieval figures have received attention in publications devoted to Kierkegaard's thought. Jack Mulder continued his reflections on Kierkegaard's reception of Bernard of Clairvaux in his monograph *Kierkegaard and the Catholic Tradition: Conflict and Dialogue*.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Lee C. Barrett developed further his analysis of Kierkegaard's reception of Anselm in his article *Atonement/Reconciliation* in the volume *Kierkegaard's Concepts*.<sup>43</sup> Wilson Dickinson wrote the dissertation *Specters of Truth: Exercising Philosophy and Theology*<sup>44</sup> in which he focused on a performative and responsive understanding of philosophical and theological truth and placed Kierkegaard in a dialogue with Gregory of Nyssa and Origen.

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<sup>37</sup> PIETY, M.G.: The Stillness of History: Kierkegaard and German Mysticism, In: *Konturen*, 2015, vol. 7, pp. 42 – 63.

<sup>38</sup> PIETY, M.G.: Søren Kierkegaard. In: ABRAHAM, W. J. and AQUINO, F. D. (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*. Oxford: OUP, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> HARRIES, K.: *Between Nihilism and Faith: A Commentary on "Either/Or."* Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010 (*Kierkegaard Studies Monograph Series*, vol. 21).

<sup>40</sup> ZIOLKOWSKI, E.: *The Literary Kierkegaard*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> MEESEN, Y.: Eckhart et Kierkegaard – la Percée et l'Instant. In HERNANDEZ-DISPAUX, J. et al. (eds.). *Kierkegaard et la philosophie française. Figures et réceptions*. Louvain: Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2014, pp. 11 – 22.

<sup>42</sup> MULDER, J. Jr.: *Kierkegaard and the Catholic Tradition: Conflict and Dialogue*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010.

<sup>43</sup> BARRETT, L. C.: Atonement/Reconciliation. In STEWART, J. et al. (eds.). *Kierkegaard's Concepts*, Tome I: Absolute to Church (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 15). Aldershot : Ashgate, 2013, pp. 109 – 115.

<sup>44</sup> Wilson Dickinson defended his dissertation at Syracuse University in 2011.

#### 4. AVENUES OF FUTURE RESEARCH

In the previous sections I have described the main characteristics and themes of Kierkegaard's reception of patristic and medieval authors. I have suggested that his four main areas of interest were the character of the early church, the relation between reason and faith (and between Greek philosophy and Christianity), soteriology, and the existential-transformative nature of the Christian message. I have also presented an overview of the newest research of this reception and highlighted its two most dynamic strands which focus on Kierkegaard's relations to Augustine and the German mystics. Especially the last decade has produced a lively intellectual exchange that continues to inspire new research and fills the still existing lacunae.

In his *Preface to Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions* Jon Stewart pointed out that "to date there is no extended research monograph on [Kierkegaard's] relations to any of the figures treated in the present volume or to the period as a whole."<sup>45</sup> Thanks to Lee C. Barrett's monograph *Eros and Self-Emptying* this statement is now only partly true. As various strands of research of Kierkegaard's relations to patristic and medieval figures continue to develop it would be only natural if more monographs followed.

It is probable that the established traditions of research of Kierkegaard's relations to Augustine, Tertullian, Thomas Aquinas and the German mystics will continue to dominate the discourse. This is due to both the general importance of these figures and their relevance for Kierkegaard studies. Some of these trends are supported by trends in others fields of study, such as the recent revival of Eckhart studies.

Given the fact that Kierkegaard's reception of some patristic and medieval figures is quite limited, it is appropriate to integrate them into larger traditions of thought. Thus they can be part of the research of Kierkegaard's relations to, for example, early Christian apologists, medieval mystics or Scholastic thinkers.

The decisive influence of secondary sources on Kierkegaard's reception is an important object of study which has so far received little attention. It would be useful to provide individual portraits of Kierkegaard's principal secondary sources like Böhlinger, Clausen, Martensen, and Neander.

Synthetic interpretations focusing on different themes and motifs of Kierkegaard's reception would help to transcend the historical scope of research. Although there are a few systematic studies, they do not form a continuous

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<sup>45</sup> STEWART, J.: Preface. In STEWART, J. (ed.). *Kierkegaard and the Patristic and Medieval Traditions*, p. xi.

line of research. They are mostly connected to individual intellectual projects of their authors.

Specialized journals and publication series such as *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, *Danish Golden Age Studies* and *Acta Kierkegaardiana* have recently served as platforms for continuing the debate about Kierkegaard's patristic and medieval sources. The dynamic of the debate would, however, benefit greatly from thematic conferences and volumes that would be natural catalysts for further research.

It would be welcome if the dynamic Central European discourse on Kierkegaard contributed more substantially to the development of this area of research. Some Central European authors have already taken part in the discourse and continue to do so. This article is intended as an impetus to inspire new authors to consider joining this trend.

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## Biskupská encyklika a pastiersky list ako literárny žáner na príklade Košického biskupstva v 1. polovici 19. storočia<sup>1</sup>

Peter Zubko

Episcopal encyclical and shepherd's letter as a literary genre on the example of the Kosice diocese in the first half of the 19th century

The research of sermon literature in the Slovak language from the 19th century is not thoroughly examined. In examining this issue, we come across the same named facts named differently: they are called differently by literary science and theologian. This discrepancy is related to the historical development in Slovakia in the second half of the 20th century. These are the names: literary type, literary genre. This article does not solve this problem, but points to the potential use of an interdisciplinary approach to the issue. This article counts various literary genres that can be commonly identified in the Catholic Church. Today's understanding of any genre may not be the same as in the past. As times change, so does the meaning or definition of naming. On the example of two terms (episcopal encyclical and shepherd's letter) the problem of developing the understanding of these terms is presented on the example of the Kosice diocese in the years 1804–1850 in comparison with today's understanding.

**Key words:** literary genres, encyclical, shepherd's letter, the diocese of Kosice.

### LITERÁRNE DRUHY A ŽÁNRE

Teológia ako vedný odbor narába so slovom. Rozvojom biblických vied vnikajú do jej prostredia termíny, ktoré pochádzajú zvyčajne od autorov alebo z prostredia, ktoré ich zaviedlo ako prvé. Tak napr. biblistika používa termín *literárne druhy*. Jozef Heriban skonštatoval: „Štúdium a poznanie literárnych druhov v Biblii veľmi prispelo k hlbšiemu a jasnejšiemu pochopeniu biblic-

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<sup>1</sup> Článok je súčasťou riešenia projektu APVV-19-0158 SlovKa19 (Slovenská kázňová spisba v 19. storočí).

kých textov a ich posolstva.<sup>2</sup> Následne vymenúva 56 skupín tejto kategórie. Podľa označení tohto termínu, ktoré je v zátvorke označené v latinčine a potom v nemčine *Gattungen*, je zjavné, že slovenské pomenovanie bolo prekladom z nemčiny. Okrem biblickej vedy v teologických disciplínach nachádzame ďalšie disciplíny, ktoré rozlišujú vlastné literárne druhy: homiletika, liturgika, kánonické právo, cirkevné dejiny atď.<sup>3</sup> Je evidentné, že takého špecifikovanie je pomôckou v oveľa širších súvislostiach príslušnej teologickej disciplíny.

Slovom a jeho funkciou i textami sa primárne zaoberá jazykoveda a literárna veda. Tá skúma a pomenúva principiálne tie isté javy a skutočnosti. Teológia je jednou z mnohých vedeckých disciplín a jej rozvoj u nás nastal po páde komunistického režimu, ktorý jej napredovaniu nežičil. Zdá sa, že tu potom nastala istá diskrepancia medzi ustálenou literárnovednou terminológiou, ktorá sa na Slovensku mohla sformovať a formovať aj počas totality, a terminológiou, ktorú prirodzene potrebujú aj teologické disciplíny, ale nekonzultujú ich s domácou vedeckou tradíciou, ale vytvárajú vlastnú autonómiu a akoby hľadajú aj príslušné pomenovania skutočností, vecí a javov. Naším cieľom nie je vyriešiť tento problém. Literárny vedec František Štraus sám konštatuje: „Kategórie literárnych druhov v priebehu vývoja umeleckej literatúry a literárnej vedy vyvolávali a dodnes vyvolávajú rozličné názory. Tradičné klasické členenie umeleckej literatúry v literárnej teórii vyvoláva ťažkosti najmä v tom, že sa miešajú a zamieňajú druhy a žánre, že vznikajú nové žánre, doteraz sa však neobjavila žiadna nová teória literárnych druhov, ktorá by mohla nahradiť triádu druhového členenia umeleckej literatúry.“<sup>4</sup> Výslovné spomínanie umeleckej literatúry je v tomto kontexte podružné, lebo ide o literárnovedný teoretický text, no súčasťou literatúry (v staršom pomenovaní písomníctva, spisby) je aj vedecká a odborná tvorba. Literárna teória pod druhmi rozumie diferencovanie literatúry na tri špecifické oblasti: lyriku, epiku a drámu. A v rámci týchto druhov rozlišuje žánre, ktoré je možné ďalej tematizovať. To, čo súčasná teologická terminológia nazýva literárnymi druhmi, literárnovedná terminológia pomenúva ako literárne žánre. Vychádza tu pritom z oveľa širšej a staršej vedeckej tradície, ktorá sa zrodila vo Francúzsku.

Ani si to neuvedomujeme, ale v úradnej cirkevnej komunikácii existuje viacero tradičných a osvedčených žánrov alebo žánrových foriem. Ich názvy

<sup>2</sup> HERIBAN, J.: *Príručný lexikón biblických vied*, heslo : literárne druhy. Rím : SÚSCM, 1992, s. 643.

<sup>3</sup> ĎURICA, J. (ed.): *Stručný katolícky teologický slovník*, heslo : literárne druhy. Trnava : Dobrá kniha, 2015, s. 535 – 536.

<sup>4</sup> ŠTRAUS, F.: *Príručný slovník literárnovedných termínov*, heslo : druhy literárne. Bratislava : Vydavateľstvo Spolku slovenských spisovateľov, 2005, s. 99 – 100.

a charakteristiku definuje kánonické právo alebo tradičná cirkevná prax. Len málokedy sa robí historická analýza týchto foriem. Rozumieme ich dnešnému obsahu, ale neskúmame ich genézu a vývin. Tak, ako sa v priebehu dejín posúva a mení sémantika slov, ešte intenzívnejšie sa mení, posúva a špecifikuje význam ustálených termínov. Záujem na ich poznávaní prichádza zvonku, z neteologického prostredia, ktoré je dnes na jednej strane značne sekularizované, na druhej strane sa prikrýva sekularizujúcou terminológiou, ktorá náboženské prejavy posúva do oblasti duchovnej kultúry. Treba však oceniť prenikanie záujmov, interdisciplinaritu, pretože sa tak skrze vedu reevanjelizuje sekularizovaný svet, na druhej strane aj Cirkev nachádza nielen nové spôsoby a cesty pôsobenia, ale aj sebauvedomovania sa, upevňovania vlastnej identity. To, čo je v internom cirkevnom prostredí nezaujímavé, je pre externé prostredie objektom záujmu.

Na Slovensku každý povinne maturuje zo slovenského jazyka a slovenskej literatúry. Je to prirodzený národný princíp každej kultúrnej krajiny. Sú však stále isté oblasti literárnych dejín, ktoré nie sú spracované, ba sú až neznáme. Ide aj o oblasti, ktoré sú primárne náboženské, ale špecifitou objektu sú záujmom výskumov vedcov z neteologického prostredia. Takou oblasťou sú dejiny slovenského kazateľstva. Pred rokom 1990 sa táto téma vedecky neskúmala do takej šírky a hĺbky ako svetské žánre. V učebniciach síce nájdeme mená viacerých slávnych kazateľov z katolíckeho alebo evanjelického prostredia, poznáme aj viaceré duchovné piesne, no nevieme takmer nič o kultúre, ktorá formovala nie intelektuálov, ale jednoduchý pospolitý ľud. Táto kultúra bola vymedzená na kostol, kňaza a učiteľa (školy na dedinách boli zväčša cirkevné), cirkevný a náboženský kontext. Často počúvame kliše o zachovaní dedičstva otcov, ale to sa ako vytrvalosť vo viere zachovalo vďaka verným dušiam jednoduchých veriacich, ktorí vlastnili modlitebnú knižku, už pomenej Sväté písmo, no predovšetkým boli živí Božím slovom v kázňach pri bohoslužbách. Preto vznikol na Filozofickej fakulte Univerzity sv. Cyrila a Metoda projekt Slovenská kázňová spisba v 19. storočí, ktorý podporila agentúra APVV, ktorý bude riešený v rokoch 2020 – 2024.

