

Rev. Andrzej Zwoliński

The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland

The endangered faith of the young

In his apostolic letter *Dilecti Amici* of 1985, John Paul II wrote: “youth is in itself (independently of any material goods) a special treasure of man [...] This is the treasure of discovering and at the same time of organizing, choosing, foreseeing and making the first personal decisions, decisions that will be important for the future in the strictly personal dimension of human existence. At the same time, these decisions are of considerable social importance.”¹ Youth is the time of transition from childhood to adulthood in all the important functions of human life. There are also changes in intellect, perception of the world, interests and pursuits. It is revealing your own “self” to the whole world, God, and the system of values. It is just then, when man recognizes the strength of his freedom, focuses on values, assimilates and incorporates them

1 Apostolic Letter *Dilecti Amici* of Pope John Paul II to the Youth of the World on the Occasion of International Youth Year, No. 1, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1985/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_31031985_dilecti-amici.html (07.07.2016).

in the individual reference system. Then he also searches for God and His presence.²

1. New fascinations

Weltanschauung problems are one of many matters and issues that a young man is trying to tackle, understand and make their own reflection about. He/she either loses or recovers their faith, or strengthens their unbelief. Youthful rationalism, criticism and scepticism are mixed with idealization of the world, naivety and a lack of proper religious knowledge. The radicalism of the young easily opens them up to pseudo-mystical experiences (visions, meditations, strong “charismatic” experiences), and to radical slogans of sects and new religious movements.³

Young people react lively and adopt easily styles and patterns of behaviour that are proposed to them and are by them understood and accepted. Questioning and rejection of traditional values, understanding of a family, the acceptance of freedoms and the rejection of obligations, the cult of money or a contempt for the ethos of work and for authorities, all of these, are dangerous phenomena in the process of educating youth and in consequence for youth themselves. Young people face a chaos of values, truths and statements, which worrying ruins their stable vision of the world. The chaos applies to the area of responsibility, truth, understanding, freedom and love – important and fundamental values in life.⁴

The emergence of new fascinations may be a sign of a deepening confusion of young people. The fascinations make the mind abandon several traditional truths and customs. It is impossible to overlook that according to psychologists, the number of children who are fascinated with witchcraft, astrology and fortune-telling has doubled in the last decade.

2 A. Błasiak, *Młodość wobec aksjologicznych dylematów współczesności*, in: *Młodość wobec ponowoczesności*, red. M. Duda, Kraków 2009, pp. 35–52.

3 Cf. H. Świda-Ziemba, *Młodość licealna. Analiza wybranych klas warszawskich w latach 1956–1958*, Warszawa 1963.

4 Cf. J. Mastalski, *Przyszłość nastolatka. Perspektywa pedagogiczna*, “Pedagogika Katolicka” 2007 nr 1a, pp. 90–91.

This proves little criticism of children in the reception of advertising content and media suggestions they receive. According to surveys, in developed countries, every third teenager has come into contact with various forms of occultism. In the United States, up to 44% of adolescents have dealt with spiritualism, telepathy or tarot. In Poland, one half of young people admit that they believe in astrology and 30% of them in witchcraft. Online esoteric “astral shops,” where you can buy accessories to calling up spirits or a set of talismans, have become very popular. There are 3,500 practicing witches and magicians in the UK, almost 40,000 professional fortune-tellers in France, and so is in Italy, where the number of seers and soothsayers has reached 350,000 – by about 100,000 more than Catholic priests. In accordance with the Public Opinion Research Centre (OBOP), more than 60% of Polish society believe in prophecies and divinations, and every fifth Pole claims that they have an influence on their decisions. Sects have an easier access to children’s minds because of a magical way of thinking, which exempts them from criticism and logical thinking. The purpose of the whole religious education is to make a child, who grows in faith, become a witness to it in various life situations. The transmission of religious life can be compared to a small candle that is lit from a big one shining with full light. Transmitting light means at the same time release from darkness.⁵

The faith of young Poles is shaped in a country that is considered to be predominantly Christian. In 2004, the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church conducted in Warsaw a survey. It showed that 87.3% of young people living in the capital declare themselves Catholic, but only 41.7% practise quite regularly. Every tenth person declares themselves deeply religious. Almost 60% say that their faith is strengthened mainly by tradition and upbringing. Nearly 85% of the young accept premarital sex, 75% approve divorces, more than a half – abortion and cohabitation, and 44% – prostitution.⁶ Many years of research on the religiosity of

5 L. Koperska, *Wychowanie religijne małego dziecka*, “Emaus” 1993 nr 2 (18), pp. 8–11; A. Biesinger, *Jak rozmawiać z dzieckiem o Bogu?*, przekł. S. Jopek, Kraków 1998, pp. 145–149.

