

Karel Skalický: Fundamental Theology in the Existential Horizon of Thinking¹

We are all parts of certain traditions. When we decide to walk some way, we are never completely alone. We have to consider those who preceded us on the roads and paths we walk. We have contact with those who walk with us. And last but not least, we have to think about those who will follow in our footsteps. In the process of our own education and growth we encounter those who teach us to read maps. And we meet others, who initiate us into the rules of traveling. Some present theories (maps) show us how to dwell in the labyrinth of the world and its landscapes that we eventually decide to travel and walk. Some skilful globetrotters know that maps are not the same as actual landscapes. They know that theories are not identical with practice, but both are necessary for us to have a complete picture of our surroundings. In other words, maps usually tell us that there is a river or a bush up ahead. But they do not tell us how deep the river crossing is, or how thick the bushes are for when we need to go through them.

For this information, we need someone who knows, someone who has experience – a local scout, an authentic insider. However, even the most skilful tracker cannot see the particular landscape in its wider context in the same way as those who create maps are able to see it. Connecting theory to praxis, reading maps, and walking through landscapes, learning to understand map signs and learning to know corners and streets, forests and rivers, roads and paths, local

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people, plants and animals; that is what we need to search for, that is what we need to learn from those who are settled in the local grounds as well as from those who travel a lot – from those who know places as well as from those who draw maps. Yet, there is always a danger of being too narrow-minded and think our (or my) map is the only one, that my reading of the landscape is the only possible. We need to read our landscapes, including our theological traditions, “widely”² in order to maintain balance between the general and the contextual so as to avoid abstract generalisation on the one hand and exclusive contextual interpretation on the other. We need to pay attention to one’s own context, yet we should not fall into the trap of ignoring the context of the other.

During my theological journey, I have met several “local scouts” who have never left their homelands. I have met some map drawers who were never out of their office. And I also have met a few who were able to draw maps, read them, and who always enjoyed scouting through the different landscapes. One of these was Mgr. Prof. Karel Skalický, who trained me in theology and continues to inspire my own theological journey. The aim of this article is to introduce his concept of fundamental theology and contribute in this way towards a revival of this theological discipline, which is, according to Gerald O’Collins, experiencing crises or decline:

(...) as the third millennium unfolds, even though the questions fundamental theology traditionally raised have in no way become outdated and irrelevant, the very existence of this discipline seems to be quietly threatened with non-existence.³

In the perspective of O’Collins the appropriate response to such a situation is to go back to the great masters of fundamental theology, recall them, and develop their legacy.⁴ Only then shall we be able to relaunch the discipline once again in the context of contemporary times, facing the collapse of Christian

² Chris Budden, “The Necessity of the Second Peoples’ Theology in Australia,” in *Contextual Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Katalina Tahaafé-Wiliams and Stephen Bevans (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2012), 61.

³ Gerald O’Collins, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2011), vii.

⁴ In the preface to his *Rethinking Fundamental Theology*, Gerald O’Collins names, for instance, Cardinal Avery Dulles, Gerhard Ebeling, René Latourelle, and Karl Rahner. See *ibid.*

civilisation,⁵ or Christendom if you prefer the term.⁶ It is characteristic to such a context that while Christianity in the global south flourishes today,⁷ European Christianity experiences disorientation and decline – it loses members, property, power, and influence in society.⁸ According to my opinion, it is not only the way how Christianity is lived that has changed, but also the way how people understand its (doctrinal) content. Therefore, the future task for theologians could be defined as threefold: (1) to participate actively in intra-denominational discussions about the development of doctrine facing the immense social and cultural changes of the world today; (2) to join theology to the interdisciplinary nature of thinking characteristic to contemporary times; and (3) to emphasise constantly the public relevance of theology as a service to thinking and to the sustainable development of life on a global scale. Fundamental theology has the potential to serve us well for the purpose of dealing with the abovementioned tasks.

However, in order to maintain and even rediscover the merits of fundamental theology as a discipline “living on the edge of empirical sciences and theology” and being ‘enormously sensitive to changes of cultural environment and new ways of thinking,’”⁹ we must go back to the heritage our predecessors have left

⁵ It is necessary to note that such a reflection comes chiefly from the camp of Protestant authors. For instance, Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1999); Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2004); Stuart Murray, *Church After Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2005); Douglas J. Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity* (Oregon, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002). Catholic authors do not speak about post-Christendom, but their reflections on Christianity living in the globalised world (e.g., Bevans, Schreiter) correspond to a certain extent to the concept of post-Christendom.

⁶ According to Hauerwas and Willimon, the fall of Christendom occurred somewhere between 1960 and 1980. See Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1989), 15-16. Further, it is important to note that by the term Christian civilisation a close link between Christianity and European cultural heritage is meant here, and consequently the term Christendom emphasises the fact that this particular form of Christianity exercised its sovereignty and decisive (cultural) power beyond its original geographic borders.

⁷ The fact that so called “western Christians” will become a minority within the global Christianity of the 21st century was predicted more than 15 years ago by Phillip Jenkins. See Phillip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002), 1-14.

⁸ Cf. Hans-Peter Geiser, *The Community of the Weak: Social Postmodernism in Theological Reflections on Power and Powerlessness in North America* (Oregon, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), xi.

⁹ Karel Říha, “Fundamentální teologie v existenciálním horizontu myšlení [Fundamental theology in the Existential Horizon of Thinking],” *Studie* 122-123 (1989): 146.

us and carry their legacy forward in a creative way. Only in this way may we stay faithful to the constant task of renewing tradition and become truly able to react to new and upcoming signs of the times. And that is why I would like to start with presenting the adventurous life story of Mons. Skalický which shaped his unique theology in a decisive way. Skalický himself became part of the larger theological tradition while he continued the work of his predecessor at the Lateran University in Rome, Prof. Boublík. In this sense my personal connection to Skalický and to his style of fundamental theology helps to carry this tradition further for a while. The second part of this article proceeds with presenting fundamental theology as a reflection of the continuous and gradual concretisation of the sacred in human lives and the world. Such a reflection then results in Skalický's concept of fundamental theology, being done in the existential mode (or horizon) of thinking (part 3). Consequently, the conclusion attempts to summarise the major lines of inspiration we may draw from the works of Karel Skalický today and their use for the task of the discipline's renewal.

1. Karel Skalický – A Biographical Narrative

Karel Skalický (1934)¹⁰ was born as the only son in the family of a forest engineer in Hluboká nad Vltavou, a small town in the region of South Bohemia. After he finished high school and had a brief working experience, he decided to study at Charles University in Prague. In 1953 he enrolled at the Agricultural Faculty to study the mechanisation of agriculture. Despite the technical orientation of his study, he appreciated music, dance, and reading. During his university studies, the desire to become a priest started to mature. In this respect, Skalický was influenced by Vladimír Třebín – a Premonstratensian priest candidate whom he met during Easter 1955. Soon they became friends and Třebín gave him a book, *The Following of Christ, in Four Books* by Thomas à Kempis. Skalický started to read and meditate upon his vocation. Slowly, he decided to give his life fully to the service of Jesus Christ as a priest in the Catholic Church. But it was rather impossible to realise such a vocation in the context

¹⁰ This short biographical sketch is based on my interview with Karel Skalický, which was recorded for the Memory of Nations – a non-profit organisation collecting and recording stories connected to the most important events of the 20th century narrated by living witnesses. I recorded and edited the whole story of Karel Skalický in 2014 within the project “Fleeing into Freedom.”