## PESTROŠŤ CIRKEVNÝCH ŽÁNROV

Vráťme sa opäť k žánrom, ktoré sú evidentné v cirkevnom prostredí. Rozlišujem ich predovšetkým podľa pôvodcov, ktorými môžu byť: pápež a Svätá stolica (pápežské úrady), biskup a jeho kancelária (kedysi konzistórium, kúria, aula), farár a jeho kancelária (farský úrad) či rehole. Každý z týchto pôvodcov je za istých okolností autorom typických písomností, ktoré nesú názvy podľa

povahy obsahu. Majú svoje miesto v cirkevnej komunikácii, ale súčasne sú obohatením národného písomníctva a kultúry, lebo ak neboli primárne napísané po slovensky, tak sú do slovenčiny prekladané. Pápež, hlava Katolíckej cirkvi, produkuje dokumenty, ktoré majú tieto pomenovania: encyklika, adhortácia, apoštolský list, apoštolská konštitúcia, motu proprio, breve, bula (dnes ako menovací dokument; tiež kanonizačný doklad), z prednášaných žánrov: katechéza, homília, príhovor. Svätú stolicu tvorí štátny sekretariát, kongregácie a ďalšie úrady, ktoré vydávajú dokumenty, ktoré sa nazývajú: aktá, dokumenty (najrozličnejšej povahy), inštrukcie, dubiá atď. Biskupovi je vlastný najmä pastiersky list. Jeho kancelária vydáva obežník (cirkulár, aktá). Osobitnú agendu s rozličnými názvami častí tejto agendy vytvára diecézny súd. Farár ako vlastný pastier produkuje predovšetkým farské oznamy a niektoré farnosti vydávajú farské periodiká (s najrozličnejšími názvami, rozsahom, periodicitou a obsahovou i typografickou kvalitou). Ako rehoľnú osobitosť treba spomenúť regulu alebo konštitúcie, ktorými sa riadia mníšske rehole, kongregácie, inštitúty zasväteného života. V kňazských seminároch zas existuje seminárny poriadok. Popri týchto dokumentoch aj z bežného života poznáme ďalšie typy dokumentov, ktoré sa vyskytujú aj v Cirkvi, napr. žiadosť, rozhodnutie, schválenie (aprobácia, konformácia), zamietnutie, podanie, dohoda, zmluva, štatút, poriadok atď. Nech sa na tieto kategórie písomných a ústnych prejavov pozeráme akokoľvek, môžu byť predmetmi akéhokoľvek výskumu, aj literárnovedného, ako jedinečné pramene.

V priebehu čias sa preferencia a frekvencia týchto žánrov menila, prispôbovala, rôznil sa ich obsah i rozsah, vznikali nové, zanikali prekonané. To, čo dnes rozumieme pod niektorým žánrom, nemuselo byť to isté v minulosti. Tak je to napr. s pastierskymi listami, ktoré dnešnú formu nadobúdali postupne. Dnes je pre pastiersky list typické, že jeho autorom je diecézny biskup alebo miestny ordinár, biskupi cirkevnej provincie alebo celej krajiny. Ide o spôsob duchovného príhovoru adresovaný veriacim. Obsahom listu sú vieroučné otázky, cirkevná disciplína, pastoračné usmernenia, zaujatie postojov k spoločenským problémom. Čítajú sa zvyčajne namiesto klasickej homílie pri nedel'ných omšiach.<sup>5</sup> Z formálneho hľadiska ide o napodobenie novozákonných listov<sup>6</sup> a klasickej korešpondencie.

<sup>5</sup> LEMAĎTROVÁ, N. – QUINSONOVÁ, M. T. – SOTOVÁ, V.: *Slovník křesťanské kultury*, heslo : pastýřský list. Praha : Garamond, 2002, s. 273; VNUK, F.: *Průruční slovník křesťanstva*, heslo : pastiersky list. Bratislava : Smaragd, 2003, s. 217; VRAGAS, Š. (ed.): *Teologický a náboženský slovník II [L – Ž]*, heslo : pastiersky list. Trnava : SSV, 2008, s. 138.

<sup>6</sup> Porov. ĎURICA, J.: *Stručný katolícky teologický slovník*, heslo : list, s. 533.



Predchodcom pastierskeho listu v našich biskupstvách bol tzv. okružný list, ktorý niesol latinský názov encyklika. Pod ním netreba rozumieť to, čo je dnešná pápežská encyklika.<sup>7</sup> Ešte v 18. storočí biskupi týmto spôsobom promulgovali závažné dokumenty a rozhodnutia aj so širokým teologickým, historickým i kánonickým odôvodnením. Encyklikou jágerský biskup František Bar-kóci 17. marca 1749 schválil štatúty Jágerskej diecézy,<sup>8</sup> ktoré 9. februára 1806 potvrdila i nástupnícka Košická diecéza (vznikla 9. augusta 1804) a platili až do 8. októbra 1859, keď biskup Ignác Fábry promulgoval nové diecézne štatúty.<sup>9</sup> Platili teda 110 rokov. Biskupské encykliky 18. storočia boli po formálnej stránke plodom barokovej doby, mali kvetnatý štýl.

### ŽÁNER PASTIERSKEHO LISTU NA PRÍKLADE KOŠICKÉHO BISKUPSTVA (1804 – 1852)<sup>10</sup>

Doba osvietenstva, ktorá je v literárnej vede známa ako literárny klasicizmus, zasiahla aj túto oblasť. Sformoval sa žáner pastierskeho listu, ktorý bol z estetického hľadiska jednoduchý, skutočne mal atribúty listu. Keďže jeho autorom bol biskup, nástupca apoštolov, ktorý konal apoštolskú službu, tento prívlastok sa stal súčasťou spomenutého termínu. Nie každý list napísaný biskupom bol nazývaný apoštolský. Na príklade Košickej diecézy zo začiatku 19. storočia možno charakterizovať tento žáner.

Pastiersky list mal slávnostnú formu, ako ju poznáme i dnes. V záhlaví sa nachádzalo meno biskupa s jeho úplnou titulatúrou, označenie adresáta, oslovenie, nasledoval rozsiahlejší text a na záver podpis biskupa. Z formálneho hľadiska list obsahoval poznámkový aparát s odvolávkami na Sväté písmo alebo cirkevných otcov. Takýto list bol určený špecifikovanej cieľovej skupine: celej diecéze, len kléru, len laikom. Tieto listy boli vytlačené v tlačiarni a distribuované do každej farnosti. Boli písané po latincky alebo vo vernakulárnych jazykoch (po maďarsky, nemecky, slovensky, gréckokatolícke biskupstvá vo svo-

<sup>7</sup> Prvý encykliku v modernom ponímaní vydal 3. decembra 1740 pápež Benedikt XIV. Každá encyklika je známa podľa svojej arengy (prvých slov). Všetky encykliky boli vydané ako samostatná edícia: *Enchiridion delle encicliche 1 – 8*. Bologna : EDB, 1994 – 1998 (2005).

<sup>8</sup> ZUBKO, P.: *Dejiny Košickej cirkvi v prameňoch (1803 – 2006)*. Prešov : VMV, 2006, s. 186 – 187.

<sup>9</sup> ZUBKO, P.: *Dejiny košickej Cirkvi*, s. 244.

<sup>10</sup> Ide o prvú ucelenú periódu dejín Košickej diecézy, keď sa formovala vlastná identita, konštituovali sa diecézne štruktúry, inštitúty. Je to obdobie tolerancie všetkých jazykových skupín veriacich, ktoré spája pôsobenie prvých piatich biskupov, ktorými boli: Andrej Sabo (1804 – 1819), Štefan Čech (1821 – 1831), Imrich Paludái (1831 – 1839), Anton Očkai (1839 – 1848) a Jozef Kunst (1850 – 1852).

jich mutáciách), a to zvyčajne vo všetkých jazykových mutáciách používaných v biskupstve súčasne. Tento spôsob kopíroval zaužívané úradné postupy. Verejné vyhlášky určené pre pospolitý ľud boli vydávané buď ako viacstĺpcové tlače, v každom stĺpci bol ten istý text, len v inej jazykovej mutácii. Alebo jednotlivé preklady vychádzali ako samostatné tlače. Tu sa navyše uplatňoval starý zvyk, že každý jazyk mal svoj typický výzor, bol používaný typický písomný font, latinské a maďarské texty boli vysádzané v antikve, nemecké vo švabachu a slovenské (podobne ako české texty) vo fraktúre, čo bol jednoduchší variant švabachu.

Pastiersky list (*litterae/litterae pastorales*) je termín, ktorý sa vžil postupne. Spočiatku tento typ dokumentu neniesol tento názov, aj keď sa sporadicky objavoval v samom texte dokumentu, čiže bol takto chápaný. List sám o sebe je textom odosielateľa, ktorý je niekomu určený. Pastiersky list má atribúty klasického listu, ale svoju špecifickosť nadobúda sledovaným cieľom. Vydáva ho vysoká cirkevná autorita, miestny ordinár, má verejnú povahu, venuje sa závažným náboženským témam, ktoré sú reakciou na konkrétne spoločensko-politické okolnosti. Je pre neho typické teologické, náboženské uvažovanie, ktoré je podporené mnohými citátmi z Písma a z cirkevných otcov, prípadne iných morálnych autorít, napr. pápežov alebo svätcov. Keďže list nahrádzal kázeň, mal aj homiletické prvky, napr. sledoval aj city poslucháčov, útočil na intelekt, rozum, vôľu, tiež obsahoval aj zvolania či citoslovce. Pastiersky list tak stál medzi úradným, hovorovým a náučným štýlom. Formoval názory, ktoré boli považované za správne, oficiálne. Často jediným kultúrnym miestom obyčajných poddaných v 1. polovici 19. storočia bol miestny kostol, ktoré moderoval domáci domáci farár. Jeho kázne, katechézy, výklady katechizmu duchovne formovali veriacych. Pastiersky list od biskupa tak bol obohatením. Čítal sa v nedeľu alebo vo sviatok, keď prichádzali na bohoslužby všetci veriacy.

Každý biskup krátko po nástupe do úradu diecézneho biskupa písal svoj prvý pastiersky list. Bol to povinný zvyk, ktorý by v súčasnosti bolo možné porovnať k prvej encyklike pápeža. Biskup v tomto liste definoval svoj pastiersky program, svoju víziu, svoju spiritualitu. Z týchto dôvodov boli prvé pastierske listy preložené do všetkých rečí ľudu diecézy a rozposlané do každej farnosti vo všetkých jazykových mutáciách. Často to býval jediný pastiersky list, ktorý bol určený pospolitému ľudu a napísaný v jeho reči. Ostatné pastierske listy boli písané pre klérus, alebo pre klérus a súčasne veriacych laikov, a to po latinsky. Myšlienky z týchto listov kňazi prerozprávali vlastným spôsobom v rámci klasickej kázne.

Rovnaký princíp kopírovali aj apoštolské listy od pápeža. Týkali sa závažných vieroučných, disciplinárnych alebo spoločenských tém. Ich tlač zabezpečovala cirkevná vrchnosť a tá ho distribuovala všetkým kňazom. Frekvencia týchto listov nebola veľká, ale nebola ani zriedkavá.

Pastierke listy vydané po slovensky, ktoré do polovice 19. storočia boli rozposlané v Košickom biskupstve, napísali: prvý košický biskup Andrej Sabo (list z 18. decembra 1806, 4 strany); pápež Pius VII. vydal 11. septembra 1821 list proti slobodomurárom, ktorý tlačou aj po slovensky vydali uhorskí biskupi v roku 1824; druhý košický biskup Štefan Čech (15. apríla 1826, 13 strán), súčasťou textu bol rozsiahly list pápeža Leva XII. k jubilejnému roku s upozornením na možnosť získať odpustky; uhorský prímás Ján Krstiteľ Scitovský (6. januára 1850, 11 strán); piaty košický biskup Jozef Kunst 6. októbra 1850, 3 strany). Týchto päť pastierskych, resp. apoštolských listov bolo vydaných aj po maďarsky a nemecky. Boli určené pospolitému ľudu. Všetky ostatné pastierske listy boli adresované kléru, preto boli napísané len po latinsky.

Biskup A. Sabo však zachoval aj tradíciu encyklik, súčasne založil tradíciu pôstnych listov, ktoré nazval *Encyclicae quadragesimales*. Boli vydávané v januári – februári a boli povzbudením pre klérus pred nastávajúcím Pôstnym obdobím. Biskupi ich písali každý rok až do roku 1852. Rozsahom ide zvyčajne o krátke útvary v rozsahu niekoľkých riadkov až niekoľkých strán, napísané po latinsky.<sup>11</sup> Ak si všimame encykliku ako žáner, ktorý bol osvedčený a závažný, aj keď už zanikal, v tomto kontexte možno povedať, že biskup kládol na správne prežitý pôst spojený s úprimným pokáním a veľkonočnou svedou veľký dôraz. Toto bolo privilegované obdobie, keď sa bolo treba aspoň raz v roku vyspovedať. Okrem pôstnych encyklik biskup písal krátke encykliky na začiatku nového občianskeho roka, keď vyhlásil kánonickú vizitáciu a keď ju ukončil.