6 Cf. Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego, *Młodzi Warszawy – pokolenie pontyfikatu Jana Pawła II*, Warszawa 2005.

Poles proved that the said results have remained almost unchanged since March 1986. The outcome of the self-declaration vary only because of an introduction of other indicators of religiosity or due to a sampling error. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, a similar number of young Poles declares faith in God that it was in the late 90s of the twentieth century.⁷

The general census of 2011 (whose data were announced in 2014) for the first time included a question about the denomination/religion. Nearly 88% of Poles identified themselves as faithful to the Catholic Church. However, the review of those who hold individual truths of faith (e.g. a belief in the existence of one God, the resurrection of the body, miracles etc.) leads us to the conclusion that there are merely 5% of those who accept the entire doctrine of the Church. 1,000 of respondents declared atheism; 500 – agnosticism; 15,000 marked the box “other;” 930,000 confirmed they did not belong to any religion (they believe “in their own way”). The views of the young are shaped in such an environment of faith. The views are marked with similar qualities: an incomprehensible idea of syncretism, a segregation of the truths of faith, an acceptance of only some part of the Christian doctrine together with being open to thoughts and opinions that are radically alien to the Gospel.⁸

The spiritual condition of the young has been largely dominated by a massive wave of the New Age propaganda that in the 90s of the twentieth century affected parents of today’s teenagers. The first who formulated the idea of the “New Age” were Americans: Levi H. Dowling (1844–1911) in his book *The Gospel of Aquarius* (1908), allegedly received through meditation, and a theosophist Alice Bailey (1880–1949) in her work about *The Second Coming of Christ* (1948). However the first person who in his book *The Fundamentals of A New Era Worldview* (Riga, 1934) was a Russian called Alexander Klizowski.⁹

The ethical views of New Age Movement are often referred to as an “axiological night” in which there is no distinction between good and

7 B. Wciórka, *Religijność Polaków w III RP. Komunikat z badań CBOS-u*, BS/39/1999, Warszawa 1999, p. 2; F. Kucharczyk, *Otwarcie wyjściowe*, “Gość Niedzielny” 2007 nr 23, p. 12; K. Stoltz, *Kościół na przełomie wieków. Raport*, “Rzeczpospolita” 2003 nr 23, p. 7.

8 J. Cieśla, *Wiara po swojemu*, “Polityka” (2015) nr 30, pp. 28–30.

9 J. Prokopiuk, *Ścieżki wtajemniczenia Gnosis aeterna*, Warszawa 2000, p. 172.

evil, each truth has the same value, regardless of its basis or justification. The new outlook rejects any boundaries and promotes the illusion of an unlimited improvement of man. It explains that an individual can break free from all traditions and determine himself in accordance with any formula.¹⁰

For groups drawing on the ideas of the New Age, education means self-creation. A child and a young man must try to create and build himself. Along with relativism in the world of values, there is chaos in the sphere of responsibility, truth, freedom and health as well as in the realm of love, authority and communication. All of them are subject to revision, sometimes even destruction and an attempt to build their surrogates in accordance to one's own idea.¹¹

The self-creation in the meaning of the New Age brings significant risks. The most important include:

- ▶ Acceptance and even promotion of psychedelics, drugs, narcotics and intoxicants treated as an effective means of achieving mystical states or “transcending oneself;”
- ▶ Affirmation of wanton sexuality which leads to promiscuity among youth with all its consequences;
- ▶ Formation of youth subcultures having a pathological character, threatening the freedom, security, moral order, e.g. Satanists;
- ▶ The formation of sects, parareligious groups and bands, in which “spiritual leaders” use mentally weak individuals to become their tools in achieving private objectives through making th
- ▶ Threat for the public order.¹²

An example of an all-embracing influence of an idea on the young can be a popular series of books about Harry Potter by J. K. Rowling, which became the source of a phenomenon called “the Harry Potter Mania.” It introduces young children into the world of magic, populated by colourful,

¹⁰ M. Rembierz, *Etyka wobec postmodernistycznej „nocy aksjologicznej”*, in: *Co się dzieje z wartościami? Próba diagnozy*, red. E. Okońska, K. Staciewicz, Poznań 2009, pp. 91–102. Cf. S. Morawski, *Postmodernizm – co to za zwierz*, “Principia” 6 (1992), p. 44.