It is available at: http://www.pametnaroda.cz/witness/index/id/4143?locale=en_GB. [Accessed 21st June 2018.] The whole story and audio samples are in Czech but crucial parts of Skalický's narrative and his short biography are available in English translation.

of the early 1950s in a Czechoslovakia that was ruled by the Communist party which was well advised by Soviet counsellors. In the whirl of uncertainties and ruminations about what to do, a clear impulse suddenly came, again from Třebín, who unexpectedly invited Skalický to join him for an escape to “the West,” where they both could freely study for the priesthood and reach ordination.

Skalický was shocked because he knew about the military-guarded electric fences and barbed-wire barriers freshly built along the Czechoslovakian border to separate the Eastern Bloc from the free western world.¹¹ Friends of his father, workers in border woods who worked with trees in the “forbidden zone,” told him stories about its impenetrability. “Do you want to join me?” asked Třebín. Skalický remembers that he started to fudge the issue. He first told his friend that he had to finish university, that he was not the kind of person who runs away from a work in progress, and that he could not leave his parents behind. But deep down he knew that the die was cast, that he had already decided, and that these were just excuses. “Ok, fine, I’ll go,” answered Skalický in the end. During the dark and rainy night from 15th to 16th June 1956, their desire to become priests led Skalický and Třebín to the southern border of Czechoslovakia. They managed to get past guards and wired barriers including an electric one. And after crossing the swollen river they finally reached Austria. The road to Rome was open to the new (overnight) refugees.¹²

After this inner (the decision to go) and outer (planning the journey itself) adventure, and after a few months spent in Austria (Vienna, Geras), both refugees safely reached Rome and the Czechoslovakian seminary. While Třebín was eventually dismissed from the Nepomuceno College for his aggressive

¹¹ Such barriers were parts of the broader concept of the so called “Iron Curtain,” a complex effort of the former Soviet Union to seal off itself and countries under its political influence (including Czechoslovakia), ideologically, politically, and even physically from the (non-communist) West. While it is common knowledge that the Berlin Wall is used as the symbol of the Iron Curtain, particular post-communist countries have their own symbols as well. In the contemporary Czech Republic, the forbidden border zone and so called “wires” function as symbols of the Iron Curtain.

¹² At this point it is necessary to note that the story has another dimension revealed to Skalický only a few years ago from newly discovered archival materials. The escape of Třebín and Skalický was not actually illegal. In fact, Třebín was already an agent of the StB (State Security – plainclothes secret police serving as an intelligence and counter-intelligence service for the communist regime in former Czechoslovakia) and Skalický was used as proof (a young idealist) of their escape’s authenticity and Třebín’s mission abroad. Třebín was sent to the Czechoslovakian seminary in Rome (Nepomuceno College) to collect information about the site, people, and life there.

behaviour,¹³ Skalický completed his spiritual formation and was ordained priest in the Lateran basilica just after Christmas 1961. Soon after, in 1962, he finished his theological studies and defended his licentiate. After that, Skalický started to work as a youth minister in St Peter's oratory in the Vatican City. Simultaneously, he continued to study philosophy and was also offered the opportunity to take part in the final Second Vatican Council session as an "assignator locorum" (usher). Skalický of course did not miss the unique opportunity to witness the Council's aula atmosphere. Later, he recalled this experience in a commentary to the *Gaudium et spes* conciliar document, which soon became a prominent reference work for everyone in Czechoslovakia who wanted to deal with the Council and this particular constitution.¹⁴

In 1966, the communist regime of Czechoslovakia expatriated Cardinal Josef Beran, who retired in Roman exile. Very soon after his arrival, Karel Skalický became his second secretary. Meanwhile, Skalický finished his theological doctorate and together with his secretarial duties also became the editor in chief of the famous Czechoslovakian exile journal "Studie." He served in this place until 1990, when the journal ended. In 1968 Skalický officially became an Italian citizen and it was again possible for him to travel freely with an Italian passport. In the same year, he was appointed assistant professor at the Lateran University, where he became a colleague of Vladimír Boublík, a prominent Czechoslovakian theologian in exile.¹⁵ Skalický had met Boublík already as a

¹³ When the undercover agent had finished his mission at Nepomuceno College, he caused trouble (he struck a clerical colleague publicly in the face) and for that reason he was expelled from the college. The mission was accomplished, and the agent was free to return undiscovered.

¹⁴ Karel Skalický, *Radost a naděje* [Joy and Hope]. (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2000). The original book was published in 1968.

¹⁵ Vladimír Boublík (1928-1974) was a Catholic priest, theologian, and a professor of the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome (1959-1974). In 1972, he even became the dean of its Faculty of Theology. His life journey was quite adventurous, and it is no exaggeration to say that the same is true about his theology. For Boublík, theology was a way of searching for the meaning of life in facing its inevitable termination in (physical) death. His time was marked by flourishing existentialism seeking to find the meaning of human existence experienced by people as being towards death – "Sein zum Tode" in Heidegger's term. And therefore, in his work, Boublík sees theology as an (existential) adventure of searching for life meaning. He is convinced that theology can help us to find out: (1) who we are as human beings; (2) what our specific place is in this world; and (3) what is the purpose of our existence, directed, and slowly floating towards death. According to Boublík, answers to these questions may come from a relationship with the transcendent, personal, and triune God of Christianity. This kind of relationship has a model in the life and story of Jesus Christ. Human life is an adventure of love (Cf. Vladimír Boublík, *Duchovní deník* [Spiritual Diary], (Olomouc: Refugium, 2010), 147-148). In the

seminarian. Boublík was his teacher, older mentor, and later he became his friend too. Their friendship and collegial cooperation lasted until Boublík's early death in 1974. After Boublík passed away, Skalický took over his job at the Lateran University and became full professor of fundamental theology.¹⁶ He also became responsible for the Theology of Religions programme established by Boublík.

From student, youth minister, and Council usher, Skalický became secretary to a Cardinal, an editor-in-chief, and later professor of the Lateran University. Skalický knew that if his university teaching career were to be fruitful, he had to stay in contact with daily life and praxis. Therefore, despite his university commitments, he served as a chaplain in the general house of the Marist Brothers (1970-1985), and he was a spiritual administrator of Czechoslovak refugees in Italy (1970-1979). His university activities were not limited only to the city of Rome. He travelled a lot and lectured in most European countries, U.S.A., Zambia, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Puerto Rico. In 1987, he was named "Monsignor" by Pope John Paul II as a reward for his excellent service to the Church. His reputable career as a respected professor and prominent clergymen was in full blossom when the communist regime in Czechoslovakia collapsed. This was the second time this evil ideology of the 20th century turned Skalický's life upside down. At the instigation of his long-time friend and confrere Monica Schreier, he relinquished his post at the Lateran University, left his comfortable, sunny Vatican flat and at the age when other university professors retire, he relocated back to the town where he was born, and started to work again.

In 1994, he became a local priest in Hluboká nad Vltavou. At the same time, he became a professor at the newly established University of South Bohemia, Faculty of Theology in České Budějovice, which was a nearby city. From 1996 to

perspective of Boublík, love seeks not only understanding, but also its own fullness within the ahistorical completeness of Love. This Love, however, became part of history in the event of Jesus Christ. The ahistorical became historic, and yet remained ahistorical; the transcendent became immanent and yet remained fully transcendent. This paradox reveals the true nature of God and sets up a possibility for human beings that their love as a particular, historical act can connect to God, the transcendental, personal, and everlasting source of all love.