## ZÁVER

Literárny vývin je badateľný v žánrových formách, ktoré používa Katolícka cirkev. Aj keď na Slovensku existuje v teoretickom pomenovaní nejednotnosť, interdisciplinárny prístup napomáha poukázať na diskrepancie a do budúcnosti otvára ďalšie možnosti výskumu. Žáner sám o sebe je len pomocným prostriedkom, ktorý po teoretickej stránke pomáha hlbšie uchopiť kontext, v ktorom fungoval. Na jednej strane ako osvedčený historický model je stabilne prítomný, no jeho sémantika má svoj vývin. Na príklade biskupskej encykliky a pastierskeho listu možno vidieť, ako encyklika dominuje v barokovom období, ale v prvej polovici 19. storočia postupne upadá a zaniká, no stále má vážny obsah, v 18. storočí aj kánonickoprávny, neskôr už len spirituálny, ale stále apelujúci na svedomie. Na druhej strane sa popri ňom paralelne rozvinul

<sup>11</sup> Archív Košickej arcidiecézy, fond Košické biskupstvo, odd. Circulares, *Constitutiones et Circulares Diaecesanae vim observantiae in Dioecesi Cassoviensis habentes*, s. 528 – 591.

žáner pastierskeho listu, ktorý mal slávnostnú a verejnú povahu a ide o produkt zapadajúci do literárneho klasicizmu. Pastierske listy adresované kléru boli písané po latinsky, boli relatívne rozsiahle, popretkávané citátmi z Písma a cirkevných otcov. Sporadicky vydávané pastierske listy pre pospolitý ľud boli písané vo všetkých živých jazykoch ľudu. Keďže sa čítali pri bohoslužbách, ich rozsah bol kratší. V závažných prípadoch uhorskí biskupi do vernakulárnych jazykov nechali preložiť aj pápežské listy. Až v druhej polovici 19. storočia boli napísané niekoľké kolektívne pastierske listy biskupského zboru.

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## Hebrejská Kniha Ester v kánone a jej (ne)náboženský charakter

Sidónia Horňanová

Táto vedecká štúdia vznikla v rámci projektu VEGA č. 1/0746/20 „Hebrejská Kniha Ester v historických, teologických a kultových súvislostiach.“ Projekt sa rieši na Katedre Starej zmluvy EBF UK v Bratislave a jeho zodpovedná vedúca riešiteľka je autorka tejto štúdie.

### **The Hebrew Book of Esther in the Canon and its Non-Religious Character**

The book of Esther has been a topic of debate for as long as it has been in existence. Its canonicity was questioned through the centuries due to its non-religious character, namely the lack of the name of God. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that despite an ostensible profane character of the book it deserves a place in the canon of sacred Scriptures. In spite of the absence of God's name it is strongly saturated with the motif of God's providence and God's taking care of his people in pagan world. Though God's name is not mentioned as God himself is not seen, yet in all that occurs God is always present.

**Key words:** Esther, canon, God's name, providence.

### ÚVODNÉ POZNÁMKY KU KNIHE

Hebrejská Kniha Ester má pôvod v egyptskej diaspóre. Pre jej datovanie máme len málo oporných bodov. Prevzatie motívov z helenistických románov a podobnosť s Knihou Daniel a Knihou Judit sú dôvodom pre jej datovanie do prvej polovice 2. storočia,<sup>1</sup> príp. ešte skôr do 3. stor. pred Kristom.<sup>2</sup> Najstaršia grécka verzia Knihy Ester vznikla začiatkom 2. stor. pred Kristom. „Kolofón ku gréckemu prekladu možno datovať do rokov 78 – 77 pred Kristom.“<sup>3</sup> Podľa toho kniha musela byť neskôr (okolo r. 78 – 77 pred Kr.) prepracovaná a do-

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<sup>1</sup> BÁNDY, J.: *Úvod do Starej zmluvy*. Univerzita Komenského, Bratislava, 2004, s. 149.

<sup>2</sup> RENDTORFF, R.: *Hebrejská bible a dejiny*: Úvod do starozákonní literatury. Praha : Vyšehrad, 1996, s. 335.

<sup>3</sup> BÁNDY, J.: *Úvod do Starej zmluvy*. Univerzita Komenského, Bratislava, 2004, s. 149.

plnená v egyptskej diaspóre. Je možné, že práve s tým súvisí rozšírenie sviatku Purím v egyptskej diaspóre (cf. „Mordochajov deň“ v *2Mak* 15,36). Text knihy sa ďalej prepracovával v helenistických mestách v čase vlády Seleukovcov.<sup>4</sup>

Na prvý pohľad sa Kniha Ester javí ako profánny príbeh Židov, ktorí po exile zostali žiť v diaspóre. V hebrejskej verzii knihy – na rozdiel od ostatných kánonických kníh – sa Boh priamo vôbec nespomína.<sup>5</sup> Naproti tomu v apokryfe Dodatky ku Knihe Ester,<sup>6</sup> ktoré sú súčasťou dlhšej gréckej verzie knihy (a súčasne rímskokatolíckeho biblického kánona), sa Boh spomína často. Apokryfné dodatky akoby vyvažovali absenciu Božieho mena v hebrejskej kratšej verzii knihy. Otázke textových verzií Knihy Ester (mazorétskeho textu a gréckych verzií alfa-textu a LXX) však nebudeme venovať väčšiu pozornosť, lebo by to bolo nad rámec zámerov tejto štúdie.<sup>7</sup>

V tomto príspevku sa zaoberáme otázkou kanonicity, resp. inšpirácie Knihy Ester a výhrad k nej na pozadí absencie Božieho mena. Práve absenciou Božieho mena sa spochybňuje prijatie tejto knihy do zbierky normatívnych svätých textov. Iný dôvod, ktorým sa spochybňuje prijatie a ocenenie tejto knihy je fakt, že sa v nej zdôvodňuje slávenie sviatku Purím, ktorý nepatrí medzi sviatky prikázané v Tóre.<sup>8</sup> V súvislosti s riešením otázky kanonicity hebrejskej Knihy Ester nás zaujíma hodnotenie tejto knihy ako v židovstve, tak aj v kresťanstve, vrátane Lutherovho odmietavého postoja ku knihe. Príčinou odmietania Knihy Ester bola aj zmienka o masacre viac než 75 000 Peržanov, po ktorom pre tých, ktorí popravu vykonali, nadišiel „deň hodovania a radosti“ (*Est* 9, 17).

## 1. POSTAVENIE KNIHY ESTER V HEBREJSKOM A KREŠŤANSKOM KÁNONE

V hebrejskom kánone je Kniha Ester umiestnená v tretej časti hebrejského kánona – Spisy (*Ketúvím*), medzi sviatočnými Zvitkami (*Megillót*), na samom ich konci: po Žalospevoch a pred Knihou Daniel. Sviatočné Zvitky sú ohraňo-

<sup>4</sup> CHALUPA, P.: *Kráľovna Ester*. Svitavy : Trinitas, 1999, s. 75.

<sup>5</sup> Istú narážku na Boha by sme snád' mohli nájsť v *Est* 4, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Apokryfné dodatky ku Knihe Ester sú tieto: 1. Mordochajov sen a odhalenie sprisahania; 2. Kráľov list; 3. Ester sa má modliť; 4. Mordochajova modlitba; 5. Modlitba Ester; 6. Prošba za ľud; 7. Kráľov list v prospech Židov; 8. Mordochaj vykladá svoj sen. In GÁBRIŠ, K. *Apokryfy: Mimokanonické (deuterokanonické) spisy Starej zmluvy podľa Septuaginty*. Liptovský Mikuláš : Tranoscius, 1990, s. 24 – 28.

<sup>7</sup> Por. CLINES, D. J. A.: *The Esther Scroll: The Story of the Story*. Sheffield, JSOR Press, 1984. CHALUPA, P.: *Kniha Ester v řeckých verzích (Septuaginty a alfa-textu)*. Praha : Vyšehrad, 2016. (Preklad V. Černušková, úvod a komentář P. Chalupa).

<sup>8</sup> CRAIGE, P. C.: *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth, & Content*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986, s. 242.

né knihami, v ktorých vystupujú ženské hrdinky: Rúť, ktorá zachraňuje rodinu, a Ester, ktorá zachraňuje národ.

„V niektorých rukopisoch, ako aj tlačených vydaniach, sa Zvitky nachádzajú hneď po Tóre. Je to kvôli bohoslužobnému používaniu týchto kníh aj kvôli vážnosti, ktorú majú v židovstve.“<sup>9</sup>

Keďže Spisy (*Ketúvím*) obsahujú predovšetkým poetické a aj múdroslovné knihy, umiestnenie Knihy Ester „môže odrážať jej starobylé povedomie o jej blízkosti k múdroslovnej literatúre.“<sup>10</sup> Aj Daniel, ktorý vystupuje v rovnomennej kanonickej knihe hneď za Ester, patril k legendárnym múdrym mužom.<sup>11</sup> Ako dej Knihy Daniel aj dej Knihy Ester sa odohráva na babylonskom kráľovskom dvore. Kniha Ester podobne ako Kniha Daniel (a aj Kniha Rúť) poukazujú na Božie predivné riadenie za hranicami Izraela v cudzom prostredí.

Kým hebrejská verzia Knihy Ester je kratšia, grécky preklad knihy je asi o sto veršov dlhší a explicitne sa v ňom spomína Boh. V Septuaginte je Kniha Ester zaradená medzi historické knihy (*leges et historiae*): medzi Druhú knihu Ezdráša a apokryfnú knihu Judit. Vulgáta umiestňuje apokryfné dodatky na koniec Knihy Ester (10,4-15,24). Kniha Ester je pritom ako historická kniha umiestnená medzi ďalšie historické Knihy Judit a Knihy Jób. Medzi historické knihy je Kniha Ester zaradená aj v kresťanských prekladoch Biblie.

Nie všetky knihy, ktoré dnes pokladáme za kanonické, aj boli hneď automaticky prijímané rabínmi či cirkevnými otcami. Tých, ktorí mali ku Knihe Ester výhrady a spochybňovali jej inšpiráciu, však bolo iba pár v porovnaní s tými, ktorí ju, naopak, mali vo veľkej vážnosti a úcte. Ako poukázal Leiman, ak aj rabíni diskutovali o inšpirácii niektorých kníh,<sup>12</sup> ich rozprava „už *nesúvisela* s kanonizáciou a zavretím kánonu. *Kanonicita a inšpirácia* – ako to napokon dokladajú aj obe už uvedené kategórie – *nie sú synonymá*“.<sup>13</sup> Preto ak niektorý

<sup>9</sup> BÁNDY, J.: *Úvod do Starej zmluvy*. Univerzita Komenského: Bratislava, 2004, s. 137.

<sup>10</sup> DILLARD, R. B. – LONGMAN III. T.: *Úvod do Starého zákona*. Návrat domů: Praha, 2003, s. 182.

<sup>11</sup> V *Ez* 28,3 vo výrokoch proti týrskemu kráľovi sa hovorí, že mytologický týrsky kráľ si namýšľal, že je „múdrejší ako Daniel“. Daniel vystupuje aj v ugaritskom príbehu o Aqhat (zo 14. storočia pred Kristom) ako otec Aqhat a ten, ktorý múdro rozsúdil prípad vdovy a siroty.

<sup>12</sup> V Talmude sa uvádza, že niektoré knihy (Veľpieseň a Kazateľ) „znečisťujú ruky“.

<sup>13</sup> Leiman, S. Z. *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence*. Hamden, CN : Archon, 1976. Leiman je presvedčený o skorom datovaní kánona už v 2. storočí pred Kristom. In ČAPEK, F.: *Hebrejská Bible, její kánon a možnosti výkladu: Kánon jako interpretační možnost rozvedená na pozadí díla B. S. Childse a J. A. Sanderse*. Praha : Nakladatelství Mlýn, 2010, s. 178; s. 180 – 181.

rabín nepokladal nejakú knihu za inšpirovanú, neznamena to, že táto kniha nebola kánonická.

V Novej zmluve Kniha Ester nie je nikde citovaná.

## 1.1 HODNOTENIE KNIHY V ŽIDOVSTVE

Vo všeobecnosti možno povedať, že Kniha Ester je v židovstve prijímaná a obľúbená: „Stále má prvenstvo v židovských komunitách a číta sa v rodine každý rok na sviatok Purím, ako to bývalo zvykom po stáročia.“<sup>14</sup>

Rabínska tradícia zaraďuje Ester medzi sedem izraelských prorokýň (spolu so Sárrou, Deborou, Mirjam, Abígajil, Chuldou a Annou).