¹¹ J. Mastalski, *Samotność globalnego nastolatka*, Kraków 2007, pp. 306–330.

¹² M. W. Poznańska, *Wychowanie wobec New Age*, in: *Oblicza nowej duchowości. Materiały XXIII Ogólnopolskiego Seminarium Estetycznego New Age Kraków–Mogilany 1995*, red. M. Gołaszewski, Kraków 1995, pp. 204–205.

appealing and noble characters that are depicted in contrast to gloomy and repulsive adults (Muggles). Harry Potter is a student in a wizarding school where he studies different magic curses. (These include *Imperius* curse which allows for the subjugation of people; *Cruciatuus* curse to inflict unlimited pain; and the deadly *Avada Kedavra* curse against which there is no defence. Young students learn the art of numerology; palmistry; fortune-telling with a crystal ball, flames, or tea leaves; herbal healing; and clairvoyance. The hero, Harry Potter, makes an impression that although he is immersed in the world of occult magic and guided by selfish motives, he does not do anything wrong. The fourth volume of the series presents a satanic ritual connected with a murder of a child. While reading subsequent volumes, a young reader receives occult education.¹³

Fashion and advertising have a profound impact on the preferential fascinations and choices of young people. Specific mechanisms of influence are used to persuade the young of a need to follow their peers and to take over symbols, gestures, and ways of functioning. At some point, a young man can no longer distinguish between magical and religious thinking.¹⁴

2. Towards sects

Education in an “appropriate” mainstream of thinking is a direct preparation of the ground for the development of sects. The educational ideology itself may contain an aspect of an uncritical directing of pupils to all kinds of novelties and the sectarian content. One of the ways to gain full control over the intellectual and spiritual development of children and young adults is launching a devastating criticism of traditional school. It prepares a young man for an uncritical acceptance of the way of development offered by sects. The Witnesses of Jehovah often repeat

¹³ M. Więczkowska, *Harry Potter*, “Któż jak Bóg” 2014 nr 6, pp. 60–61; A. M. Stoltz, *Harry Potter – niewinny czarodziej?*, “Zawsze Wierni” 45 (2002) 2, pp. 116–123; A. Bielecki, *Harry Ezotter*, “Frona” 2001 nr 25/26, pp. 142–149. Cf. R. Abbanes, *Harry Potter and the Bible*, Camp Hill 2001, pp. 22–24.

¹⁴ M. Cholewa, *Psychologia pastoralna z elementami psychologii klinicznej. Dla studentów teologii*, Kraków 2014, pp. 23–26. Cf. C. Climati, *Młodzi i ezoteryzm*, tłum. K. Czuba, Kielce 2001.

that the only scientific book worth knowing is the Bible. They argue, after Russell, that it can teach you not only religion or morality, but also history or natural sciences, while the biggest scientist in the world was Moses.¹⁵ A true follower of Jehovah should not finish high school, much less to study at a university since human knowledge spoils and corrupts him. In propaganda materials of this sect one can come across testimonies of young people who abandoned school and began to preach “the good news.” They are presented as a role-model worth of emulation. They use the terms “study, studying, knowledge” but refer them reading (studying) the Bible and all publications of their headquarters in Brooklyn.¹⁶ The sect known as *Family of Love*, which also uses the name of *Children of God* fiercely criticized all obligations imposed on young people, including the schooling obligation. David Berg, the founder and leader of the sect, in inspired letters, called *Mo-letters*, wrote: “The kids are abducted from their homes by the law on schooling obligation, got high like hell by modern, godless, useless public education, hypnotized by the TV, movies, magazines, and modern music, and trapped by a modern regime, child labour laws, the law on parental authority, the law on minimum age for marriage of minors and by the rules of conscription, and the obligation to do military service.”¹⁷

In place of a criticized or even rejected traditional school, sects frequently offer their own system of education. Exercising the freedom of setting up “religious” schools, sects have become sponsors or owners of a part of educational institutions. They have done it sometimes in secret, not wanting to discourage parents and teachers. Children from sects that live in communities are provided teaching within the sect. Their “teachers” is their “family” – members of the sect and its doctrinal books. Such “education” makes it easier to manipulate and intimidate children, often communicates a distorted image of the world while lazy children

15 Ch. T. Russell, *Nadszedł czas*, Warszawa 1923, p. 38.

16 H. Skibiński, *Świadkowie Jehowy w Polsce*, in: *Sekty. Studium socjologiczno-historyczne*, red. J. Sztumski, Kielce 1993, pp. 67–70.