¹⁶ As his successor, Skalický builds on the fundamental theology developed by Vladimír Boublík. Cf. Karel Skalický, *Za nadějí a smysl* [For Hope and Meaning], (Praha: Zvon, 1996), 233. It is especially obvious from the extensive introduction he wrote for Boublík's fundamental theology, which was discovered in the estate of the deceased Monica Schreier (a close friend of Boublík and Skalický) as late as in 2014 and was published two years later in 2016. See Karel Skalický, "Saggio Introduttivo: Vladimír Boublík e la sua teologia [Introduction: Vladimír Boublík and His Theology]," in Vladimír Boublík, *Alla ricerca di Gesù di Nazareth: e altri scritti* (Città del Vaticano: Lateran University, 2016), 11-85.

1999 he also served as its dean. In the year 2006 Skalický received the highest state distinction – the Order of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk – from the President of the Czech Republic for his service to the state in the area of democracy, humanity, and development of human rights. In the year 2010, he received an honorary doctoral degree from Palacký University in Olomouc. In 2013 Skalický became professor emeritus of the University of South Bohemia. Nowadays, Skalický is still active within the university. He teaches a few courses and continues with his writings. For instance, despite the extensive introduction to Boublík's fundamental theology which was already quoted, in 2016 Skalický published an article on revelation and time in *Lateranum*,¹⁷ and during the spring of 2018 he finished the manuscript of his upcoming book dealing with the Christian understanding of European history in the perspective of revolutions.

Apart from the attempt to contribute a little towards the renewal of the discipline of fundamental theology, I would like to introduce Skalický's concept of fundamental theology to the English-speaking readership, because his theology has been available only in Italian and Czech (with a few exceptions in German and English).¹⁸ It would be of course possible to present other aspects of Skalický's work (for instance his theology of the world, his interpretations of the history of salvation, religion and politics, religious studies, etc.), but I regard his fundamental theology as the most inspiring and therefore I have opted for devoting the remaining pages of this text to the effort of summarising its principal contours. However, there are two difficulties in such an attempt. First, Skalický's work is still under development and it will be the task of future

¹⁷ Karel Skalický, "La rivelazione e il tempo: Abbozzo della tipologia della rivelazione secondo il parametron del tempo," *Lateranum* 82/1 (2016): 161-170.

¹⁸ Prior to his return to the Czech Republic, Skalický published mostly in Italian and in Czech (exile journals). Most of Skalický's recent work (during the last 25 years) appeared in the Czech language. Despite this, he published occasionally also in English, Italian, and German. Two recent Italian publications have already been mentioned. The most important English and German texts include: Karel Skalický, "Thinking about God Philosophically in Europe Today: A Czech Perspective," in *Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today: Theology in Global Dialogue*, ed. Norbert Hintersteiner (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007), 157-168; Karel Skalický, "Religion in the Modern World," in *Das Wesen des Menschen, Integrale Anthropologie* 6, ed. Karel Mácha (München: Minerva, 1985), 313-328; Karel Skalický, "The Vicissitudes of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, 1918 to 1988," in *Czechoslovakia: Crossroads and Crises, 1918-88*, ed. Norman Stone and Eduard Strouhal (London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 358-376; Karel Skalický, "Wer ist ein Christ? Zur Theologie des Christseins," in *Christliche Identität in Europa auf dem Prüfstand: Pastoraltheologische Begegnungen: Horizonte und Optionen: Eine Veröffentlichung des Post-Netzwerks der mittel- und osteuropäischen Pastoraltheologinnen und Pastoraltheologen*, Pastoraltheologische Hefte 7 (Gnieszno-Wien: Gaudetinum, 2014), 81-94.

research to assess properly the whole corpus of his work. Second, because of the limited space given by the character of this text, I can present just a brief sketch, and not a deep study of his fundamental theology.¹⁹

2. Fundamental Theology as Gradual Concretisation of the *Sacred*

Skalický's first comprehensive text on fundamental theology dates back to 1979. He wrote an Italian textbook for his course at the *Istituto superiore di teologia a distanza: Ut Unum Sint*.²⁰ He used the same text for his lectures at the Lateran University. Skalický's textbook soon became popular among students and thus the second (corrected) edition was published by the *Ut Unum Sint* institute already in 1980.²¹ The third edition was published by the Lateran University Press in 1987 as a proper book.²² Finally, the fourth expanded edition of Skalický's *Teologia fondamentale* was published in 1992.²³

Even though we may find in his "Fundamental theology" a certain structure, Karel Skalický denies that he would proceed strictly systematically while writing it.²⁴ Despite that, its first version consists of 10 didactical units (and Skalický decided to keep this structure in all future editions of his book) proceeding

¹⁹ I published a larger text on Skalický's fundamental theology in the festschrift celebrating his 80th birthday. See František Štěch, "Fundamentální teologie a křesťanská identita [Fundamental Theology and Christian Identity]," in *Církev a společnost* [Church and Society], ed. František Štěch and Roman Míčka (České Budějovice: Jihočeská Univerzita, 2014), 23-38. At this point it has to be noted that I joined the story of Karel Skalický in 1999 as one of his students in České Budějovice. Soon I became his student assistant (2000) and therefore (naturally) he served as a consultant of my master thesis and later also as the promotor of my doctorate. After completing my doctoral degree in theology, I became a colleague of Skalický and took over his responsibility of teaching fundamental theology at the University of South Bohemia. We worked together until summer 2016 when I moved to Prague, becoming a researcher at Charles University. Since that time, we still keep close contact, and I consider his theology and life example as formative for my own theology.

²⁰ Karel Skalický (Carlo Skalický), *Teologia fondamentale* [Fundamental Theology], (1st edition), (Roma: Istituto di teologia per corrispondenza del Centro 'Ut Unum Sint', 1979).

²¹ Karel Skalický (Carlo Skalický), *Teologia fondamentale* [Fundamental Theology], (2nd edition), (Roma: Istituto di teologia per corrispondenza del Centro 'Ut Unum Sint', 1980).

²² Karel Skalický (Carlo Skalický), *Teologia fondamentale* [Fundamental Theology], (3rd edition), (Roma: Istituto superiore di teologia a distanza – P.U.L., 1987).

²³ Karel Skalický (Carlo Skalický), *Teologia fondamentale* [Fundamental Theology], (4th edition), (Roma: Istituto superiore di scienze religiose a distanza dell'Ateneo Romano della Santa Croce, 1992). It is necessary to note that even though some part of Skalický's fundamental theology was translated into Czech, the whole book is still available only in Italian.

²⁴ Cf. Skalický, *Za naději a smysl* [For Hope and Meaning], 229.

from the study of the general religious phenomenon (religious studies), through a philosophical reflection of religion, to the theological interpretation of the crucial event of Christianity – that is, according to Skalický, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. After a careful study of various concepts of the idea of God and their origin,²⁵ Skalický comes to the conviction that the idea of God is born only from the need for orientation and meaning. Human beings need a plausible concept of meaning for their elementary residing in the world. However, he does not build this argument as another “proof” of God’s existence, but he rather shared his own expertly reflected experience, his own explanation of the origin of the idea of God in the human mind.

Skalický shows that religious fact (or as Skalický prefers, “phenomena”) is always somehow ambiguous, it oscillates between human and divine, while both elements are interconnected and work together on its forming. After all, “each questioning for God always finally leads to questions for humanity.”²⁶ But religious studies alone cannot answer Skalický’s further question whether something in reality corresponds with the idea of God.²⁷ In the effort to answer this question Skalický leaves the field of religious studies and turns to philosophy. After considering two traditional philosophical argumentations for God’s existence, that of St Thomas and the other of Anselm of Canterbury, he also considers the axiological argument of Albert Lang, popular at that time.²⁸ Skalický is satisfied with neither Lang nor St Thomas and Anselm. Consequently, he attempts to work out his own argument, which would best be called “comparative.” In this effort, he was inspired by Claude Trésmontant and Avery Dulles (especially by his thinking in models). Skalický strives to prove the relative character of humanity and the world in relation to the absolute, which means for him chiefly to prove the createdness of the whole “worldly-human reality.”²⁹ In his opinion, classical arguments for God’s existence presuppose the relative nature of the world, thus logically they must reach the conclusion that the absolute cause of the relative world must exist. But is the world really relative?