Niektorí rabíni dokonca interpretovali slovné spojenie „Ester sa obliekla ako kráľovná“ ako symbol oblečenia si Ducha Božieho, resp. božskej inšpirácie.<sup>15</sup>

Židovský učenec Maimonides (1135 – 1204) hodnotil Knihu Ester vysoko – hneď za Tórou.<sup>16</sup> Pred Maimonidesom ju rabín Šimon ben Lachíš (cca 300) a ďalší zasa stavali na tú istú úroveň ako Zákon.<sup>17</sup> Aj Jozefus Flavius, ktorý v *Contra Apionem* uviedol štyri kritériá kanonicity, počítal so zaradením Ester v hebrejskom kánone. To, že sa Kniha Ester tešila uznaniu v židovstve dosvedčuje aj fakt, že Talmud obsahuje početné odkazy na Knihu Ester. Kniha sa nachádza v zozname *Bava Batra* 14b – 15. Jej fragmenty sa našli aj v geníze v Káhire.

Podľa jednej židovskej tradície bola tretia časť hebrejského kánona vymedzená na synode v Jamnii okolo roku 100 po Kristovi. Aj keď sa vierohodnosť tejto tradície o synode v Jamnii dnes už spochybňuje, táto tradícia nevrhá pochybnosti na kanonicitu Knihy Ester (spomína sa v nej, že sa diskutovalo iba o inšpirácii Knihy Kazateľ a Vělpieseň).

Dôležitým dielom s cieľom povzbudiť a podporiť židovský národ v čase prenasledovania, bol midraš ku Knihe Ester pod názvom *Ester Rabba*. Ide o nedokončenú zbierku hagadických kázaní, v ktorých sa Kniha Ester vykladá „verš po verši“, no nie celá kniha, ale iba po *Est* 8,15.<sup>18</sup> Za najstarší dôkaz kanonicity

<sup>14</sup> BALDWIN, J. G.: *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1984, s. 13.

<sup>15</sup> CHALUPA, P.: *Kráľovna Ester*. Svitavy : Trinitas, 1999, s. 80.

<sup>16</sup> DILLARD, R. B. – LONGMAN III. T.: *Úvod do Starého zákona*. Návrat domů: Praha, 2003, s. 179.

<sup>17</sup> MOORE, G. F.: *Judaism I*. Cambridge, 1946, s. 245. In BALDWIN, J. G.: *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1984, s. 51.

<sup>18</sup> BIČ, M. a kol.: *Výklady ke Starému zákonu V* : Knihy deuterokanonické (nekanonické, apokryfní). Kostelní Vydří : Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1996, s. 74



knihy Ester možno pokladať práve zmienku v tomto midraši *Ester Rabba 2,7* o tom, že citovaný Aquilov grécky preklad pochádza z hebrejského originálu.<sup>19</sup>

Zaujímavosťou je, že v Kumráne sa zvitky Ester nenašli. Absenciu knihy v Kumráne možno zdôvodniť tým, že zvitok pomerne krátkej Knihy Ester sa jednoducho nezachoval, alebo tým, že ku knihe mohli mať v Kumráne náboženské a teologické výhrady. Členovia kumránskeho spoločenstva mohli mať problém alebo s tým, že sviatok Purím nebol je nariadený v Tóre, alebo s tým, že tento sviatok nebol zahrnutý v esénskom kalendári sviatkov. Kniha, ktorej zámerom bolo objasniť pôvod sviatku Purím, tak nemala pre členov kumránskeho spoločenstva význam. Je však možné, že v Kumráne knihu odmietli práve z toho dôvodu, že sa v nej nespomína Božie meno (tetragram).<sup>20</sup> V tejto súvislosti sa uvádza aj iné vysvetlenie absencie knihy v Kumráne, totiž, že nájdené zvitky nepatrili do knižnice kumránskeho spoločenstva, ale boli to zvitky, ktoré sa už nepoužívali. Keďže sa nemohli len tak zničiť, „pochovali“ ich a takto ich neskôr našli v jaskyniach v oblasti Kumránu. Pretože v Knihe Ester sa nenačádza Božie meno, poškodené zvitky knihy neboli „pochované“ s ostatnými zvitkami, ale boli zničené.<sup>21</sup>

Z predloženého zhusteného náčrtu je zrejmé, že Kniha Ester bola v židovstve vo všeobecnosti obľúbená a prijímaná ako inšpirovaná kniha.

## 1.2. HODNOTENIE KNIHY V KREŠŤANSTVE

Kým v židovstve bola Kniha Ester vo všeobecnosti vysoko hodnotená a kanonizovaná pomerne rýchlo, v kresťanstve bola, naopak, prijímaná „s rozpakmi“. <sup>22</sup> Zdržanlivý postoj kresťanov niektorí vysvetľujú tým, že podporuje židovský nacionalizmus a genocídu.<sup>23</sup>

Za kanonickú knihu bola prijatá až v 4. storočí po Kr., keď ju nachádzame v zozname kníh zo synôd v Hippo v r. 393 a v Kartágu v r. 397. Východná kresťanská tradícia – na rozdiel od západnej – prijala Knihu Ester ako normatívnu ešte neskôr – až v 8. stor.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> CHALUPA, P.: *Kráľovna Ester*. Svitavy : Trinitas, 1999, s. 80.

<sup>20</sup> HERIBAN, J.: *Úvody do Starého i Nového zákona s výberovou a tematicky zoradenou bibliografiou*. Trnava : Spolok svätého Vojtecha, 1997, s. 170.

<sup>21</sup> BALDWIN, J. G.: *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1984, s. 50.

<sup>22</sup> BÁNDY, J.: *Úvod do Starej zmluvy*. Univerzita Komenského: Bratislava, 2004, s. 148.

<sup>23</sup> BALDWIN, J. G.: *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1984, s. 51.

<sup>24</sup> Niektorí to zdôvodňujú tým, že prijatiu knihy v západnej cirkvi napomohli grécke verzie Septuaginty, ktoré majú charakter komentára. Tento fakt však netreba preceňovať, keďže

Klement Rímsky (30 – 100) síce spomína Knihu Ester, no v zozname kánonických kníh Melita Sardského (v r. 170) a Gregora z Nyzy z Kapadokie (329 – 390) sa nenachádza. Atanázius (295 – 373) ju síce nepojal do kánona, ale bral ju ako poučnú knihu spolu s apokryfmi Judit a Tóbit (deuterokanonickú).

Prvý kresťanský komentár ku Knihe Ester napísal Rabanus Maurus, mohučský biskup, až v r. 831.<sup>25</sup>

Rímskokatolícka kresťanská tradícia vykladá Ester ako predobraz Panny Márie tým, že obetuje seba, keď ide pred kráľa a riskuje život, „umožňuje Prozetel'nosti darovať spásu“.<sup>26</sup>

Luther bol veľmi zaujatý proti Knihe Ester – a aj proti 2. knihe Makabejskej, keď o nich povedal, že „by bol najradšej, keby vôbec neexistovali, lebo príliš judaizujú a obsahujú mnoho z pohanského neslušného správania (*Unart*).“<sup>27</sup> Aj keď Luther mal ku Knihe Ester isté výhrady, predsa vykladal aj ju, no nenapísal k nej samostatný komentár.

Knihá Ester kladie dôraz na ustanovenie sviatku Purím a v tejto súvislosti aj na židovský národ<sup>28</sup>. Zvláštnosťou tejto knihy je to, že sa v nej počíta so židovstvom ako etnikom. „Zaradenie Ester do kresťanského kánona slúži ako poistka proti všetkým pokusom spiritualizovať koncept Izraela.“<sup>29</sup>

## 2. ABSENCIA BOŽIEHO MENA

Ako už bolo uvedené, v hebrejskej Knihe Ester sa ani raz neuvádza Božie meno. Nespomína sa v nej ani uctievanie Boha, ani modlenie sa k Bohu, ani chrám. Istú narážku na Boha by sme možno našli v *Est* 4,14, v zmienke o tom, že Židom príde pomoc „z inej strany“, čo by sa dalo vykladať v zmysle: od Boha.<sup>30</sup> Alebo slovo מְקוֹם, t. j. miesto, použité v *Est* 4,14 niektorí chápu vo významme Božieho mena.<sup>31</sup>

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ju prijali aj niektorí cirkevní otcovia na východe. No naproti tomu Atanázius Knihu Ester nepokladal za kánonickú.

<sup>25</sup> In GORDIS, R.: „Esther – A New Solution“. In *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 100/3 (1981), s. 361. In CHALUPA, P.: *Kráľovna Ester*. Svitavy : Trinitas, 1999, s. 80.

<sup>26</sup> CHALUPA, P.: *Kráľovna Ester*. Svitavy : Trinitas, 1999, s. 80.

<sup>27</sup> BORNKAMM, H.: *Luther and the Old Testament*. Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1969, s. 189. Tento výrok je zapísaný v Lutherových Rečiach pri stole.

<sup>28</sup> V *Est* 9,20-10,3 sa pojem יהודי, t. j. Žid, vyskytuje až 46-krát.

<sup>29</sup> CHILDS, B. S.: *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. Trowbridge : Redwood Burn Ltd, 1979, s. 606.

<sup>30</sup> Tak Rendtorf aj Langkammer. In RENDTORFF, R.: *Hebrejská bible a dejiny*: Úvod do starozákonní literatury. Praha : Vyšehrad, 1996, s. 332. In LANGKAMMER, H.: *Stručný úvod do kníh Starého zákona*. Bratislava : Serafín, 2005, s. 60.

<sup>31</sup> Iní to však popierajú, napr. Gordon alebo Meinhold. Neskôr rabíni bežne používali pojem

Niektorí vykladači nachádzajú nepriamu zmienku o Bohu vo formulácii „strach pred Židmi“ (פְּחַד־הַיְהוּדִים) v *Est* 8,17 (por. aj 9,2). Má sa na mysli strach okolitých národov po tom, ako kráľ vydal výnos na prospech Židov. Keďže Boh Izraela býva často predstavený ako Boh, ktorý vzbudzuje hrôzu alebo strach, napríklad: „Svoju hrôzu pustím pred tebou a spôsobím zmätok u všetkých národov, medzi ktoré prídeš, a všetkých tvojich nepriateľov donútim k úteku pred tebou (*Ex* 23,27).“<sup>32</sup> Preto niektorí v zmienke o strachu v *Est* 8,17 vidia narážku na Boha.

Aj keď jestvujú viaceré dôvody pre tvrdenie,<sup>33</sup> že vynechanie Božieho mena bolo zámerom pisateľa Knihy Ester, niektorí<sup>34</sup> vykladači sa domnievajú, že v pôvodnej hebrejskej verzii sa Božie meno vyskytovalo, no časom došlo k jeho vypusteniu.

Absencia Božieho mena v Knihe Ester by sa dala zdôvodniť zákazom prednášať Božie meno nahlas. Alebo snahou Židov tajiť svoj židovský pôvod v cudzom nepriateľskom prostredí. Ako dôvod by prichádzala do úvahy aj snaha pisateľa pripodobniť knihu perzským písomnostiam, ako to zdôvodňuje Gordis: „Židovský autor sa podujal napísať knihu vo forme kroniky na perzskom dvore, napísanú nežidovským pisárom.“<sup>35</sup> Loader zasa spája utajenie Božieho mena s literárnou technikou pisateľa.<sup>36</sup> Najmenej pravdepodobné je zdôvodňovať absenciu Božieho mena výkladom z Talmudu, že Božie meno sa v knihe radšej neuvádza preto, aby sa neznesvätilo. Podľa tohto výkladu sa Židia majú počas sviatku Purím veseľiť a piť víno a opojení by nemuseli rozlíšiť, či hovoria „požehnaný Mordochaj“, alebo „prekliaty Hámán“.<sup>37</sup> Tento argument však nie je presvedčivý, lebo tento výklad z Talmudu by musel platiť už pred šesťsto rokmi, keďže je založený na mladšom literárnom podaní zo 4. storočia po Kristovi, ktoré by predpokladalo slávenie sviatku Purím ešte pred vytvorením Knihy Ester.

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מִקּוּם ako alternatívne označenie Boha (por. Abot 2, 1. 9, 13; Tosefta Peah 1, 4). Ani Ibn Ezra nevykladal *Est* 4, 14 ako zmienku o Bohu a formuláciu „z inej strany“ vykladal v zmysle: inak, iným spôsobom. In GORDIS, R. „Religion, Wisdom and History in the Book of Esther – A New Solution to an Ancient Crux“. In *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 100/3, 1981, s. 361. Podľa Meinholda je Božie meno v knihe vynechané pre násilie.

<sup>32</sup> Por. aj *Gen* 31,42; *Gen* 31,53; *Pr* 1,26.

<sup>33</sup> Prehľad možných dôvodov absencie Božieho mena v Knihe Ester uvádza Chalupa. In CHALUPA, P.: *Kráľovna Ester*. Svitavy : Trinitas, 1999, s. 87 – 93.

<sup>34</sup> Eissfeldt, Bentzen.

<sup>35</sup> GORDIS, R.: „Religion, Wisdom and History in the Book of Esther – A New Solution to an Ancient Crux“. In *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 100/3, 1981, s. 375.