17 See: M. C. Burrell, *Wyzwanie kultów*, in: M. C. Burrell, J. Allan, *Nie wszyscy są jednego ducha*, przeł. W. Czausow, Warszawa 1988, p. 65. Cf. K. Biel, *Dylematy młodzieży, czyli ponowoczesne kroczenie ku dorosłości*, in: *Młodzież wobec ponowoczesności*, red. M. Duda, Kraków 2009, pp. 73–86.

are mentally bullied with a divine punishment of a disease, sufferings of their relatives and corporal punishments. In the Polish apocalyptic sect “Heaven” (known also as: New Heaven, Hotel Country, Cycling Country, Maidan Country, Healing with the Holy Spirit Through the Laying on of Hands), children were not sent to school and brought up in accordance with the rules of the group through flogging, starvation or keeping in a black hole.¹⁸

The opening and running one’s own school is connected with having adequate financial resources and involves an obligation to determine its nature. This does not help the sect’s “work.” Therefore, sects try to use existing schools for their own purposes. The easiest and most effective way to interfere in the world of a school is winning followers and “friends” in educational authorities that the school is overlooked by. From the position of a superior body, it is easy to control the teaching staff, introduce some content to the curriculum, observe the result of the indoctrination, or to impede possible criticism towards ourselves.

In the Russian discussion about the ways sects enter into public life, undertaken by a bi-weekly “Ogoniok” (No. 19–20/1994), Deacon Andrey Kuraev presents how schools are getting under control of Jean Gaver’s “Univers” sect. Its popularity is combined with the support received from officials of the education authorities. Jean Gaver, who is the author of *The Handbook of the Living Spirituality* says that “Russia needs the traditions of the Kabbalah [...] the spirituality that originates in the part of the body that used to be associated with sexual functions.” Gaver, himself a teacher, “tested” boys in his apartment. Kuraev noticed: “Sects quietly creep into schools, community centres, tourist clubs and libraries. Years of their covert propaganda have contributed to the fact that various forms of theosophy have become today the most widespread form of religiosity in Russia. The Russian Ministry of Education is going to grow more than one «Mother of the World,» thanks to the introduction of ‘Waldorf education’ of a theosophist and occultist, Steiner, to subsequent schools.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Ogólnopolski Komitet Obrony Przed Sektami, *Raport “Dzieci w Sektach”*, Szklarska Połęba 2001, in: *Sekty. Obrona czy tolerancja? Zagadnienia społeczno-prawne*, red. I. Kamiński, M. Płodowski, Toruń–Olsztyn 2008, pp. 191, 197.

¹⁹ J. Jarco, *Misjonarskie desanty*, “Biuletyn KAI” nr 70, 22.07.1994, pp. 15–16.

Teachers are a particular object of interest for sects. The sect is trying to get close to them, either by offering “new, interesting, exploratory classes,” or by bringing “its people” into teachers’ ranks. Each of these contacts may result in gaining new supporters or even devoted followers.²⁰

Another method of entering schools by a sect, being a legally established and registered association, is hiring school buildings or halls for meetings or group exercises. A fee offered for renting the premises is usually attractive enough to make the administrator agree willingly. This allows the sect activists to display the school address on posters informing about their meetings. For potential participants in activities and meetings offered by the sect, this is really important from the psychological point of view. The school address works as a certificate and deprives parents of ordinary prudence in making decisions related to the sect’s offer. The trust the school evokes in parents also extends to afterschool classes that take place in it and the sect knows how to take advantage of it. It sometimes succeeds in entering the school premises with its offer. Taking a name of an educational association or foundation, the sect may submit an offer for lectures and thematic meetings. Without a prior control of their content, it may turn up that the offer was a manipulation based on indoctrination.

Running canteens, community centres, libraries, student clubs and shops by the representatives of the sect for free may be an interesting offer for schools. The Society for Krishna Consciousness was running a vegetarian canteen for children in one of Cracow’s primary schools. And that allowed the sect representatives for the daily contact with children beyond the control of their parents.²¹

For sects, the easiest way of being present in a school is to have its representatives among students. Collegial, even friendly contacts facilitate the work of agitation. Sects and representatives of various religious movements are most active in filling the afterschool time of youth with their offer. This applies particularly to schools located in residential or