²⁵ Skalický concentrated his interest on different hypotheses about the origin of the idea of God provided by different scholars, such as Edward B. Tylor, Andrew Lang, Wilhelm Schmidt, Sigmund Freud, Raffaele Pettazzoni, Emile Durkheim, Carl Gustav Jung, and Peter L. Berger.

²⁶ Karel Skalický, *Po stopách neznámého boha* [Tracking the Unknown God] (Svitavy: Trinitas, 2011), 19.

²⁷ Cf. Skalický, *Za nadějí a smysl* [For Hope and Meaning], 230.

²⁸ See Albert Lang, *Wesen und Wahrheit der Religion: Einführung in die Religionsphilosophie*, (München: Max Hueber, 1957), 236-253.

²⁹ Skalický, *Za nadějí a smysl* [For Hope and Meaning], 231.

This question leads Skalický to a methodological approach different from those applied by St Thomas, Anselm, or Lang. He suggests the human being in its humanity as a criterion³⁰ for the truthfulness of various non-biblical “universal” or “total” systems. Skalický identifies altogether six of them: (1) the system of chaotic-evolutionary myths; (2) the onto-static system of Parmenides, which has (according to Skalický) its parallel in the cosmology of the Upanishads; (3) the emanationist system of Neoplatonism; (4) the substantial system of Spinoza; (5) the dialectical-spiritual one of Hegel; and the final “total” system of world interpretation is (6) the dialectical-materialistic concept of Marxism-Leninism. In all of these systems, the humanity of the human being is always somehow reduced, while only in the biblical understanding of God and his creation is the human being preserved in all its values. Therefore, Skalický concludes that God (or at least the concept of God), the creator of the world and all human beings, as introduced in the Bible, is truthful, because he is the only one substantially and explicitly enhancing the humanity of human beings and not denying it in any of its aspects.

But this argument is a result of a typically objectivistic way of thinking, very clear and accessible, but yet rather probabilistic than apodictic. Skalický is aware of that and thus he gradually resigns to all attempts to give another proof of God’s existence. He points out only the rationality of religious faith in the (1) absolute, (2) transcendental, and (3) personal (and thus immanent too) God instead. He presents this rationality in contrast with (and as an alternative to) the six ideological rationalities named above. The first step of Skalický’s fundamental theology aims at presenting a credible concept of transcendence and points out the rational aspects of religious faith open to its more concrete formulation in human lives. In short, he starts his fundamental theology with a firm conviction that the God of Christianity demands human love instead of any proof of his own existence. God does not need people for any manifestation of his own existence, but he appreciates them as partners in a relationship. Skalický presents this conviction in a form of the “Cartesian dream:”

I had a dream that soon after Descartes gave a perfectly irrefutable and strictly apodictic proof of God’s existence, God revealed to him and said: Excellent! Your proof of my existence turned out well. You will surely enter the history of human thought with it. But consider what you have done to me by your proof. Actually – if I may say so – you force me to exist. From this moment, when you irrefutably proved that I am, I cannot presume to pretend as if I would not exist. Can you

³⁰ “But it would be a misapprehension of this idea to see it in the sense of Pythagoras’ ‘pantón metron anthrópos.’” Říha, *Fundamentální teologie v existenciálním horizontu myšlení* [Fundamental theology in the Existential Horizon of Thinking], 139.

see what that does mean? Probably not, thus pay good attention: in order that you understand, I am not the God of reigning and hegemony, who always needs a scientific ideology for his own justification, proving undeniably the existence of such a super-ruler, but that I am the God of freedom, who can do without such an ideology very well, I reveal myself to you today to tell you that I will confuse all human thinking. I will confuse it in such a way that you will search me, but you won't find me, as long as you say: it is not our speculating but our love to Him, that love exceeding all other love, that is the highest proof of His existence. Thus, do not say that God exists because we strictly-logically proved him as a necessarily existing Being. But rather say: He exists, because we love Him more than anything else. Consider that I do not want to exist alone out of my own power of an independent Being. I want to exist also – and primarily – through the power of your love, your will to God. Thus, give existence to my Being. Make an endeavour that I will exist not only as a consequence of your logical considerations, but that I will exist through the power of your active and creative love.³¹

But in Christianity, people are exposed not only to the question of God's existence (or non-existence), but also to the question of Jesus Christ (the God who has been born and died, God who became man). This question was central already to Skalický's predecessor at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, Vladimír Boublík. Skalický naturally builds upon his thought and continues to develop especially the issue of the Resurrection as being of primary importance for any kind of theology, and for fundamental theology above all. The Czech Jesuit philosopher Karel Říha affirmed this position in his review of Skalický's *Teologia fondamentale* in this way: "The possibilities and tasks of fundamental theology can be only measured on the unique character of this problem [of the Resurrection]."³² For Skalický, the phenomenon of the Resurrection points out the mysterious unity of the full deity and full humanity in the person of Jesus Christ – God who was born, lived, and died, while (mysteriously) not losing anything of his divinity. Therefore, he rejected the common argumentation of classical apologetics considering the Resurrection as a kind of "peak miracle" (the Miracle among other miracles) as one-sided and too evidentialist, because in that perspective Jesus functions more or less only as a bearer (messenger) of God's revelation. Skalický is looking on the theological problem of the Resurrection in a more complex way. In the revelation of Jesus Christ, there is an identity of revealer with the mystery of salvation (with what is revealed). "The deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both

³¹ Skalický, *Po stopách neznámého boha* [Tracking the Unknown God], 182.

³² Říha, *Fundamentální teologie v existenciálním horizontu myšlení* [Fundamental Theology in the Existential Horizon of Thinking], 146. The title of Říha's review inspired the title of this article.

the mediator and the fullness of all revelation (DV 2).” With explicit reference to the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council, Skalický sees the Resurrection as: (1) inseparable from revelation, (2) the concrete and visible manifestation of God in human history (from below), and (3) the *mysterium salutis* (from above) at the same time.³³

In his theological investigation on the Resurrection Skalický starts searching for data already available. What do we know about the Resurrection? What texts do we have available? What are their differences and what do they have in common? After an extensive and careful analysis of biblical narratives dealing with the Resurrection³⁴ Skalický goes deeper in his linguistic investigation. What language is employed in order to present the paschal event? What words, terms, and expressions are used? Skalický finds altogether four different styles (languages) used in the Bible to describe the Resurrection³⁵ and thus concludes that for human language it is an extremely difficult challenge to speak about the event, which is real and eschatological at the same time.³⁶ Is it possible to share reality (both historical and trans-historical) and (continuous) radical newness of such an event at once? Skalický thinks it is only possible through a “combination of various languages which complement one another and yet it seems they oppose each other,”³⁷ as it was expressed, for instance, by Melito of Sardis in his famous work *Peri Pascha* (On Pascha).³⁸ These different languages unveil different aspects of the paschal event and drive our attention to the level of its truthfulness and meaning, yet they never exhaust all possibilities to express the mystery so close and yet so far.

What does it mean for us that Jesus was born, lived, died, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day? If it does make sense for us, is it true? Did it really happen? And how? “What actually happened that night in Jerusalem?”³⁹

³³ Cf. Skalický, *Teologia fondamentale* [Fundamental Theology], (4th edition), 195-209.