<sup>36</sup> Loader, J. A. :“Esther as a Novel with Different Levels of Meaning,“ *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 90 (1978): 417 – 421.

<sup>37</sup> Por. *Megilla*, 7b. In GORDIS, R. „Religion, Wisdom and History in the Book of Esther – A New Solution to an Ancient Crux“. In *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 100/3, 1981, s. 363.

Vynechanie Božieho mena by mohlo súvisieť aj s Božím skrytým pôsobením v sapienciálnej literatúre a s hodnotením Knihy Ester ako „historizujúcej múdroslovnej poviedky“, ktorá obsahuje múdroslovné motívy.<sup>38</sup> Napríklad aj v Danielovi je Boh je predstavený ako suverénny Pán nad dejinami, ktorý v skrytosti uskutočňuje svoje plány aj uprostred náboženskej krízy. Jeho pôsobenie nie je hneď viditeľné, ale napokon sa presadí aj viditeľným spôsobom a stane sa zjavným všetkým. Poukazom na skryté Božie pôsobenie v Knihe Ester by mohlo byť napríklad použitie lósu (cf. *Est* 3,7) alebo zmienka o pôste Židov i samotnej kráľovnej Ester (cf. *Est* 4,3; 4,16; ). Aj keď sa v knihe priamo o Bohu nehovorí, jej pisateľom je zbožný Žid, presvedčený o Božej prítomnosti na cudzej pôde a o Božom (skrytom) pôsobení vo vyvolenom národe.

Skutočnosť, že v knihe sa ani raz neuvádza Božie meno, by sa dala zdôvodniť aj neposlušnosťou židovského národa, ktorý pre svoju neposlušnosť musel žiť v exile pod nadvládou cudzích mocností. Ani neposlušnosť vyvoleného národa však nie je prekážkou toho, aby Boh uskutočňoval svoje zaslúbenia. Vynechanie Božieho mena môže viesť k zosilnenému vnímaniu Božej prítomnosti a Božieho vedenia medzi príslušníkmi vyvoleného národa, ktorí prestali vnímať Božiu prítomnosť a odpovedať na Božie riadenie. Božia prozreteľnosť a starostlivosť o ľudí, ktorá je dôsledkom udalostí predstavených v Knihe Ester ako ich príčinou, je predmetom viery, a nie recepcie ľudí. Absencia Božieho mena sa tak stáva potenciaálnou príčinou Božej existencie.<sup>39</sup> Hoci Božia prítomnosť nie je priamo v deji knihy vyjadrená, je nespochybniteľná

## 2.1 BOŽIA PROZRETEĽNOSŤ V KNIHE ESTER

Môžeme s určitosťou tvrdiť, že nenáboženský charakter Knihy Ester, v ktorej sa nespomína Božie meno, je len zdanlivý. Celou knihou sa tiahne teologický motív Božej prozreteľnosti.

Keď Mordochaj sprostredkoval Ester správu o tom, že Hámán chce vyhubiť Židov, a požiadal ju o jej príhovor u kráľa, váhajúcej Ester poslal tento odkaz: „*Ak budeš v tejto chvíli mlčať, úľava a záchrana príde Židom z inej strany* (מִמּוֹקֵי אֲחֵרִים), *ale ty a tvoja rodina zabýniete. A kto vie, či si nebola vyvolená na kráľovskom dvore práve pre takúto chvíľu, ako je táto* (עַתָּה בְּיָמֵי הַנְּשֻׂאָה הַזֹּאת)?“ (*Est* 4,14). Keby aj Ester zaváhala, Mordochaj je presvedčený, že Boh si nájde spôsob, ako svoj ľud zachráni pred

<sup>38</sup> In TALMON, S.: ‚Wisdom‘ in the Book of Esther. In *Vetus Testamentum*. Vol. 13, Fasc. 4 (Oct., 1963), s. 427.

<sup>39</sup> BALDWIN, J. G.: *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1984, s. 13.

pogromom. Zároveň predpokladá, že za vyvolením židovskej siroty a jej príchodom na kráľovský dvor, stojí sám Boh. Preto aj keď sa Božie meno v tomto verši a ani v celej knihe explicitne neuvádza,<sup>40</sup> nepriamo sa spomína Mordochajova neochvejná dôvera v Boha a adresátom knihy je zjavne čitateľ zo židovstva: „Bez jasného pochopenia podrobností, ako Mordochaj prišiel k tomuto presvedčeniu, (Mordochaj) dáva najavo, že verí v Boha, v Božie riadenie životov jednotlivcov a v Božie riadenie svetových politických udalostí, bez ohľadu nato, či tí, ktorí sa zdajú byť mocnými, ho uznávajú, alebo nie.“<sup>41</sup>

Teologický motív Božej prozreteľnosti je prítomný aj v ďalšom rozprávaní. Židovská progroma je lósom ohlásená „na trinásteho dňa v dvanástom mesiaci, totiž v mesiaci adár“ (3,13), a teda bezprostredne pred slávením židovského sviatku paschy, ktorý pripomínal Božie vyslobodenie z Egypta.<sup>42</sup> Ak sa Ester rozprávala s Mordochajom hneď po vydaní kráľovského výnosu, ktorým bol oznámený presný deň pogromy, potom by sa Ester postila a prišla by za kráľom práve počas týždňa, keď sa slávila pascha. Pogroma bola určená na 13. deň 1. mesiaca, ale mala byť uskutočnená 13. deň 12. mesiaca. Aj za tým možno vidieť predivné Božie riadenie, že Židia získali dostatok času na prípravu plánu záchrany (por. *Est* 3,7; 8,9-17; 9,1,2). Aj v biblických Prísloviach čítame: „Lós sa hádže do podolka, ale každé rozhodnutie závisí od Hospodina“ (16,33).

Motív Božej prozreteľnosti je prítomný aj v literárnom podaní o tom, ako predivným Božím riadením je na šibenici obesený Hámán, a nie Mordochaj. Podľa komentára v midraši Zereš, Hámánova žena, vedela, že Hámán nikdy nezvíťazí nad Mordochajom, „iba ak by bola vymyslela taký trest, ktorý by Žid nemal zažiť“.<sup>43</sup> Podľa *Deuteronomia* 21,22-23 je ten, ktorý bol popravený obesením na drevo prekliaty Bohom. Božím predivným riadením však na šibenici odvisol nie Mordochaj, ale Hámán. Ďalším evidentným prejavom Božej prozreteľnosti a skrytého Božieho riadenia je, že deň pohromy pre Židov (por. *Est* 3,13) sa Božím predivným riadením, stal, naopak, dňom ich záchrany (por. *Est* 8,9), či dokonca „dňom hodovania a radosti“ (*Est* 9,17)

Teologický motív Božej prozreteľnosti vystupuje do popredia práve na pozadí spomínanej série prevratných udalostí a zmien, ktoré nie sú dielom náhody, ale predivným Božím riadením. Božia prozreteľnosť je pritom skrytá,

<sup>40</sup> Zaujímavosťou je, že aj Ježiš rozprával o Božom kráľovstve v podobenstvách, no bez toho, aby v nich priamo spomínal Boha.

<sup>41</sup> BALDWIN, J. G.: *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester, England : InterVarsity Press, 1984, s. 80.

<sup>42</sup> „...štrnásteho dňa prvého mesiaca podvečer je pascha Hospodinova (*Lev* 23,5; por. *Ex* 12,1-6)“.

<sup>43</sup> Por. *Megilla*, 88. In BENJAMIN, K. M.: *The book of Esther and God Hidden and Revealed*. In *Luthean Forum*. Fall 2014, s. 11.

tajomná a nevýstižná. Boh uskutočňuje svoje veľkolepé plány aj na pozadí bezvýznamných každodenných udalostí, ktorým človek neprikladá vážnosť. Boh si napríklad použil rozmar kráľa Ahasvéra, ktorý od seba zapudí manželku Vašti zato, že sa odmietla predstaviť hosťom (por. *Est* 1,11-12). Alebo vďaka bezsennej noci Mordochaj odhalil sprisahanie proti kráľovi (por. *Est* 6,1-3), začo ho kráľ povýšil a pod.

Popri téme Božej prozreteľnosti, ktorá prechádza naprieč celou knihou, nemožno opomenúť ani literárnu techniku, s ktorou sa v knihe stretáme, totiž autorovu záľubu v irónii a satire. Autorovu záľubu v irónii dosvedčuje, že „jednotlivé akcie alebo udalosti často vyústia v opak očakávaného výsledku“. <sup>44</sup> Hámán, ktorý chcel zničiť Mordochaja a Židov, nakoniec zničí seba a svoju rodinu. Na šibenici, ktorú dal Hámán postaviť pre Mordochaja, nakoniec odvisne Hámán atď. Autorovu záľubu v satire namierenej k Peržanom dosvedčuje napríklad to, že kráľ vydá nariadenie, podľa ktorého muži majú rozhodovať vo svojich domoch, no kráľ nedokáže rozkázať vlastnej žene (1, 12. 21 – 22) atď. <sup>45</sup>

## ZÁVER

Vo všeobecnosti bola Kniha Ester v židovstve obľúbenou a prijímanou. Nie je najmenší dôvod spochybňovať jej miesto v kánone nenáboženským charakterom knihy, pretože ten je iba zdanlivý. Celou knihou sa tiahne motív Božej prozreteľnosti a predivného Božieho riadenia, ktoré je síce neviditeľné, skryté, no v dôsledku nečakaných zvrátov udalostí sa viditeľným spôsobom napokon prejaví ako nespochybniteľné. Ako je Božie meno skryté pred ľuďmi, aj Boh zostáva skrytý, a predsa je všadeprítomný a predivne zasahuje do každodenného života jednotlivcov i do celosvetového politického diania.

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<sup>44</sup> Tento literárny štýl sa nazýva *peripetia*. In BERG, S. B.: *The Book of Esther, Motifs, Themes and Structure*. Montana : Schollars Press, 1979, s. 104 – 106.

<sup>45</sup> In CLINES, D. J. A. *Esther Scroll : The Story of the Story*. England : JSOT Press, 1984, s. 3 – 32.

## The Morality of Northern mythology

Martina Juričková

This paper analyses the depiction of such traits that are understood to be the seven cardinal vices by the Catholic church—and partially also their opposing virtues—in the Northern mythology. Since these traits are universal to humanity, it can be assumed that they were common among the ancient Scandinavian people as well and were hence mirrored also in their mythology. The aim of this paper is to compare the understanding of these traits in the context of Northern mythology to their Christian understanding and highlight similarities and differences between these two cultures/religions, starting with the basic moral principles of the ancient Northmen, *frith* and *troth*. Further, it analyses the Norse gods' virtues and vices and the moral relevance of the traits pertaining to the seven cardinal vices, showing that certain elements of the Northern morality are shared with the Christian one.

**Key words:** Northern mythology, morality, vices, virtues, seven cardinal vices.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In my dissertation thesis, I analyse the depiction of capital vices in the works of J. R. R. Tolkien. While Christian theology is the major influence on the philosophy underlying his legendarium, in regard to its imagery and overall heroic spirit, the primary source of his inspiration is Northern mythology<sup>1</sup>. It is thus vital to have a look at the moral precepts (whether any at all) it presents in order to assess if and to what extent they are reflected in Tolkien's depiction of virtues and vices.

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<sup>1</sup> I prefer to use the term *Northern mythology* to the more commonly used term *Norse mythology*. Tolkien was acquainted with and inspired by not only the mythology of Norway but the whole of Scandinavia as well as that of ancient Germanic and Anglo-Saxon tribes, and while their mythologies may have common roots and feature the same/similar deities, covering them all under the attributive name of only one of the countries is, geographically speaking, obviously not accurate if not outright discriminative. The correct umbrella attributive for the myths of these North European countries is rather *Teutonic* since Teutons were the common predecessors of the abovementioned peoples (see Sausaye, 1902, p. 2 – 3).

It needs not to be argued here that myths are not only made-up stories attempting to explain natural phenomena as the manifestation of the power of divine beings, but as Hilda Davidson, a renowned scholar in the field of Northern European history and mythology studies, notes, they are also “the comment[s] of the men of one particular age or civilization on the mysteries of human existence and the human mind, *their model for social behaviour*, and their attempt to define [...] their perception of the inner realities,” (1990, p. 9, my emphasis). The emphasized phrase implies that the didactic function of myths was to teach people the norms of proper social behaviour—what was right and not right to do when interacting with one’s community or outsiders—ergo morality. This was done not through a mere listing of the moral precepts or laws, but through narration, via the example of noble heroes, because, as has already been explained in chapter 1 it is the best way to learn anything.

