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Questions about “Solidarity” refer us to events we remember as the fundamental experience of political community, an experience understood and lived as the foundation of the Third Polish Republic. “The legend of August 1980,” writes Dariusz

Gawin, “is for the Polish collective imagination something like our myth of origin,”<sup>1</sup> a legend, we should add, which has not yet seen its final draft. Why? Here’s the rub, because asking about “Solidarity,” about how it was “in the beginning” (en arche) is also a question about the principle (arche) of Polish politics after communism. Just as with all controversies about important historical experiences what is at stake, above all, is the present and the future, and therefore we are more concerned with philosophy rather than history, more with

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<sup>1</sup> Dariusz Gawin, *Obecność Sierpnia* [The Presence of August], “Znak” 543, August 2000, p. 68.

<sup>144</sup> values than facts. Life, obviously, does not wait for the conclusions of philosophical controversies. As befits a myth, the memory of August gives us food for thought, even if it is not homogeneous and not coherent, it is one of the most significant criteria of evaluating contemporary political reality. In this sense, the experience of “Solidarity” creates what we could call, “the Polish meta-political situation.” This is what will focus our attention here.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, when we are speaking about historical “Solidarity” we are also speaking about the living experience that shapes our opinions about our surroundings, to be more precise, about a certain ideal of community: its forms, goals, and also the principles and values that anchor it. Just as with any ideal, this one is a kind of mirror – the perfect material for politico-philosophical reflection. This is not an easy task, because there is no canonical version of this model. I have no intention of suggesting one. I only want to turn our attention to the forgotten aspect of the solidarity-ideal’s genesis – which can tell us a lot about itself (in its many incarnations) and about the current ups and downs of life. My question circles around the Catholic Church’s influence upon our memory of the collective experience of the “Solidarity” community. Are we not in the habit of excessively belittling its influence? Is it possible that by belittling it we are losing the chance to understand the many unique features of the Polish model of politics?

Before the Greek word *ekklesia* began to serve the Christians to express the community of the living and the dead united in Christ, it referred to the gathering of all the citizens of the Greek *polis*. Ancient ecclesiology owes a much bigger debt to Greek political thought than we like to admit.<sup>3</sup> My notes here are concerned with a dependence going the other direction – how the political is shaped (especially when it comes to the memory of the best political community) by the Church as a model. When observing the Polish political situation it is hard to shake the impression that a whole set of associations which political life evokes directly refers to concepts taken from the life of the Church. Lustration, or ridding political life of communist influences (*dekomunizacja*), are good examples of this. Here strictly political

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<sup>2</sup> The experience of August as written in the collective memory is one of the crucial elements of collective axiological memory – a lived and internalized axiology. Is it possible to ignore it? How to question it? A question on the surface concerned with history becomes a question about memory. Despite appearances these things are not interchangeable. The truths of memory and history meet, but they are not identical – that much is clear. It seems less obvious that memory, especially collective axiological memory, deserves to have sovereignty over history. This is memory of that which is good. This is not, as critics would like, evidence of collective narcissism, but a recording of behaviors which the community deems worthy of being highlighted. This is the vision of a goal. In this way memory decides the identity of a community. This is the reason why the answer to the question about the content and meaning of the experience labeled “Solidarity,” to a considerable degree, conditions the possibility of a judicious answer to the question of political philosophy, the question of the right order – the order best for us, one which is not indifferent to the unique qualities of our heritage.

<sup>3</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Wczesne chrześcijaństwo i grecka paideia* [Early Christianity and the Greek Paideia], trans. Krzysztof Bielawski, Bydgoszcz 1997, p. 36–45.

arguments (i.e., matters of national security, infiltration by foreign intelligence services, and so on) give way to quasi-religious argumentation (sin, merit, absolution, penance, conversion).<sup>4</sup> I am under the impression that the first “Solidarity,” which is an important measure of the Polish political community, is remembered in a form better expressed by ecclesiology rather than political philosophy. I think when we ignore this key difference it is hard to understand many contemporary phenomena, for example, the character of possible variations on the theme of Church-state relations. It is also hard to understand why, in practice, the measure of August is so strict (often unfair) toward events dictated by the logic of a multi-party democracy.

## The Ecclesiology of Solidarity

After the wave of tensions with regard to Church-state relations in Poland many participants of those controversies attempted to wipe from the collective memory the mood of religious exaltation which accompanied the building up of the “Solidarity” legend. Instead, now the past engagements are explained in categories of conscious choice of certain political strategies. It is not easy to believe these assertions and not only because they originate with people who, right after the Round Table talks, called the Church one of the main dangers facing the young democracy. Luckily, we need not argue with anyone about this point. We are neither concerned with the quality, nor with the sincerity, of the religious exaltations of the protagonists of the numerous weeks of culture or Masses for the fatherland, but rather with the solidarity of the community. When I speak of “Solidarity” adopting Church models I am not concerned with the presence of religious symbols, or the participation of the Church hierarchy in political negotiations. The Church and religion were, of course, an extraordinarily important element of the “Solidarity” movement, starting with the hall of the BHP<sup>5</sup> right up to the religious-patriotic manifestations during martial law. This is a truism. The heart of the matter is the question whether this was just an ornament, a chance occurrence, a bit of interior design, or whether it was an essential feature.