³⁴ Skalický highlights 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 as the most important text for interpretation of the paschal event from a theological as well as historical point of view. Cf. Karel Skalický, “Třetího dne vstal z mrtvých podle písem [On the Third Day He Rose from Dead According to the Scriptures],” in *Věřím ve vzkříšení těla a život věčný* [I Believe in the Resurrection on the Body and Life Everlasting] (Praha: Katechetická sekce ČBK a nakladatelství Tomáš Halama, 2007), 17.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 24-31.

³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 31.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Melito of Sardis, *Peri Pascha: On Pascha and Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

³⁹ Skalický, “Třetího dne vstal z mrtvých podle písem [On the Third Day He Rose from Dead According to the Scriptures],” 41.

These questions are for Skalický “an urgent invitation to a decision of faith.”⁴⁰ They challenge the human ability to believe, which is closely related to the human ability to receive and give love. Behind human faith in resurrection there is always a desire to be loved and to love. Yet, such a desire is not anonymous, because it is grounded in concrete historical events and particular experiences of certain historical personalities who loved (e.g., Rm 13:8; Eph 5:2; 1 Jn 4:10-11, 19; etc.) and were loved (e.g., Jn 11:5.36; 13:1.34; 15:12.17; etc.). Skalický sees Christian faith as a particular way of exercising love which is inseparable from confidence:

When you think of it, the Christian faith is inseparable from confidence in the truthfulness of the personal witness of the apostles. Whoever is not willing to be confident of the other in principle is not actually able to believe in the true Christian way. Faith in God and the willingness to trust in people are uniquely interconnected in Christian faith and this has no equivalent in any other religion (...). In Christianity, it is not possible to separate faith in God from confidence in people.⁴¹

In confidence in the witness of St Paul (especially 1 Cor 15:3b-5), Skalický provides us with an excellent exercise regarding what fundamental theology should be – an art of discernment of various ways of thinking, knowledge, and understanding (empirical, rational, intuitionist, creative, provisional yet informative, improvisatory, and spiritual). In other words, while remaining within a thorough scholarly discourse, Skalický’s fundamental-theological account of the Resurrection meets the call that theology must be beautiful, compelling, engaging,⁴² understandable, and existentially relevant.⁴³ Fundamental theology should respect specific competencies of all possible approaches to theology and its themes, and look for good values they may offer⁴⁴ to our complex theological investigation – similar to what St Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 – “test everything (and) hold fast to what is good.”

⁴⁰ Říha, “Fundamentální teologie v existenciálním horizontu myšlení [Fundamental theology in the Existential Horizon of Thinking],” 147.

⁴¹ Skalický, “Třetího dne vstal z mrtvých podle písem [On the Third Day He Rose from Dead According to the Scriptures],” 43.

⁴² Jonathan Roach and Grisel Dominguez, *Expressing Theology: A Guide to Writing Theology that Readers Want to Read* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 19-22.

⁴³ Štefan Štofanič, “Popularization and Autobiography: Towards an Accessible Theology,” *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Theologica* 4/1 (2014): 68.

⁴⁴ Cf. Tomáš Špidlík, “Skalického fundamentální teologie [Skalický’s Fundamental Theology],” *Studie* 78 (1981): 608.

Consequently, we may say that Skalický does not want to (*a priori*) exclude any possibility for understanding love – the basic principle of our humanity, of human relationships (including that with God). He uses hermeneutics as well as the metaphysical principle of *analogia entis*.⁴⁵ He always attempts to mediate both theory as well as praxis.⁴⁶ In the fundamental theology of Skalický there is a principal openness to all expressions of faith as a relationship to the divine or “sacred,” but at the same time there is a firm confession of particular faith in Jesus Christ, who is, according to Skalický, the only one who reveals the true meaning of humanity, and who actually is the only true (incarnated) answer to the mystery of humankind – the way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6).

In claiming this, Skalický invites his readers to track with him the “unknown” God – the initially anonymous “sacred” perceived and experienced in human lives. In his theological endeavour he wrestles with the sacred,⁴⁷ motivated by the desire to fill the term “sacred” with progressively more accurate content or meaning in a way that the face of Jesus Christ – the Resurrected one – slowly appears in clear contours on the canvas of Skalický’s fundamental theology. For Christianity, Jesus Christ is a concrete content, shape, substance, and meaning of the sacred. It is already obvious that emphasising the Resurrection and its inseparable link to revelation plays a significant role in Skalický’s fundamental theology. At this point it is possible to conclude that the initially apophatic start of Skalický’s fundamental theology turns cataphatic; it satisfies rational minds with arguments pointing towards the credibility of the Christian faith but at the same time reminds us that the more we think we know God (*Deus Revelatus*), the more mysterious, hidden and “unknown” (*Deus Absconditus*) he appears to us.⁴⁸ And precisely this kind of interplay of cataphatic and apophatic moments in Skalický’s theology shows that we need to choose a horizon in which we would like to think (and live) theology. In which mode of thinking do we approach the

⁴⁵ Cf. Skalický, *Po stopách neznámého boha* [Tracking the Unknown God], 28.

⁴⁶ Cf. Říha, “Fundamentální teologie v existenciálním horizontu myšlení [Fundamental theology in the Existential Horizon of Thinking],” 134.

⁴⁷ Cf. Karel Skalický, *Alle prese con il sacro: religione nella ricerca scientifica moderna* [In a Struggle with the Sacred: Religion in Modern Scientific Research], (Roma: Herder – Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1982). Czech translation: Karel Skalický, *V utkání s posvátnem: náboženství v religionistickém bádání* [In a Struggle with the Sacred: Religion in the Perspective of Religious Studies] (Brno: CDK, 2005).

⁴⁸ In this way, Skalický is an example of the theologian desired by Gerald O’Collins: “Insofar as they deal with the mystery of God, theologians cannot be too ‘knowing’ but must remain provisional, modest, and apophatic in what they say and claim.” Gerald O’Collins, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 336-337.

experience of revelation and the reality of the Resurrection? In which mode of thinking do we reflect upon our theological life?

3. Fundamental Theology in the Existential Horizon of Thinking

Skalický distinguishes two horizons of thinking – the intellectual and the existential. He prefers the latter as the principle for his own fundamental theology because, he holds, authentic Christian faith can only be born within an existential framework. In the first horizon we ask and answer but questioning and answering is not enough! In the second horizon we search and create, we fight for the meaning of one's own existence in this world.⁴⁹ In other words, the reality of the Resurrection must be connected with the radically existential experience of and with the Resurrected one. Such an experience is certainly also an experience of revelation (or revelatory experience as such). The search for the meaning of Jesus' Resurrection is the main and specific task of fundamental theology, holds Skalický. In the interview with Jan Regner for Radio Vaticana he says:

I regard as a primary task for fundamental theology today rather what my predecessor at the Lateran University Vladimír Boublík started to work at, and what I attempted to do in my Italian fundamental theology: that is, to point out the credibility and deep meaning of the Resurrection of Jesus.⁵⁰

But where is this meaning? And how could it possibly become credible (and existentially relevant) for contemporary people? Hypotheses of the transcendental God might be only a matter of reason and respond only to a question of the rationality of the world's origin. The real idea of God can only arise in the context of faith. If we search for meaning of the human dwelling in this world, and thus also the meaning of this world as such, it is necessary to leave the path of searching for solely a hypothesis of God and find courage to enter a relationship with him. Karel Říha thinks that "the meaning of life as a whole (...) is not only an active relating (...), but a relationship of the (human) spirit as such to the transcendence."⁵¹ In this sense, meaning is the unity of its

⁴⁹ Cf. Říha, "Fundamentální teologie v existenciálním horizontu myšlení [Fundamental theology in the Existential Horizon of Thinking]," 150.