People unacquainted with Northern mythology, save only with the Viking and Asgardian stories and even then only distilled through popular media<sup>2</sup>, may think of the Northmen as war-eager, bloodthirsty savages who do not restrain from raping women or ritual and torturous sacrificing of humans, including babies, not only during their conquering voyages<sup>3</sup>, whose moral code seems, from the current point of view, twisted. However, this is not true. Many historians and other concerned scholars go to pains to unearth the ancient moral code of the Northmen. Particularly remarkable is the publication *The Ethical World Conception of the Norse People* by a religion studies scholar, Andrew Fors (1904), which appears to be the first, and for a long time the only, attempt at a complex analysis of the Northmen’s moral values. In this work, he builds upon the research of a fellow religion scholar, Chantepie de la Saussaye, and his *The Religion of the Teutons* (1902), and while some of his ideas do not entirely agree with the opinions of later historians, such as Davidson or John Lindow, it is an insightful study.

Fors here stated that Northern mythology is “an expression of the consciousness of a moral order of the world,” (1904, p. 13) for a number of reasons (in no particular order):

1. Their gods were not immortal omnipotent embodiments of moral superiority, but rather humans with extraordinary physical and magical powers,

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<sup>2</sup> Such as the *Marvel* comics or History channel’s *Vikings* series (2013 – 2019)

<sup>3</sup> See Saussaye, 1902, p. 175, 373 on some of the Viking customs and children sacrifices, and Davidson, 1990, p. 52, 150 – 151 on voluntary torturous deaths that should have ensured men the entrance to Valhalla.



- subject to the same needs and passions<sup>4</sup>, oftentimes developed by mixing and mythologization of real historical figures.<sup>5</sup> (p. 28)
2. Evil was considered as essential an element as good in the process of world-creation.
  3. The spiritual was closely tied to the physical, hence the existence of physical evil implied the existence of moral evil<sup>6</sup>. (p. 22)
  4. Because both evil and good permeated the whole world, no man nor god was perfect and life was a never-ending internal struggle between them. (p. 23)
  5. Valhalla was presented as the afterlife place of joy and feasting which inspired men to lead an honourable life to be able to enter it. (p. 24)
  6. Despite believing in fate, the people did not assume there was only one predestined way for each person, but that there were a number of possible fates that depended on one's choices, hence man was wholly responsible for his deeds. (p. 30)<sup>7</sup>
  7. There is a possible retrograde ethical movement. (p. 26)

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<sup>4</sup> See Saussay, 1902, p. 285, 404.

<sup>5</sup> See Lindow, 2002, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the existence of physical good implied the existence of spiritual good. Hence, the greater a physical power their deities possessed, the greater wisdom and moral power they usually displayed (Fors, 1904, p. 18).

<sup>7</sup> Such view resolves the problem of the existence of free will which Christianity seems unable to resolve. The older and reformist branches of Christianity, such as Calvinism, believed in predestination in the sense that whether one would end in Heaven or Hell had been decided in God's mind at the beginning of time and there is nothing one can do to change it but pray and hope that they are one of the chosen (see MacQuarrie, 1986, p. 237 – 238). Even the other branches struggle to consolidate the idea that man has a free will to choose either good or evil with the idea that the all-knowing God knew already at the world creation all the choices and outcomes of each person's actions, yet never interfered as if this was the way he always wanted it to happen. In that view, free will would be practically non-existent and humans only puppets in God's hands (compare to Williams, 2006, p. 18 – 21). However, the view presented in the Northern mythology allows for the existence of several scenarios in God's mind and which one of them will come true depends on the free-will-based decisions of the individuals. This view is also applied by Tolkien in his legendarium, particularly in the stories of Túrin and Frodo. In both cases, there is a strong feeling of fate ruling the lives of the protagonists—Túrin's being determined by the curse put on his family by Morgoth and Frodo's by some power beyond the world, a Providence, that moves the Ring along different possessors and chose him as the Ringbearer. However, the success or failure of their life quests depends on the choices they make along the way. In Túrin's case, a series of unfortunate choices and his stubborn and prideful nature lead him into a catastrophe (see Cutler, 2018). On the other hand, Frodo's determination to endure even though he had several opportunities to give the burden up and his mercy granted him success and personal salvation (see Tolkien, 2006a, 232 – 235).

In agreement with Davidson (1990, p. 13), Saussaye and Fors had shown long before her that the ancient Northmen were not a collection of formidable uncivilized brutes interested only in material values, but men of culture with a developed ethical system presented to them implicitly through their mythology in the form of epigrammatic folk-morals, sayings, and counsels (Fors, 1904, p. 34). However, unlike the two scholars, who based their claims mainly on the observation of their religious practices, Davidson maintained that the Northmen's moral development was well evidenced by their appreciation of good and beauty as manifested through their love of craftsmanship (not only for its utility but also for its artistry), storytelling (and its musical/bardic performance), and jest, especially when these cunningly demonstrated their wit (Davidson, 1990, p.13). After all, Saussaye (1902, p. 400-401) asserted, the history of morals had always been closely related not only to legal and political institutions, but also folklore and its determination of customs in everyday life.

### 1.1. RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY

The seven arguments provided above to prove the morality of Northern mythology show a considerable affinity to Christian theology. Knowing that the myths were originally transmitted orally and only written down at about the same time Christianity started spreading over Scandinavia, mostly by clerics as they had better education, there is a reasonable assumption that their morals were substantially influenced by the scribes' beliefs. While the Christian influence on some heroic poems, such as *Beowulf*, has been confirmed<sup>8</sup> and Christian theology recognized as one of the three factors shaping Northern mythology since 1812<sup>9</sup>, Saussaye said that many of the ideas preached by Christianity, particularly its moral ideals, were not foreign to the religion of the Teutons, hence the continuous unbroken narrative history of the Northmen and the impossibility of drawing a sharp dividing line between pagan and Christian values (1902, p. 12, 353, 401, 414), in spite of how reluctantly they converted to the new faith and at times even furiously fought against it.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Tolkien's Commentary on the poem in Tolkien, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> The other two being the original Teutonic religion and Greek and Roman mythology. Later even parallels with Egyptian and Oriental mythology were identified in the Northern mythology, which proves the common origin of most of the Indo-European mythologies. For more on the reciprocal influence of religions, see Saussaye, 1902, p. 12 - 13 and 40.

<sup>10</sup> The first Christian missionaries came to the lands inhabited by German and Anglo-Saxon Teutonic tribes in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and fully converted them by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, so there remained only little of their original mythology, while at this time Christianity was only being introduced in Scandinavia and Iceland. Iceland was the first to submit

According to some clerics, the Northmen displayed an aptitude for mystical thought and intellectual achievement (Davidson, 1990, p. 10) and showed a considerable interest in monastic learning, recasting many Judeo-Christian and Roman and Greek stories into their own mythology (Saussaye, 1902, p. 39). So it seems that more than the implementation of Christian theology as such, the people fought against its forceful implementation by some of their rulers and the destruction of their pagan places of worship and prohibiting of their ritual practices, because their faith, being believed to originate around probably since 2000 B.C.<sup>11</sup>, was still very strong and lively.

## 1.2. BASIC MORAL PRINCIPLES

Notwithstanding how important the traditional ritual practices were for them, the morality preached by their mythology was only little related to religious motives<sup>12</sup> but regarded rather the relations of everyday earthly life, such as the interaction between lords and their subordinates, friends, members of the family, and the tribe.

So what exactly are the moral precepts their mythology presents? Looking for some useful sources on this topic at the very beginning of my research, I came up with results which referred mostly to the *nine noble virtues and charges*, which in the Odinic Rite<sup>13</sup> play a similar role to the Decalogue in Judaism and Christianity, except they are not a set of imperatives to be blindly followed but represent guidelines to help men navigate through their lives and attain *frith* and *troth*, which means “internal peace” and “steadfast loyalty”<sup>14</sup>.

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to the new religion, having done so in 1000. In Norway and Sweden the situation was more complicated due to a succession of rulers of whom one inclined to Christianity and persecuted those who professed the traditional faith only to be replaced by another one who preferred the traditional faith and persecuted the Christians. This repeat cycle went on for about 300 years, until Norway became fully Christianized under the rule of Olaf Trygvason and Olaf the Holy in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and Sweden in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when the temple of Odin and Freyr in Uppsala was turned into a bishop’s residence. For more on this see Saussaye, 1902, Chapter II, and Davidson, 1990, p. 9 – 14.

<sup>11</sup> Saussaye (1902, p. 10) mentioned that some of the runes related to the Eddic and Æsir archetypes date as far back as this time.

<sup>12</sup> See Saussaye, 1902, p. 204 – 205, 220, 410.

<sup>13</sup> Odinic Rite is a nowadays religious sect (or as its members prefer to call it: a branch of natural religion) popular mainly in Scandinavia that revives the belief in the local mythological deities, which has never been utterly forgotten there. See <https://odinic-rite.org/main/about/what-is-odinism/>

<sup>14</sup> *Heathen Ethics and Values*, 2003.

The most valued virtues according to this are: courage, truth, honour, fidelity, discipline, hospitality, self-reliance, industriousness, and perseverance. Their significance is further modified by the charges:

- To maintain candour and fidelity in love and devotion to the tried friend: though he strike me I will do him no scathe.
- Never to make wrongsome oath: for great and grim is the reward for the breaking of plighted troth.
- To deal not hardly with the humble and the lowly.
- To remember the respect that is due to great age.
- To suffer no evil to go unremedied and to fight against the enemies of Faith, Folk and Family: my foes I will fight in the field, nor will I stay to be burnt in my house.
- To succour the friendless but to put no faith in the pledged word of a stranger people.
- If I hear the fool's word of a drunken man I will strive not: for many a grief and the very death groweth from out such things.
- To give kind heed to dead men: straw dead, sea dead or sword dead.
- To abide by the enactments of lawful authority and to bear with courage the decrees of the Norns. (<https://odinic-rite.org/main/about/the-nine-noble-virtues-and-charges-of-the-odinic-rite/>)

These have not been given to men by any supernatural authority, but developed from a collective experience, the goodness or badness of one's deeds is judged case to case with respect to the individual circumstances and its effect on the common good of the society.<sup>15</sup> In fact, they were not chosen as the primary principle of modern heathenism by its founders randomly, but were adopted from the ancient epos *Hávamál*<sup>16</sup>, to which both Saussaye and Fors refer as the primary source of moral maxims (Saussaye, 1902, p. 201 – 202, Fors, 1904, p. 33). This proves the continuous, millennia-long tradition of Northern morality.

The moral ideal in ancient Scandinavia was closely tied to an individual's position in society, determined by one's role and status in it. Different expectations were put on warriors<sup>17</sup> than on craftsmen or farmers. As MacIntyre

<sup>15</sup> *Heathen Ethics and Values*, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> <https://odinic-rite.org/main/about/the-nine-noble-virtues-and-charges-of-the-odinic-rite/>

<sup>17</sup> Bigger were put on the warriors, because while the farmers or craftsmen were not expected to excel in fight, the warriors were supposed to be able to take care of and ensure the livelihood of the household in times of peace. Fors (1904, p. 42 – 45) suggested that it was because of the harsh climatic conditions, whereby growing produce was not easy, that

(2007, p. 121) summarizes it in his anthology of virtue, the key structures of their society were that of kinship and family, and with regard to these the deeds of men were judged. This is in line with Fors's research, who identifies 10 main areas of life the *Hávamál* gives advice on in respect to these two aspects. Another thing they both agree on is that virtues and vices are not clearly defined objective values, but rather self-repaying actions: virtue is such behaviour as helps man sustain his role and reward him, vice interferes with his role and brings punishment<sup>18</sup>.

The general conduct of life was to lead an honourable life. Since the ancient Northmen did not believe in any kind of afterlife – save Valhalla, which was accessible only to chosen brave warriors deceased in battle, which the majority of people were not<sup>19</sup> – their focus was on the earthly life they had and hence even the moral ideals did not span beyond it. With the belief in predestined fate and nothing to look forward to in order to escape it, men did not despair, but tried to live the best of their lives with a bold heart, hold true to their duties and thus build up a good name, as that was the only thing to remain after their death<sup>20</sup>. Combining the findings of all the scholars mentioned so far, it turns out that warriors, besides being physically strong, steadfast, courageous, and fearless of death<sup>21</sup>, were to be loyal to their lords no matter what, wise, cunning, intelligent, thoughtful, quiet, have a wry sense of humour and proper sense of shame, all in moderate and prudent way. They usually led a solitary life, so they had to be self-reliant as well. Truthfulness, loyalty, and fidelity were the most cherished values in community life, too. Friendships were often formally vowed with the pledge of the almost sacred duty of revenge in case anything happened to the friend or their family. Oaths of any kind were sacred and breaking them or the sworn allegiance were considered the

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the Northmen valued hard field work as much as sword skill, if not more, and thought it their sacred duty to till the earth.

<sup>18</sup> See Fors, 1904, p. 33 and MacIntyre, 2007, p. 121. MacIntyre well captures the unbreakable interconnection between morality and social role: „For the given rules which assign men their place in the social order and with it their identity also prescribe what they owe and what is owed to them and how they are to be treated and regarded if they fail and how they are to treat and regard others if those others fail. [...] To judge a man therefore is to judge his actions.“ (ibid., p. 123, 121).