20 G. Górny, *Byłam w sekcje, Polska – dzisiaj*, “Chrześcijański Miesięcznik Społeczny” nr 1, 15.10.-15.11.1995, p. 13.

21 K. Kosior, *Nie jesteście sektą*, “Czas” 13.05.1993, p. 6.

urban areas where there is an urgent need to offer attractive activities to a large group of students. Financial deficiencies of various cultural and educational institutions that could undertake such activities make it easier for the sect to acquire new candidates for the organized meetings and exercises. Classes offered by sects are often run in community centres, schools, kindergartens, educational institutions and may have a different character: theatre workshops, art studios, relaxation groups, language exercises, discussion clubs, meditation courses, physical exercise, martial arts, etc. They always make easy the personal contact of the newcomer with the leader of the sect, are relatively independent from the control of parents and adult educators, and do not have embarrassing time restrictions. The activities are sometimes promoted on posters displayed on bulletin boards at schools or by means of the local communication channels. When inviting to participation, the used words appeal to intellectual and spiritual aspirations of a young man, promoted by the fashion concerning high standards of behaviours and aspirations.

The sects use children for example to initiate sexual contacts. In the group of Rajneesh Chandra Mohan (called “the Indian guru of free love”) 12-year-old girls are recommended to practise “free love.” They were instructed how to use condoms, and enchanted with their “master” – as a sign of total surrender to his teaching – underwent sterilization. The founder of the Raelians sect, Claude Vorilhon (Rael), in his book *Genecracy* extols the awakening of a child’s mind by awakening other parts of their body. He wrote: “Young people, who are fourteen, should have the right to sexual and political independence from their parents. The law which says that a sexual intercourse between individuals who are more than eighteen and individuals who are less than eighteen is automatically assigned to the category of seduction of minors, should be abolished.” David Berg preached similar views. He was the founder of the sect “Family of Love.” In a book intended for children above seven he wrote: “The idea that children could freely have sex without interference from parents and law is becoming more popular among doctors.” He postulated that children be married at the age of 12 and 13. He claimed: “If God made that they can have children at the age of twelve and thirteen,

it is believed that 12-year old children are adults. It will be incompatible with the old system and perhaps even illegal, but never mind.”²²

These types of proposals are even more dangerous because they are legitimized by pseudo-religious arguments and refer to meditation practices and mystical raptures, that is, to the world of concepts associated with religiosity. In the absence of proper criticism, associated with the knowledge on the topic of manipulation of terms and reversing their meanings, the young man is defenceless.²³

The New Age opened the door for recognition of any claims as scientific. Thus, in the context of psychology, a number of baseless proposals of therapy not supported by any scientific evidence emerged. It is absurd to diagnose the mental state of a person on the basis of the ink blot that was made during writing.²⁴ Among young people the following philosophies are propagated: Inedism (based on a claim that a person can exist without food), breatharianism, known also as bretarianism or bresarianism (the concept that functioning of the body is based solely on the breathing process, because the air supposedly contains all the nutrient particles), Solari (making the vital functions of the body dependent only on sunshine) or waterians (nourishing with water). Non-eaters constitute religious and mystical movement, which promotes the resignation of food intake. “The philosophy of not eating” treats food as the strongest human drug. The belief in the “truths” is supposed to give the body adequate energy.²⁵

Young people are able to accept any, even the most shocking thesis, like each person who does not have adequate preparation to analyse the world that surrounds them. Their search cannot be left without answers and help from those who know more and are more experienced. However, to be useful for the young, you must want to see their problems, to understand them and work out the best form of assistance.

22 Ogólnopolski Komitet Obrony Przed Sektami, *Raport “Dzieci w Sektach”...*, pp. 193, 198–199.

23 Por. K. Krzan, *Ekstaza w wersji pop. Poszukiwania mistyczne w kulturze popularnej*, Warszawa 2008, p. 171–206.

24 M. Rotkiewicz, *Kleks na umyśle*, “Polityka” 2012 nr 9, pp. 27–28.

25 I. Kamiński, *Konsumenci światła i powietrza, czyli zwolennicy niejedzenia – inedycy*, in: *Duchowość Dalekiego Wschodu a chrześcijaństwo. Dialog czy konfrontacja?*, red. I. Kamiński, J. Kulwicka-Kamińska, J. Perszon, Toruń 2014, pp. 137–154.

The behaviour and actions of young people has always been, and will certainly be in the future, the subject of interest of adults and social institutions. They always record with great excitement the phenomenon of apathy, frustration, lack of initiative, the cult of consumption, social withdrawal and a contempt for the ethos of work and for authorities, showing the uncertain future of the world that they created and a lack of prospects. Elders feel responsible for the world, and thus the direction of the development of youth. Education of successive generations requires the creation of specific conditions for the development, a transfer of values whose importance they have learned in their life, also in practice and in the experience of everyday life. Among the great and significant values there is also faith and religious truths.²⁶

The output of solving the religious crisis is a “new religion,” more personal and individual, having some degree of naturalism, at the expense of a sacred, supernatural factor. Unfortunately, it is exactly this area of the young man’s sensitivity that often becomes a target of “new spirituality” suggested by sects. And that is why it is so dangerous.