⁵⁰ Jan Regner, *Víra a fundamentální teologie. Rozhovor s Karlem Skalickým* [Faith and Fundamental Theology. Interview with Karel Skalický], November 17, 2011 [accessed 27th June 2018], <http://www.radiovaticana.cz/clanek.php4?id=653>.

⁵¹ Říha, "Fundamentální teologie v existenciálním horizontu myšlení [Fundamental theology in the Existential Horizon of Thinking]," 148.

discovering and creating, and is characteristic to human relationships. If we pin down the meaning into some relationship, simultaneously we find it there as well.⁵² But religion in the Christian perspective is rather an interpersonal relationship between the personal God and created persons who relate to God as individuals, but also as groups or communities (of faith). There is God on one side, who relates himself to a human being through His Word (Logos), and this Word is God, who says “human” so fervidly and lovingly that He himself became human – he incarnates. On the other side, there is a human being who relates to God through his/her calling of faith “God, Father!” It is a very simple yet deep meaning of the word “Theo-logy.”⁵³

For Skalický this interpersonal communication between human and divine is possible because God reveals himself in human history in order to confirm his promises of new life for humanity, wrestling with trembling and fear in foreseeing his/her own physical termination (death). Karel Říha summarises Skalický’s emphasis on the Resurrection as follows:

Anticipation of death and new life is the meaning which was revealed in history that is in the life, sacrifice and Resurrection of Jesus, in its radical way. Since then the decision of faith, the decision towards a fullness of life is carried by unification with Christ. To become open to life in Christ means to have a share of his life, death and Resurrection. Therefore, the question of the Resurrection is crucial for fundamental theology.⁵⁴

Skalický’s emphasis on the reflection of the Resurrection enabled through the experience of revelation sheds light on the mystery of life and death (of Jesus as well as of our own). Through understanding the Resurrection and the experience of revelation people are able to see at least a glimpse of the meaning of their own life historically framed by birth and death. Skalický’s focus on questions regarding the meaning of life and death (existential questions) marks and implies a new understanding of fundamental theology and a new conception of metaphysics, understood as an “open system of correlativity of the acts of the mind – knowing and wanting – in the necessity of being and freedom of love.”⁵⁵ As such, Skalický’s fundamental theology offers a clear and concrete (Christian) vision of the absolute horizon of humanity which we are not only able to experience,

⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, 148-149.

⁵³ Cf. Štěch, “Fundamentální teologie a křesťanská identita [Fundamental Theology and Christian Identity],” 30.

⁵⁴ Říha, “Fundamentální teologie v existenciálním horizontu myšlení [Fundamental theology in the Existential Horizon of Thinking],” 150.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

but through faith we are also able to enter into a personal relationship with “it.” This is precisely because the absolute horizon of humanity is in the Christian perspective not a blurry vision, but the particular person instead. It is not “it” but “the person” instead. It is Jesus Christ, God with whom we may become friends,⁵⁶ God with whom we cooperate in the constant improvement of our humanity and the world we live in.⁵⁷

Following Boublík, Skalický’s fundamental theology maintains not only theological but also anthropological focus. Put simply, we cannot love God unless we love our fellow human beings and the world.⁵⁸ And I think this is what fundamental theology may offer to Christians as well as non-Christians (to all those who search for mysterious meaningfulness of the world and our being in it) – a reflection of the God-Human mutual relationship experienced within the scene of this world and its particular (contextual, socio-historical, geographical...) landscapes. According to Skalický, emphasising and enhancing humanity could be used as a criterion to assess the truthfulness of the world view (Weltanschauung) because (at least in Christian terms) everything that improves humanity and preserves it in all its aspects directs us and leads us to God – who became one of us in order to reveal that the human being shall be nothing other

⁵⁶ This was already a conviction of Vladimír Boublík who spoke about the mystery of Nazareth where they were meeting Jesus as their fellow human being – as a neighbour or even a friend. “Inhabitants of Nazareth were meeting the incarnated God on the streets, when working, having fun or with a glass of wine. Meeting God on the street is perhaps better than in the smell of incense and faded flowers.” Valdimír Boublík, *Setkání s Ježíšem* [Meeting with Jesus] (Svitavy: Trinitas, 2002), 126–127.

⁵⁷ “No relationship is played out in an absolute vacuum; it needs always its proper context, where it can be perceived, developed and understood. Of course, the quality of a relationship is measurable only with difficulty for an external observer. However, it is possible to estimate the quality of a particular relationship from the way those involved in it treat each other, and their surroundings. Each relationship manifests itself in its environment. The garden of those who love each other blossoms and is beautiful, because they work together in it. The garden of those who quarrel is overgrown with weeds and fruit of trees nobody harvests. Relationships and their quality are expressed in their tangible contexts. The context of theology understood as a multifaceted relationship of free persons (God – human beings), is the ‘garden’ of the world and its history.” František Štěch, “Co je teologie? [What is Theology?],” in *Domov jako most: Festschrift k padesátinám Ivany Noble*, ed. Zdenko Širka [Home as a Bridge: Festschrift celebrating 50th birthday of Ivana Noble] (Jihlava: Mlýn, 2016), 14–15.

⁵⁸ This accords well with how the late Cardinal Avery Dulles defines crucial questions for the discipline of fundamental theology: “Fundamental theology, I would suggest, must ask not only how we get to God but how God comes to us. It must maintain a theological as well as an anthropological focus.” Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1995), 56–57.

than a human being heading towards its completeness and fullness offered by God as salvation.

Conclusion

At this point, it is possible to conclude that even though Skalický's fundamental theology was shaped a few decades ago, it does not lose any of its relevance for its readers today. It might appear a little outdated here and there, but as such it maintains the potential to inspire contemporary theologians in a considerable way. First, it must be mentioned that the whole work of Skalický shows that the personal story as well as the story of the community of believers does matter for theology. In fact, the particular story is always decisive for how people interpret and use classical sources of theology: Scripture, Tradition, and the magisterial teaching of the Church. This naturally influences the way theology appears, performs, and functions in human society. Since the Second Vatican Council, the classical triad of sources for theology became a tetrad when the signs of the times were suggested by the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (GS 4). This imperative of scrutinising and interpreting phenomena characteristic to present times in the light of the Gospel always resonated in Skalický's life and theology. Therefore, Skalický never considered himself just as a theologian, but also as an active citizen of Italy and the Czech Republic. He was engaged in dialogue with Marxism, in interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and also in dialogue with secularised society and its representatives. In this respect he has always been a kind of public theologian whose theology rests upon the relationality of God, people, and the world. In this sense we may say, that Skalický is a "son of the Second Vatican Council" in the best sense of the term, passionately promoting and defending the council's legacy since the end of the 1960s until today when (despite his advanced age) he is one of the most prolific advocates of Pope Francis and his vision of the Church in the Czech Republic. Skalický's theology was never done as an abstract intellectual exercise but instead, it might be said, it was and still is the way of his life. Consequently, it would not be a mistake to characterise Skalický's fundamental theology as a fruit of the post-conciliar period in Catholic theology. And it is precisely a task for contemporary theologians to respond creatively to the achievements of their predecessors and rethink their positions in the context of our time. Skalický's fundamental theology offers plenty opportunities for that. We may start developing his theory of revelation and time relationship, or we can focus on the notion of the presence (and form) of revelation in world religions. Another possibility is to undertake a serious study of the phenomenon of the