<sup>19</sup> See Davidson, 1990, p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> See Saussaye, 1902, p. 407, 411, and Fors, 1904, p. 31, 32.

<sup>21</sup> Often men felt ashamed if they did not die a heroic death in battle or at least did not suffer a nasty wound. It was believed that only such an excruciating death could ensure men the entrance to Valhalla and this eagerness for one led as far as to people, both men and women, undergoing voluntary torture at ritual sacrifices or jumping into funeral pyres along with their deceased loved ones. See Fors, 1904, p. 24, Dickenson, 1990, p. 52, 54, 150, 216.

biggest sins. This also reflected in their attitude towards women and marital relations—women were equal to men (sometimes even in battle skills, as the mythological Valkyries prove) and respected not only because of their ability to bring new life, but also as oracles. Actually, they recognized the sanctity of human life and overall freedom and so did not practice slavery much. However, it was also praised when a person, particularly a leader, knew when to avenge and punish and when to amend conflicts in a peaceful, diplomatic way. And not the least, man had to be able to make the earth fertile, which was also considered one of their excellences.

The Northmen believed that both good and evil were inherent to each person<sup>22</sup>, and thus it was their duty to fight against the evil and the weaknesses they had. Apart from duty- or oath-breaking and disloyalty, some of the gravest sins were fear and cowardice, disrespecting somebody's dignity, self-pity, or immoderation in bodily passions. Liars and traitors were punished along with thieves, perjurers, murderers, adulterers, and other criminals, just as anyone who breached the sacred *frith* and *troth*.

### 1.3. NORTHERN GODS

The cited historians present varied opinions on the religious role of the mythological deities. It appears that in different regions and different times the amount of veneration given to them differed. For some of the ancient people, they were no more than folktale characters; for others, they represented real but mythologized figures; by others, they were dreaded as indomitable powers; and yet by others, they were worshipped as the ultimate helpers, developing complex cults around them. But what nearly all historians agree on is, as has been already mentioned, that they never embodied moral perfection<sup>23</sup>. On the contrary, they were far from it because they were subject to the same needs as humans and acted not out of altruism but on account of their personal interests (Saussaye, 1902, p. 285). Often lustful, greedy, hot-tempered, jealous of the possessions of humans or giants, but also of each other, and quarrelling among themselves. Nonetheless, they formed a small, kinship-based community with a firm sense of value they would rather die for than give up, and if need be, they were still able to put all their strife aside and unite against

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<sup>22</sup> “[N]o man is so good as to have no faults, and no man so bad as to be good for nothing,” (Saussaye, 1902, p. 411)

<sup>23</sup> Only MacIntyre (2007, p. 124) suggests that instead of morality the gods sometimes embodied passions inspiring/tempting men to certain actions. Other times passions were just impersonal forces.

a common enemy, whereby they resembled the Northmen and presented an ideal of how the tribe should behave<sup>24</sup>. Another trait they had in common with ordinary men was that in some of them certain virtues and vices were more prominent than others, so they became associated with these as their progenitors and guardians. Particularly the Vanir – a younger generation of gods that joined Asgard after a war with the older gods Æsir – were considered morally inferior, and amoral practices were associated with their worship (Davidson, 1990, p. 125).

Here follows a commentary list of some major Northern mythological figures and their moral status<sup>25</sup>:

- Odin** As the chief of all the deities, he is the most powerful. He gives courage in battle and inspires to self-sacrifice. He is the wisest and most cunning, and in spite of being a consolidator in cases of human hate, he is not associated with justice nor mercy. On the contrary, he is known for his jealousy and lust, like the Vanir, and like Thor or Freya, he is also quick to anger and fickle. He is also known for occasional treachery. Legend has it that he is the progenitor of evil as well because it was him throwing his spear on Earth that brought strife among men. One of his names is *Bölverk*, which means “evil-deed”.
- Thor** God of thunder, he has the greatest physical strength, and he is invoked to provide men with strength. He presents also an ideal of the unbreakable familial and friendly bonds and loyalty. However, his downside is gluttony. While often depicted as Odin’s son, he sometimes stands in opposition to him in regard to what gifts he bestows on men. When Odin gives long life, best weapons, and riches, Thor gives arduous work, denies the possession of land, and imposes greed (Fors, 1904, p. 238).
- Loki** The god of fire is an ambiguous character not only because his origin is unclear—he is sometimes presented as brother of Odin, other times as brother of Thor, and often as offspring of a god’s union with a giant or monster—sometimes he helps the gods and other times thwarts their work. He is a trickster figure, master-thief, deceiver, and liar; full of mischief, malevolence, malice, and spite; often bragging, quarrelling, and mocking. He knows a lot of other gods’ dark secrets

<sup>24</sup> See Davidson, 1990, p. 46, 218; Saussaye, 1902, p. 404.

<sup>25</sup> Compiled mainly based on Lindow’s (2002) and Davidson’s (1990) work with occasional complements by Saussaye (1902) and Fors (1904).

(their sins) and blames them for that in the epos Lokasenna. Like Odin, he is gender ambiguous because he can turn into female creatures and thus begot three of the most feared monsters in Asgard (Hel, the World Serpent, and the wolf Fenrir) and Odin's eight-legged horse. He was also indirectly responsible for the killing of Balder, revealing thus that the gods are not immortal. Davidson (1990, p. 177) suggests that originally he might have been a "good god", just like the fire he governs can be both good servant or bad master if mis-handled, and what he has become is the result of gradual blackening, which, in my opinion, might have been caused by Christianity.

- Balder** He is a sun god associated with wisdom, goodness, righteousness, mercy, piety, and peace. He is probably the most virtuous god.
- Frigg** As Odin's wife, she embodies the ideal of marriage and chastity. However, she's been accused of not being faithful to her husband, cheating on him with his brothers, by Loki.
- Hel** She is a half-monster, the guardian of the world of the dead. As such, she is associated with evil and fear but at the same time, known for being just and negotiable.
- Hoenir** He is the most timid of the gods, called also the Silent God. Silence was considered a virtue because it represented thoughtfulness and mantic wisdom.
- Eir** She is the goddess of healing and associated with peace and clemency.
- Norns** The Norns are goddesses that represent Fate, Being, and Necessity. They know destiny and could shape it.
- Bragi  
and Byggvir** They are both accused of cowardice by Loki.
- Freyr  
and Freya** The main representatives of the Vanir, the sibling couple is invoked as the providers of fertility in matters of both food and sexuality. Especially Freya is worshiped as the goddess of love. Freyr is the more timid of the two, governing agriculture and overall living prosperity. He also seems to be a pacifist since Loki accuses him of abandoning his sword. Freya is more hot-tempered and often raging.
- Forseti  
and Tiwaz** Forseti is the law-giver, hence he represents justice. Tiwaz is also associated with justice and known as a giver of heroic glory.



<b>Mimir, Kvasir, Frodr, and Snotra</b>	All of them are associated with wisdom. Mimir and Kvasir are presented as the wisest gods who can foretell the future, and this skill costs them both their lives. Frodr was a real historic figure, a chieftain or a ruler, who was known for his great wisdom and ability to ensure his people peace and plenty. However, he succumbed to greed.
<b>Ratatosk</b>	It is a squirrel that runs as a messenger up and down the sacred tree Yggdrasil bearing the insults between the eagle at its top and the Nidhöggr at its roots, thus representing the vice of verbal hostility. A person spreading lies, feuds, and stirring affairs, or helping thereof, was despised in Northern society.
<b>giants</b>	They are the arch-enemies of the gods, depicted as greedy, lustful for goddesses, and jealous of the gods' possessions. But the same can be said about the gods' attitude towards the giants. Interestingly enough, they are not always described as dumb and ugly, but many of them are wise and pretty (particularly the giantesses).
<b>dwarfs</b>	They are skilful crafters, but greedy and often mischievous. However, sometimes they help the gods or men and make magical weapons for them and dispose gifts.
<b>elves</b>	The elves are very similar to dwarfs. In fact, in some myths the dwarfs represent just a special kind of elves, the dark elves. The lighter elves are usually more friendly towards men. In some versions, the elves are depicted as dumber than men and have to be taught by men.

#### 1.4. CHRISTIAN CARDINAL SINS IN NORTHERN MYTHOLOGY

As shown above<sup>26</sup>, because of the different cultural context, many of the acts considered sinful by Christians were not considered vices according to the Northmen. Often quite the contrary was true<sup>27</sup>. What follows here is thus not a Christian criticism of the Northmen's moral ideals, but an attempt for an objective discussion of the depiction and the moral value of such behaviour as is deemed the most vicious by Christianity in Northern Mythology.

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<sup>26</sup> And as I have had pointed out by members of Tolkien-related semi-academic Facebook groups (particularly *The Tolkien Society*, *The Mythopoetic Society*, and *Christ and Tolkien*) whom I am indebted to for useful suggestions on further reading on this topic.

<sup>27</sup> Curiously enough, there seems to be behaviour considered sinful by the Northmen and virtuous by Christians. But that is a matter for another article.

The Northern gods are often described as quite hot-tempered and easy to anger, but their anger seems to be ascribed no moral value at all. For them it is just an emotion and usually a justified one since it comes as a natural reaction to some wrong done to them, like when Freya's necklace and Thor's hammer were stolen, or when Odin lost his son Balder, or their heroic deeds were interfered with by someone, like when Thor attempted to catch the World Serpent but a giant cut the fishing line<sup>28</sup>. Maybe only in the case of Loki is his anger not always just but is an effect of his malicious nature.

In general, the wrongdoing and the consequent anger prompts the gods to take quick action, which shows their hot-headedness. They either try to regain their lost possessions – sometimes by tricking the enemy (Thor), sometimes by expending self (Freya) – or seeking revenge (Thor throwing the giant off-board, Odin setting a killer after his son's murderer). But because by this they only want to re-establish justice, their acts, while considered evil by Christian standards, were not seen as vices in the myths.

In fact, as I have already hinted several times, it was a sacred duty to avenge any wrongdoing done to oneself. Thus vengeance was considered a virtue among the Northmen; probably the second greatest after loyalty and closely tied to it. The eposes advise men that vengeance is more noble than killing random enemies (Lindow, 2002, p. 84) and it is better to avenge one's friend than just grieve him (Davidson, 1990, p. 216). The society abode by the "eye for an eye" law, as MacIntyre (2007, p. 124) puts it: "If someone kills you, my friend or brother, I owe you their death and when I have paid my debt to you their friend or brother owes them my death." Of course, as Fors (1904, p. 41) remarked, the inflicted hurt could have been settled by fines or the surrender of the villain's possession, but the hurt one and their family had the right to refuse this and seek vengeance.

Vengeance was so valued in the Northern society that it had not one but outright three separate guardian gods. Two of them are Vídar and Váli, who play an important role in the Ragnarök, when they avenge the death of the old deities and found a new generation of gods in the new world. Váli is Odin's son, particularly begot for the purpose of avenging Balder's death. The third is goddess Vár, who is specifically the guardian of oaths and helps avenge their breaking (Lindow, 2002, p. 113 – 114, 310 – 315). Broken promises were sure to be avenged not only among ordinary people but also among the deities.

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<sup>28</sup> See Davidson, 1990, p. 35.

And not only broken oaths but also disloyalty when loyalty was pledged. It was sinful to betray even an evil or foolish liege-lord, and people were expected to serve those as faithfully as if they were good, and if not, he had the right to seek revenge (Fors, 1904, p. 40).

Related to wrath is also the vice of hate, and this seems to be as sinful for the Northmen as it is for Christians. The most outrageous crime committed due to hate appears to be Loki's killing of Balder, or to be accurate, him fooling other gods into a series of mischiefs that resulted in Balder's murder (Davidson, 1990, p. 35 – 36). He was reproached for this, but it is interesting that Odin had not intervened with him beforehand, in spite of knowing the prophecy of Balder's death and having the power to consolidate hate, as stated by his eighth magical chant in *Ljóðatal*. Even Lindow (2002, p. 210) finds Odin's power, being the guardian of hate, rather ironic.

#### SLOTH

In the ancient Northern society, sloth, particularly physical, was as sinful as for Christians. There are no explicit warnings against it, except when Starkad accused king Ingellus of slothfulness (Saussay, 1902, p. 167), but considering how crucial was men's readiness for battle and ability to take care of the household, hard work was surely praiseworthy. Sloth is a perfect example of the Northern concept of sin as an act that brings its own punishment, as mentioned earlier – if a man was lazy to take care of his household or farmyard, this would lead his family to starvation; if he was lazy to battle, he would be deemed fearful and deprive thus himself of fame and riches and even bring the lord's wrath upon self. It was also slothful to tarry in wreaking vengeance.