The awareness of the socially hazardous activity of sects and so-called new religious movements urges families, schools, communities of believers and all for whom the fate of every individual is important to take necessary steps. They must include both prevention to make individuals resistant to the propaganda methods used by sects and measures that take into account victims of sectarian doctrines and practices.

Prevention must cover all those elements of the environment and social life that are of a particular interest to sects. Those people that help youth maintain freedom from philosophical and religious innovations should be additionally motivated by the latter’ vulnerability in this area and the importance of the task they undertake. Individuals can be defended against seduction from sects by their families, parishes, circles of friends and acquaintances and by healthy piety and an in-depth knowledge. However, it should be kept in mind that education in religious values is by no means

26 A. Błasiak, *Młodzież wobec wartości*, “Horyzonty Wychowania” 2004 nr 3, pp. 87–99.

taming or relying on a warrant or an order. A system of rewards and punishments – typical of the behavioural education – is also ineffective. It is the interaction between the educator and the person being educated that can bring a step change. When talking values, a testimony, a friendly presence and a compatibility between the said word and a performed deed also play an important role.²⁷

As in the course of religious education, a young man is also shown the meaning of life, it is very important to remember that this issue is extremely sensitive; it is experienced and motivated in deep layers of existence. Finding ways to point to the essence of this problem has a long record in philosophical reflection, literature and art. Viktor E. Frankl combines the issues with a commitment to the values, participation in them and their fulfilment.²⁸

The most important educational environment is the family that can do a lot to build in its children attitudes of resistance to the shallow propaganda and manipulative activities of various centres, including sects. Parents do not always have an appropriate preparation to fulfil this task. Moreover, they often underestimate the size of risk or neglect their duties due to a lack of sufficient time. It is the family that socializes and educates children. It is the primary active subject of religious education.²⁹ A young person's religiosity has the characteristic qualities of the religiosity of their parents as it is them from whom the person acquires behavioural patterns and borrows arguments for his/her decisions pertaining to his/her religious behaviour. Mothers and their daughters are usually more religious than fathers and their sons. However, the children's attitude to religion depends mainly on their parents.³⁰

27 M. Pachowicz, *Wychowanie do wartości to nie tresura*, "Przewodnik Katolicki" 2014 nr 33, pp. 24–25. Cf. Ł. Adamski, *Tolkien, czyli subtelny intelektualista i naukowiec, który postanowił szerzyć „światło” za pomocą masowej kultury uosobionej przez baśń*, "W Sieci" 2013 nr 4, pp. 18–19.

28 A. Staniaszczyk, *Psychologiczna problematyka sensu życia*, "Karan" 61 (2007) nr 3, pp. 13–15. Cf. M. Meeker, *Dlaczego chłopcy potrzebują Boga*, "Frona" 2011 nr 59, pp. 30–51.

29 Cf. W. Piwowarski, *Socjalizacja religijna dziecka a kontekst społeczno-kulturowy*, in: *Dziecko*, red. W. Piwowarski, W. Zdankiewicz, Warszawa–Poznań 1984, pp. 89–106; J. Wilk, *Wychowanie religijne dziecka w wieku przedszkolnym*, in: *Dziecko...*, p. 131–142.

30 K. Bełch, *Środowisko rodzinne a religijność dzieci*, "Roczniki Nauk Społecznych" 9 (1981), pp. 81–100; U. Tokarska, *Wychowanie religijne w rodzinie*, "Wychowawca" 2016 nr 3,

The maintenance of an appropriate hierarchy of educational objectives is essential for the proper personal development of a young man. This applies particularly to shaping in children the right attitude towards God and the whole religious life, which does not mean disregarding or diminishing other values. The ideal includes a skilful, internally coherent, comprehensive and real shaping of religious life incorporated into the entirety of other problems and issues of everyday life. To achieve this objective, it is necessary to keep a constant personal contact between parents and a child, and an exchange of information between mother and father, which allows for the maintenance of a common course of action.³¹ The absence of parents in the process of upbringing their children, no matter of the excuse, generates the feeling of insecurity and the intolerance of frustrations and the authority. A parent's authority offers love, stimulates, accompanies the child and protects him/her in such a way as to stimulate the development of their personality. It also involves setting requirements, frustrating, controlling and punishing. To stimulate the child's development, both love and frustration are needed in the upbringing. However, love must always be present – frustration without love leads to frustration and neurosis.³²