Resurrection, which is now being neglected again in theological debates, even though the debate about the Resurrection was intensive during the course of the 20th century.⁵⁹ We can also engage in theology and religious studies encounters and dialogue or develop the line of dialogue with philosophy. Reading Skalický, we may also set off in the direction of engaged, public theology or the theology of religions. In this respect, Skalický's theology as such calls for interdisciplinarity. He suggests that theologians need to come out from the "totem" of their own profession and take courage to meet and embrace other disciplines, no matter how far from theology they are. Theologians need to behave according to the principle of "totemic exogamy,"⁶⁰ says Skalický, because

Whoever wants to be 'vulnerable' and wants to 'deliver' must leave the shelter of one's own 'disciplinary totem' and search somewhere else. Just as totemic exogamy obliges tribe members, interdisciplinarity (...) is gradually becoming urgent.⁶¹

Skalický himself entered into dialogue with different facets and representatives of religious studies and philosophy as it is obvious from large parts of his fundamental theology. Despite this "outer interdisciplinarity," he has also maintained dialogue within the broad field of theology.⁶²

⁵⁹ Kenan Osborne notes to this issue, "At the beginning of the twentieth century not all Roman Catholic, nor all Protestant theologians and biblical scholars shared (...) interest in the resurrection of Jesus. At that time, Roman Catholic theology was by and large still dominated by the so-called manuals of theology, used extensively in seminary education. When one reviews these manuals of theology, two major items concerning the resurrection of Jesus emerge. First, in the sections devoted specifically to Christology the authors generally spent only a few paragraphs on the resurrection. (...) Second, outside of the specific chapters on Christology in these text books, the pages dedicated to apologetics offered a somewhat more extensive explanation of the resurrection. Nonetheless, in these Christological sections of theological apologetics the resurrection of Jesus was considered primarily as a proof both of his divinity and of the claims and prophecies that Jesus had made during his earthly life." Kenan Osborne, *The Resurrection of Jesus: New Considerations for its Theological Interpretation* (Eugene (OR): Wipf and Stock, 2004), 7-8.

⁶⁰ A principle described already by James George Frazer in his extensive four-volume work *Totemism and Exogamy*. See James George Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy: A Treatise on Certain Early Forms of Superstition and Society*, vols. I – IV (New York: Cosimo, 2010). The principle of totemic exogamy according to Frazer obliges tribe members to find their partners in a different tribe or totemic clan.

⁶¹ Skalický, *V utkání s posvátnem: náboženství v religionistickém bádání* [In a Struggle with the Sacred: Religion in Perspective of Religious Studies], 12.

⁶² In the afterword to Skalický's book *Struggles for Tomorrow or Quo Vadis Ecclesia*, the Czech philosopher and theologian Karel Vrána states that "theological thinking of Karel Skalický (...) surmounts dialectical method and becomes an integral dialogue." Consequently, he characterises

Drawing on Skalický, it can be said that apart from practising inner interdisciplinarity within theology, theologians must seriously consider the contemporary cognitive pluralism present in the “shared realm of public discourse,”⁶³ as Wenzel Van Huyssteen puts it. If theology wants to take part in public discussion, it must be able to enter the arena of interdisciplinarity beyond its own boundaries. That means, “to accept the unavailability of consensus, and to work at creating a communal framework of the wide reflecting equilibrium of thought and action.”⁶⁴ The true interdisciplinarity in theology is a call for public theology, and happens,

when our conversations proceed, not in terms of imposed ‘universal’ rules, nor in terms of purely ad hoc rules, but when we identify this (post-foundationalist) space where both strong Christian convictions as well as the public voice of theology are fused in public conversation.⁶⁵

Even though interdisciplinarity is an imperative for scholars, it should not become just a void, a programmatic necessity. This warning sounds strongly from Aaron Ghiloni, who reminds us that interdisciplinarity should not be only a motto in today’s university culture,⁶⁶ but rather a deep attitude of openness free of each attempt to ideologise interdisciplinarity. In theology, interdisciplinarity must be motivated by a mission mind-set which

understands the necessity of communicating between cultures, thus balancing interdisciplinarity’s competing demands for clarity and nuance. Indeed, early missiologists, such as St Luke and Eusebius, might be seen as proto-interdisciplinary theologians, inasmuch as they develop narratives which deliberately draw on ‘non-religious’ sources in addition to sacred writings.⁶⁷

All in all, interdisciplinarity and public discourse in theology are not the only ways forward, but certainly remain powerful tools for keeping theology up to date, understandable, and (existentially) relevant to contemporaries. Skalický’s fundamental theology advocates the use of these tools by its own example, invites

Skalický’s theology as “integral” and “holistic.” Karel Vrána, “Doslov [Afterword],” in Karel Skalický, *Zápasy o zítřek aneb Quo Vadis Ecclesia* [Struggles for Tomorrow or Quo Vadis Ecclesia], (Rychnov nad Kněžnou: Ježek, 2000), 136.

⁶³ Wenzel J. Van Huyssteen, *The Shaping of Rationality: Toward Interdisciplinarity in Theology and Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 279.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 279-280.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁶⁶ Aaron J. Ghiloni, “On Writing Interdisciplinary Theology,” *Practical Theology* 6:1 (2013): 13-14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

readers to learn, inspires them to reflect, and encourages them to set off on their own direction.

However, these important inspirations (namely emphasising interdisciplinarity and involvement in public discourse) that Skalický's theology provides for contemporary theology might seem to some to be somewhat commonplace. In order to avoid such possible feelings, I would like to offer at least one concrete example of what Skalický's theology implies for current theological debates. It is beyond doubt that one of the central questions of fundamental theology today is the question of human identity, or more specifically the question of Christian identity (human identity in theological terms) in the context of the contemporary world.⁶⁸ Skalický's fundamental theology suggests Christian identity to be human identity transformed by an encounter with God's revelation. He brings the question of human identity into a close relation to the identity of Jesus Christ. In the perspective of Skalický, Christianity is about an everyday discernment and readiness to affirm the essentials of Christianity over and over again. No one can say that he or she will be, for sure, still a Christian tomorrow. No one knows what can happen in life and how one's own faith might be threatened and may also be shipwrecked during the storms of life. Therefore, continuous conversion is principal to Christianity, it is a *modus operandi* in the process of searching for and building Christian religious identity, which is not set up (or gained) once and forever (for example, by primary conversion or baptism), but it is rather a life-long process of discernment and theologising. Consequently, each attempt to come closer to a potential defining of the Christian religious identity must consider its own inner plurality, and even with a kind of paradoxical nature, because Christian religious identity is something still in the making; it is a gift people cannot possess or claim but can only receive it with gratitude and take care of it with a loving attitude.

Karel Skalický is also well aware of the fact that it is impossible to give a single, comprehensive definition of Christian religious identity, at least not in contemporary times. In the past, when denominational struggles, especially those between Catholics and Protestants, dominated Christianity, it was possible to define Christian identity in clear terms. Only one who is baptised in the true church of Christ, confesses the true creed, and subordinates to the only

⁶⁸ As for instance, Clemens Sedmak says that identity is "one of the basic questions of theology. In this sense we do theology all the time, because we constantly try to find our place in our community, in society, in the world. Questions of identity are theological questions." Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 74.

true church authority has Christian identity.⁶⁹ Skalický understandably rejects this way of defining religious identity and offers an alternative. He thinks that Christian religious identity may be defined by three interrelated paradigms: (1) the paradigm of God's self-communication (Karl Rahner), (2) the paradigm of the first and the second creation (Karel Skalický, Vladimír Boublík) and (3) the practically-oriented paradigm of following Christ (Hans Küng). Even though Skalický thinks a combination of these three paradigms allows for a relatively complex discernment of Christian religious identity, he still favours the second approach, which he defined himself in building to great extent on his predecessor at the Lateran University, Vladimír Boublík. This approach enables us to connect the first paradigm with the third and pictures Christian identity as being born within the bipolar dynamics of the first and second creation.