#### PRIDE

Pride is another act on which Northern mythology and Christianity have slightly disagreeing opinions. In Northern society, boastfulness was not always viewed as wholly evil; after all, almost all the myths and eposes exaggerate about the hero's deed to some extent. In academic research, one can most frequently come upon the word *ofermod*, a kind of heroic pride. However, scholars still struggle to agree on its exact translation or its interpretation. Besides others, even Tolkien wrote an essay with that name, in which he explored the concept in regard to the poem *The Battle of Maldon*<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Although an Anglo-Saxon poem, these tribes were also from Teutonic predecessors, so it can

According to Forest-Hill (2008) and Cutler (2018), who in turn explore the relation of this concept to Tolkien's work, the majority of the uses of this word come from religious contexts, counting it among vices, once referring directly to Satan. They both point out that the word is a Northern equivalent of the Latin *superbus* and agree with Tolkien on its translation as "overmastering/overbearing pride", neglecting the former translation by Gordon as "overconfidence" (Forest-Hill, 2008, p. 74). Tolkien (2001, p. 147) argued that *-mod* literally means "spirit" and thus *ofermod* means "over-spirit, going beyond one's spirit". Following Tolkien's reasoning and put simply, *ofermod* is then the act of pushing oneself beyond one's duty and/or limits in desire to gain oneself greater renown.

*The Battle of Maldon* appears to be the only text where *ofermod* is used in a non-religious context when the poet criticized the earl that it was his pride (eagerness for renown) that led his people to ruin regardless of the security and well-being of his people, not knowing when to stop fighting and save them by backing up. While the aptitude for heroic glory, expending oneself in battle, and exhibiting "uttermost endurance in the service of indomitable will" (ibid., p. 143), conforming to the lines: "Thought must be the harder, heart be the keener, mind must be the greater, while our strength lessens,"<sup>30</sup> was highly valued in Northern society—indeed, the finest expression of their heroic spirit—it always depended on circumstances. According to Tolkien (2001), for the man who had responsibility for none other but himself, the lonely hero whose eventual death would not have affected anyone, *ofermod* was a virtue. Such a person could go into excess in relying on his own power or the help of gods and prophecies (e.g. throw off arms and fight bare-handed) or go beyond his duty and kill several enemies instead of one, making the combats just sporting events, as Tolkien termed it, to show off, like Beowulf in his early life.

But for a person who had responsibility for the lives and well-being of other people, his subordinates and tribe-folk, or exercised the supervision of somebody else's property, *ofermod* was a sin. It was because their primary duty was to protect their people or the property in keep and not to spend them in pursuit of personal glory. The loyalty and oaths pledged should have been of the utmost importance for them. Thus a rebellious subordinate would be as guilty of *ofermod* as a lord who imperils his knights solely for the purpose of receiving credit for their deeds<sup>31</sup>. Such dual approach to *ofermod* is in line with Fors's doub-

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be included in Northern mythology.

<sup>30</sup> <https://lightspill.com/poetry/oe/maldon.html>

<sup>31</sup> See Cutler, 2018, p. 67, and Tolkien, 2001, p. 150.

le morals standards regarding solitary warriors versus community members<sup>32</sup>. From this point of view, Beowulf's last battle in his old age, although victorious, can no longer be viewed as virtuous.

Both Tolkien and Forest-Hill mention the use of another word for glory-eagerness, *lofgeornost*, used to refer to Beowulf. However, unlike Tolkien, who emphasized the ominousness of this word, Forest-Hill, citing German philologist Klaeber (2008, p. 78), states that this word does not necessarily represent the desire of a warlike renown. Instead, it can be the desire of the traditional Northern moral ideal of leading an honourable life. Then it would be in agreement with Tolkien's opinion that the most moving heroism is one based on obedience and love, not on pride and wilfulness (2001, p. 148).

## LUST

Proper sexual behaviour is another subject on which Northern mythology provides opposing views, which leads to historians also taking opposing stances on what the ancient sexual moral code was. While loyalty was preached as the highest moral ideal in all aspects of life, including marriage, as suggested before, the gods did not behave accordingly. In *Lokasenna*, Loki accuses nearly half of the Asgardians of cheating on their spouses or behaving sexually immorally, himself being no exception (Lindow, 2002, p. 214). This was in agreement with the widespread saying: "Love before marriage is as rare as fidelity after marriage is general," (Fors, 1904, p. 45).

The Vanir were considered the most amoral even in the eyes of the other gods. They were accused of engaging in incestuous relationships, which were considered normal for them before they joined Asgard. According to one version of the myths, Freya and her brother Freyr were conceived in such intercourse; according to another version, they engaged in such a relationship themselves. Particularly Freya was very controversial in this respect. On one hand, she was depicted as a faithful wife who, devastated by the disappearance of her husband, went to look for him all over the world and thus represented the ideal of chaste marriage and love-beyond-death; who refused to fake a marriage with a giant in order to retrieve Thor's hammer in order not to be seen as eager for men; and who, as the goddess of love, was invoked to help people in relationship and fertility problems. On the other hand, besides having an affair with her own brother, she had multiple affairs with various humans and even giants on her husband-seeking journey; was a frequent object of the

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<sup>32</sup> See note 17.

giants' lust and was believed to have children by them; easily agreed to sleep with four dwarfs in order to get her necklace back; and was known to enjoy erotic poetry (ibid., p. 121 – 128). Moreover, the cult developed around her person was typical for organizing sexual orgies (Davidson, 1990, p. 125 – 6). Similar to Freya was the Æsir goddess Gefjon, who was a virgin goddess, guardian of those who died unmarried, but at the same time said to be raped by or willingly given herself to a giant and bore him four monster sons. Thus there were two goddesses both featuring in two mutually exclusive traditions (one of a chaste faithful woman and one of a prostitute), the likeliness being so striking that it makes one wonder if they were not originally one and the same goddess – especially knowing that one of Freya's names was Gefn, which is close to Gefjon pronounced carelessly and quickly – despite historians, such as Lindow (2002, p. 135-137), not suggesting the connection.

The chief god Odin does not fall short of Freya's fame. He too engaged in multiple relationships with other goddesses, humans, or giantesses, often times against their will, and begot many children outside of his marriage with Frigg. He was known as the master of seduction, and there were at least 10 women known to be his victims, including seven Algroen sisters; princess Rinda, whom he raped to father Bous to become Balder's avenger; giantess Gunnlöd, with whom he slept for three nights to retrieve the mead of poetry; and according to some versions, even Freya<sup>33</sup>. Crucial is his attempt to seduce Billing's girl who resisted him by tricking him. She agreed to meet with him, but at the appointed time, there was a dog in her bed instead of the girl and Odin did not touch it. Lindow (2002, p. 80) suggests that this can be viewed as a manifestation of his moral victory in the situation as he refused to commit bestiality which was even more amoral than incest. And that is really something, considering that one of Odin's charms was related to the latter (Davidson, 1990, p. 210). Similar to Freya, the exercise of Odin's cult, especially the ritual of *seid* (a kind of fate-foretelling), included sexual perversion if men performed it (Lindow, 2002, p. 265).

Another god known for his particularly significant sexual intercourse is Heimdall, who under the name of Ríg is known as the progenitor of human race. During his wanderings around the earth, he visited three households consisting of a man and a woman, dined with them, and then slept with them for three nights. Nine months after his visits, a child was born in each household, becoming the forefather of the three social classes: a thrall, a free-man farmer, and an aristocratic earl.

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<sup>33</sup> Odin was sometimes identified with Freya's husband Odr (Davidson, 1990, p. 154).

What most of these stories have in common is that the sexual intercourse was never performed out of mere lust and the aggressor's egotism; on the contrary, it was done for a specific purpose: either to retrieve some valuables for the good of the community or to beget children to perform certain roles. So they were kind of justified, and maybe that is why the mythology did not see such behaviour as sinful. Nonetheless, there were still some limits on what was deemed morally plausible and what was amoral. Incest and bestiality were sinful, as has been already stated. But also cross-species intercourse was not always acceptable. For example, the union between a god and a giant was generally unacceptable as they were enemies. In spite of that, giants lusted for Asgard women and the Asgard men lusted for giantesses and often managed to satisfy that lust. However, according to Lindow (2002, p. 136 - 137) there seemed to be a double standard about it, since it was tolerated that Asgardians had intercourse with giantesses - as those were considered their trophies and this complemented the image of the Asgardians' superiority - whereas it was unacceptable when a goddess engaged in intercourse with a giant, because in that case, the goddess was considered a trophy for the giant and this contradicted the superiority. Yet the ban of goddess-giant intercourse was broken so often that it ceased to be of any moral authority at all.

For these reasons, there are on one side scholars such as Davidson and Lindow, who claim that the ancient Northern society was rather sexually immoral, and on the other side scholars such as Saussaye and Fors, who deriving mainly from the proverbs in *Hávasmál* and old Roman-invaders' records, present the society as sexually virtuous. Their chief argument was based on the Northmen's strong feeling of loyalty, as pointed out above, which reflected also in man-woman relationships, and on the relatively equal position of women in their society. Based on that reasoning, chastity and marital faithfulness should have been highly valued as well. In their attempts to prove it, they referred to Tacitus's account of the Northmen's customs where he highlights their sexual purity. But it has to be born in mind that he did so purposefully to contrast Northern society with the morally declining Roman society (Saussaye, 1902, p. 402). Fors (1904, p. 46 - 47) added to Tacitus a number of later historians who expressed the same opinion on the Northmen's sexual morality, and as a main reference, used the epos *Sigurtharkvida* and some others, which stated that women were to be sprightly, shrewd, meek, kind, with Frigg as an ideal thereof, and people of all ranks were to lead pure and chaste lives as this complemented the overall personal integrity and honour. Anyway, this shows that despite advocating the morally purer image of the Northern society, they were both aware of its flaws.

The joys of eating and drinking and the excess thereof were not seen as sinful by the Northern peoples. In the harsh conditions of the cold, barren land, food was rather hard to come by, so every occasion of feasting was much appreciated. Indeed, feasts plentiful with pork and mead were imagined to be the paradisaal reward for brave warriors in Valhalla. In fact, there were only two things to do after death in Valhalla – to battle during the day and feast at night (Davidson, 1990, p. 149). The gods known for their extraordinary appetite were Thor and Loki. They both contested with giants in eating and drinking, Loki claiming he was the fastest eater, Thor being able to eat more than the giants and drink a considerable volume of a sea. According to Saussaye (1902, p. 240), in some myths Thor assumed the place of a gluttonous giant.

As far as drinking is concerned, particularly mead was so valued in the society that there was a complex myth developed about its origin and three gods associated with it as guardians. At the beginning there was Kvasir, one of the wisest gods, whose cult was likely taken over from Slavs as his name originates in their language, meaning “fermentation”. He was killed by some dwarfs who mixed his blood with honey and thus produced the magical mead. This they sold to the giants, and soon the gods became jealous of it, so Odin disguised himself and slept with a giantess who had it in her keeping to trick her into giving the mead to him. Ever since, the mead was associated with Odin, and because the drunkenness it caused made men sing, it was also called “the mead of poetry” or “the mead of wisdom”. It was ascribed the magical power of giving wisdom, artistry, and unusual courage. Another god linked to drinking was Byggvir, whose name translates as “barley” and thus symbolizes beer. His companion was Beyla, “bee” who thus symbolizes the honey the mead is made of.

Despite being so fond of good meal and drink, the Northmen did not forget about the dangers it might pose. They realized that the courage drinking gave one was such as sober men would have never wished to have and the deeds done under the mead’s influence were regretted later. They were also aware that overindulgence in food and drink made one’s reflexes slower, head heavier, and resulted in man losing control over his body. In addition, they believed that in greed for food, one could eat himself into both physical and economical misery. Therefore, moderation in eating and drinking was advised (Fors, 1904, p. 48).



## GREED AND ENVY

There is nothing much to say about these in the context of Northern mythology. As has been already mentioned several times, greed and jealousy were common attributes of many gods. They were often said to covet the possessions of their subjects or enemies, especially the giants, but these attributes seem to receive no moral judgement commentary. This only comes in stories concerning greed and jealousy in humans where they are criticized as sinful for, if excessive, they almost certainly bring some evil on the families or tribes of the individuals concerned. Two stories are of particular significance: that of king Hreidmar, whose sons kill him in their greed; and of king Frodr, who pushed on his giant slaves to grind still more and more gold, more than was necessary to sustain his people, so that they in revolt started grinding salt and made the ocean waters undrinkable. Unique in this respect is the story of Starkad, whose contempt of luxury and material abundance implies his virtuousness.

The human greed for gold was seen as the number one reason for all their strife, for, as Keyser recounted (cited in Fors, 1904, p. 20), it set their minds and dependence upon it and thus the time of guiltless peace disappeared. The men were aware of this, and this awareness is translated also in their mythology, where the greed gave rise to the image of dragons. Davidson (1990, p. 159 – 162) suggests than more than the embodiments of the destructive, physical-property-devouring power of fire itself, the dragons were rather metaphorical images of the soul-devouring fire of greed.

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