A religious community, a parish should support the family in taking preventive measures against sects. It should function as a basic ecclesial community, giving testimony to those who are experiencing difficulties and are seeking answers to the fundamental questions of life. It is there where you can help your child to find the sense of prayer.³³

p. 14–15. Cf. D. Łosiewicz, *Skretynienie płynie z mediów. Rozmowa z dziennikarką telewizyjną i radiową Karoliną Korwin-Piotrowską*, "W Sieci" 2013 nr 18, pp. 38–40.

31 Cf. S. Sławiński, *Wychowywać do postuszeństwa*, Warszawa 1994, pp. 31–41; R. Polak, *Wychowanie religijne dzieci według ks. W. Gadowskiego*, "Cywilizacja" 2006, nr 18, pp. 186–194; J. M. Estevez, *Prawda, błąd, relatywizm*, "Polonia Christiana" 2008 nr 4, pp. 65–67.

32 N. Funes, *Kochanie, rozpuściłem dzieciaki!* Rozmowa z francuskim psychologiem klinicznym Didier Pleux (after: Le Nouvel Observateur, 17.01.2013), "Forum" (2013) nr 15, pp. 32–34. Cf. U. Solińska, *Wychowanie jako poszukiwanie wartości*, "Wychowawca" 2015 nr 12, pp. 18–21; A. Rayzacher-Majewska, *Mówić dzieciom o Bogu*, "Wychowawca" 2016 nr 3, pp. 16–17.

33 J. Bel Geddes, *Jak uczyć dziecko modlitwy*, przekł. T. Kołodziej, Kraków 2004, pp. 14–15. Cf. J. Baniak, *Ksiądz w oczach młodzieży. Obraz kapłana w świadomości młodzieży. Studium socjologiczne*, Poznań 1993, pp. 107–132.

The Church reminds parents in many ways about the need of deepening religiosity together with and for the child. A similar task is entrusted to the parish community. The Vatican report of 1986 on sects and new religious movements, points to the need of rethinking the traditional “structure of the parish community” in order to create a model that “would have more brotherhood” in it, would correspond to different life situations of parishioners, and would be “tailor-made for man.” The report lists the types of recommended communities: “caring communities of living faith, love (warmth, acceptance, understanding, reconciliation, fellowship) and hope; celebration communities, prayer communities, missionary communities – facing outwards and acting as witnesses; communities that help and are open to the needs of people who have particularly difficult problems, for example the divorced and remarried, people living on the margins of society.”³⁴ The so-called pastoral care of children which appeared as a regular activity of the Church after the Second World War is a great opportunity.³⁵ In *Directory for Masses With Children* of 1 November 1973, issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship, we read: “The Church must show special concern for baptized children who have yet to be fully initiated through the Sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist as well as for children who have only recently been admitted to Holy Communion.”³⁶

A very important way to counter the propaganda and the invasion of sects is making constant efforts of evangelization, catechesis, education in matters of faith and permanent teaching of biblical, theological, ecumenical subjects to the faithful at the level of local communities by all those responsible for the education of man, especially with the participation of the clergy and those involved in religious education. The effectiveness of any prevention is limited, which does not change the fact that this part of the counteracting the propaganda of sects is paramount. It is much harder to make attempts to eliminate physical and mental,

³⁴ *Sekty albo nowe ruchy religijne. Wyzwanie duszpasterskie*, “L’Osservatore Romano” (wydanie polskie) 1986 nr 5, p. 5. Cf. J. Makselon, *Psychologiczna atrakcyjność “nowych religii”*, in: *New Age: pseudoreligia*, red. S. Dobrzański, Kraków 1994, pp. 68–69.

³⁵ R. Rak, *Duszpasterstwo dzieci*, in: *Dziecko...*, p. 143–154.

³⁶ Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory for Masses With Children*, 1 November 1973, No. 1, <http://www.adoremus.org/DMC-73.html> (08.07.2016).

individual and social effects, arising from the operation of the so-called new religious movements. Therapy is always more difficult than prevention. These difficulties are multiplied in the case of multi-dimensional effects of the operation of sects.

For the reason of the huge diversity of individuals' personalities, it is very difficult to develop a set of such rules of conduct against members of sects and new religious movements, which will help all to survive the difficult period of a religious crisis.