Such bipolarity is significant even within the nature of Christian identity. The Christian is a human being like anyone else, but still the new and last Adam, the Risen one, who anoints each person with his Spirit, lives in him or her. By the power of this anointing each Christian is born twice: bodily from his or her parents and spiritually from the resurrected humanity of Christ, through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. From a theological point of view, such an identity is not homogeneous, but heterogeneous in the sense that the whole humanity of the first creation is oriented towards the risen Christ, who is the tree of life, the perfect kingdom of God, the heavenly Jerusalem.⁷⁰

Such a gradual transformation of the first creation into the second is possible according to Skalický only through the praxis of following Christ (paradigm 3) and thanks to God's revelation throughout history (paradigm 1).⁷¹ However, true Christian identity cannot be established exclusively by following the crucified Jesus but must be balanced also by following the risen Christ. As it is not possible to separate Jesus from Christ, it is not possible to separate his death from his resurrection. Both moments of his life must be held and meditated upon in close

⁶⁹ Karel Skalický "Kdo je křesťan? K teologii křesťanské existence" [Who is Christian? Towards a Theology of Christian Existence] *Teologické texty*, 25:2 (2014): 58.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 64.

⁷¹ In the perspective of the first paradigm Christians are able to accept God who freely communicates (reveals) himself to humanity (1) in the historical event of Jesus Christ, continues to communicate with people through (2) being encountered in the life of individuals and communities (dependent revelation), and finally (3) promises to pronounce the concluding word towards this world in the eschatological future of the definitive implementation of God's kingdom announced by Jesus Christ (eschatological revelation). Cf. František Štěch, "Zjevení a teologický obrát v teologii" [Revelation and the Theological Turn in Theology] *AUC Theologica* 7:2 (2017): 59.

unity otherwise our Christian religious identity suffers again from (theological) unbalance, having an effect on the practice of the Christian life as well.

It is now possible, in line with Skalický's vision of Christian identity, to see that questions of Christian religious identity are individual as well as communal, they are actual as well as perennial, and they are relevant for particular persons as well as for whole communities. They can be perceived as truly public questions relevant for Christians and non-Christians, too. Skalický thinks that searching for Christian religious identity is inseparable from searching for human identity in the light of Christian revelation. This could be a particular perspective which Christians could bring to the society-wide, public process of discernment and realisation of the ideals of humanity and contribute towards forming basic human identity. Everyone who wants to realise fully his or her own humanity naturally searches for the absolute horizon of humanity. If this is true, the Christian endeavour to find and become closer to such a horizon (perceived in Christianity and experienced through revelation) represents a challenge open to everyone. Christians are not following Jesus Christ for the sake of their own salvation but for the sake of the welfare of the whole of humanity.

It was in 1982, during his political imprisonment, when Václav Havel, the famous Czech intellectual, playwright, dissident, and later also president of Czechoslovakia (1989-1992) and the Czech Republic (1993-2003), wrote:

People seized the world in a way that they de facto lost it; they subjugated it in a way that they destroyed it (...). The deepest causes of this tragic development are obvious I think: a continually deepened crisis of experience of the absolute horizon growing out of the very spiritual structure of our civilization leads towards losing a sense for the integrity of existence, mutual interconnection of beings, and of their independence. From the phenomena of the world, their mysterious meaningfulness drains out (they are neither mysterious nor meaningful any more), and everything turns into 'conciseness' – and what is most important: a crisis of experience of the absolute horizon leads naturally towards a crisis of substantial responsibility of human beings towards the world and for the world – that means towards themselves and for themselves. And where there is no such responsibility – as a meaningful basis of the relationship between people and their environment – human identity as the unmistakable place of the human being in the world set by such a relationship, vanishes inevitably.⁷²

Havel's essay "Crisis of identity" depicts very well the nature of human identity from a general perspective. Human identity finds its place not only in the coherence of person with one's own personality, nor solely in the relationship

⁷² Václav Havel, *O lidskou identitu* [On Human Identity] (Praha: Rozmluvy, 1990), 349.

of human beings with the world they create and live in, but also in relation to the experience of the absolute horizon of humanity. Havel sees the absence of such an absolute horizon as a deep source of societal crisis, which is after all a spiritual crisis. Much has changed in the world since Havel wrote his essay on human identity, but I think the message of his text is as urgent today as it was at that time. Dehumanisation tendencies in the contemporary world are even stronger than they were towards the end of the 20th century and people suffer through a crisis of their identities now, just as they did before. Havel's diagnosis of the problem is very accurate. He suggests that people should try to behave responsibly, that is, in a way they think it is right to behave and in a way they think (according to their most honest conviction) all people should actually behave.⁷³ Who would not perceive in this kind of thinking the age-old wisdom of the "golden rule" which says, "what you hate, do not do to anyone" (Tobit 4:15)? But is it acceptable if we ground our identity and also our morals in personal convictions about what is right or wrong?

As a humanist, Havel was hesitant in all his writings to name the transcendence perceived and therefore here and elsewhere he rather remains with the general term "experience of the absolute horizon," because he takes seriously practically all ancient religious traditions "Christian, Jewish, 'Pagan,' Hermetic, Asian."⁷⁴ Martin C. Putna, author of a book on the spirituality of Václav Havel, perceives Havel's proclamation in his first presidential speech of 1st January 1990 to invite the Pope and the Dalai Lama to Prague as a symbolic act of claiming allegiance to the old spiritual traditions of the world in front of the mostly secular Czech society. Havel's willingness to listen to experiences of different religious traditions is perhaps the most important spiritual heritage he left us. He reminds us that the most important thing is to free ourselves from prejudices and to keep the public space open to different voices of different ancient wisdoms, which may help humanity grow.⁷⁵

Havel's experience of the absolute horizon is from the Christian perspective an experience of Jesus Christ, an experience of God's divine revelation. It is an experience with transcendence which has a name "above every name that is named" (Ephes 1:21). It is a transcendental experience of faith manifested as courage to the fullness of the meaning of life. Contrary (but also complementary) to Havel, Skalický would claim that Christianity offers a clear and concrete vision of the

⁷³ Ibid., 351.

⁷⁴ Martin C. Putna, *Spiritualita Václava Havla* [Spirituality of Václav Havel] (Praha: Knihovna Václava Havla, 2009), 79.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

absolute horizon which is not only to be experienced or perceived but to which we may find that we have a relationship after all. It is because in Christianity the absolute horizon of humanity is not merely a vision but a particular person instead. It is the person of Jesus Christ, who asks everyone searching for a mysterious meaningfulness of human life to respond to the question he asked the disciples at Caesarea Philippi: "Who do you say I am?" (Matt 16:15; Mk 8:29; Lk 9:20).

Searching for Christian identity is therefore not a mission impossible but rather a mission responsible. And that is in two ways: (1) It is about responsibility (response-ability) towards the self, the other, and the world in the sense of Havel's thought, where responsibility seems to be about transforming values to action; and (2) It is about the ability to respond (response-ability) to the call of God to do his will (cf. Matt 7:21), and also, it is about the ability to respond to the question of Jesus. Christians are not Christians just for being Christians: they are Christians for others. Christian life is about being on mission responsible. It is about participation in the mission of God (*missio Dei*) in the world, which means, above all, to do theology in the style of the Anointed One sent from God to "bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn" (Isa 61:1-2). Discussion on Christian identity is the concrete example of how we may engage with Skalický's fundamental theology in contemporary theological debates.

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