The most important of them can include:

- ▶ Maintaining the contact with a child who fell into the structure of the sect, although it can be very difficult. He/she must be ensured that he/she is still loved, respected and needed. A contact with the loved ones, parents, friends, teachers is often the only opportunity to raise awareness of a convert to a sect what the outer world looks like;³⁷
- ▶ Maintaining a positive relationship with the young convert: to make the relation with him/her more positive and personal. Listening to what he/she has to say, is particularly important for maintaining a positive relationship. Putting aside the grievances and resentments, and emphasizing what unites, parents have the right to express their own opinions and views;³⁸
- ▶ Obtaining information about the sect: This allows for a mature and clear discussion with a convert. It is necessary to look for it from neutral sources, specialized organizations, former members of the movement or the sect, etc. because information received from its current members can be one-sided and incomplete;
- ▶ Obtaining information about entering a person into the sect (the "conversion") and the assessment of the situation together with him/her: It is important to realize positive reasons to join the group – the attractiveness of the sect, the sources of its power of attraction, authority of leaders and negative motives of the decision –

37 Cf. F. Martyna, *Nowe ruchy religijne: wnioski i wskazania pastoralno-wychowawcze*, in: *Nowe religie i sekty...*, p. 221–222; C. Cekiera, *Ryzyko uzależnień*, Lublin 1994, pp. 13–15.

38 *O pojawianiu się mechanizmów obronnych w trudnych sytuacjach*, Cf. J. Szkolny, *Odpowiedzialna wolność*, "Edukacja i Dialog" 2002 nr 2, p. 2.

gaps existing in the previous religious community, the search for self-confirmation, a rebellion against family etc. It should be remembered that when a person stubbornly sticks to his decision, it is the decision of free and rational individual, and as long as the action is not in conflict with the general laws, his/her right and decision to stay in the group must be respected;³⁹

- ▶ Financial issues should be left to the discretion of the person engaging in the sect. This is part of the responsibility for his/her own decisions. Some sects are trying to force its members to extort under any pretext money from their relatives. You should seek legal advice in matters of succession, receiving inheritances, which a possible convert would like to transfer to the sect. Attempts to “bribe” converts to make them go away from sects are unsuccessful. They strengthen their belief that the outside world is materialistic and manipulative.⁴⁰

The national and international law is an ally of parents, schools and social institutions in the work of protecting young people against sects. It tries to defend them in many ways, determining the age for possible binding decisions regarding leaving home or entering independently into certain social groups. It offers a number of specific provisions, related to young labour, entering into sexual relations or establishing a new family, and regulates matters arising on the border between sects and life of individuals.⁴¹

Contemporary men's difficulties in getting on with others become particularly important in view of a possibility of getting lost in the maze of human proposals offered by numerous religious movements and sects. Being with people and offering them friendship, brotherhood and love appears to be the only effective prophylactic and therapeutic solution against the threats of the modern world. The most important gift an adult

³⁹ Cf. F. Martyna, *Nowe ruchy religijne: wnioski i wskazania pastoralno-wychowawcze...*, p. 224–225; S. Kuczkowski, *Psychologia religii*, Kraków 1993, pp. 236–243.

⁴⁰ Cf. F. Martyna, *Nowe ruchy religijne: wnioski i wskazania pastoralno-wychowawcze...*, pp. 225–226.

⁴¹ Cf. R. Mizerski, *Problem sekt z perspektywy traktatów praw człowieka*, in: *Sekty. Społeczne i prawno-polityczne...*, pp. 301–311; T. P. Terlikowski, *Posłuchaj mnie, mamo*, “Newsweek Polska” 2007 nr 5, pp. 78–81.

can provide to the confused generation is being with the young in their dilemmas and addressing their problems and questions in a dialogue. Leading a young man to the discovery of the truth and strengthening him/her in faith requires a lot of patience, peace and everyday love.⁴² The whole culture is created through dialogue. It is necessary to delve into it especially in the world that has lost universal truths and values. Since we are different and diverse, we even more need a dialogue that means a possibility of coexistence of sometimes seemingly contradictory and competing patterns of explaining the world.⁴³ Staying in a dialogue with young people, we can help them to find a correct answer to the questions about the basic life issues.

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⁴² M. Mazurek, *Prowadzenie do wiary*, "Wychowawca" 2016 nr 3, pp. 22–23.

⁴³ Cf. M. Szulakiewicz, *Dialog jako wartość – dialogiczne doświadczenie wartości*, in: *Co się dzieje z wartościami?...*, pp. 139–156.

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