When writing about Christian community as a new source of ideas for Western political thought, Jerzy Szacki calls the Christian vision of social life, “communities of values.” We should turn our attention to several key characteristics whose presence is indubitable in the myth of “Solidarity.” According to Szacki, it is a universal, not elite, community. It constitutes itself toward both a hostile world and a clearly defined group of values. Access to this community is a matter of consciously negating other relations. Furthermore, affiliation is unconstrained by circumstances

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<sup>4</sup> Rafał Maryja turned my attention to the religious background of the lustration during one of the discussions conducted by the editors of *Kwartalnik Konserwatywny* [The Conservative Quarterly].

<sup>5</sup> One of the most important halls in the Gdańsk Shipyards, the place where the leaders of the strike gathered and also where the strikers’ demands were accepted and signed by the representatives of the communist government and Lech Wałęsa [trans.].

146 independent of the human will, such as ancestry, social position or wealth. Finally, it is a characteristically apolitical community whose members agree to simultaneously function within two orders, the broken earthly order and within the world of confessed values.<sup>6</sup>

It is indubitable that this model does a good job of capturing a whole series of features associated with our imaginings about the first “Solidarity” (and at the same time the features of an ideal social order). It is interesting that this similarity is not just formal.

SPIRITUAL UNITY. Irrespective of what historians might have to say about the topic, within the axiological memory the events of August took the shape of a deep unity written in the language of spiritual experiences and not political goals and calculations. “Solidarity” as it was recorded by collective memory was therefore a kind of collective affirmation of values (above all Christian ones) rather than a political event with a clearly political countenance. It seems that this is not a matter of reality-deforming memories. Zbigniew Stawrowski contends that there are many reasons for defining the relations between members of the first “Solidarity” as ties of the religious type.<sup>7</sup> By concentrating upon experience, and not history, we will not discuss this matter here. However much it all looked in reality, it is hard to doubt that those 16 months of liberty are better described by the language of Augustine’s *City of God* than those of Hobbes, Mill or Locke.<sup>8</sup> We remember August as a realization of the myth of political *agape* which joined people from all walks of life. The colloquial vision of those times does not have any cracks, differences of opinion and political formation of the sort that everyday life of that immense political movement had its share. The impression of unity emphasizes a dualistic, rather than pluralistic, model of the world, which places the majority of phenomena within the schema of “us-them.” This is a model whose contents are filled out with the antinomies of love (which unites) and hate (which destroys), truth and falsity, freedom and slavery, honor and dishonor, naturalness and lying, reason and folly, patriotism and treason, and so on. To be honest, one must underscore that these antinomies really became significant during martial law. The themes of battle and persecution, truth be told, already present in the early stages of the “Solidarity” legend, are in the beginning veiled with an axiological affirmation of the unity of people who are indifferent toward the hostile political situation and who seem to be ignoring it.<sup>9</sup> The members of the church of solidarity seem capable

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jerzy Szacki, *Historia myśli socjologicznej* [The History of Sociological Thought], v. 1, PWN, Warszawa 1983, p. 50–52.

<sup>7</sup> See: Zbigniew Stawrowski, “Solidarność znaczy więź” [Solidarity is a Bond], *Tygodnik Powszechny* [The Universal Weekly], nr. 22, 3 czerwiec 2001, p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> “Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self.” St. Augustine, *The City of God* 14.28, trans. Władysław Kubiśki, Kęty 1998, p. 546.

<sup>9</sup> “[A] solidarity born of the pages and spirit of the Gospels does not need an enemy or an opponent to consolidate and develop. It is directed toward everyone and not against everyone” Fr. Józef Tischner, “Solidarność sumień” [The Solidarity of Consciences] in *Etyka Solidarności* [The Ethics of Solidarity], Krakow 2000, p. 9.

of living in two realities, if only the earthly reality will not demand them <sup>147</sup> to betray their allegiance toward the values that unite them.

CONVERSION. The religious element is seen clearly when we look at the rules of entering the community, which had all the hallmarks of conversion in the religious sense of the word.<sup>10</sup> The politically naïve criteria giving the catechumens the possibility of converting to “Solidarity” was simply an act of faith in the ensemble of professed values, which, like baptism, wiped away all previous sins, bringing back the lost into the bosom of the community. Celebrated public acts of great sinners’ conversions coupled with moral indignation in reaction to revelations about the neophytes’ past were both important elements of that spiritual climate. And parenthetically speaking, everything was saturated with a pathos that did not exactly serve political discourse. It was one of moral rectitude and unity, which, coupled with the low requirements for the converted, opened a perspective of universality (on a national scale) of the “Solidarity” *ekklesia*. This is especially the case since the movement did not require catechumens to approve the political aims of the movement. It seems to me that for many members of “Solidarity” the movement’s aims appeared too misty and instead they depended upon “living in the truth,” upon sharpening moral demands upon themselves and the Polish People’s Republic’s (PRL) corrupt reality, rather than any clear political vision.

SET OF VALUES. When we speak of the above-mentioned realities, we should not forget that “Solidarity” was not characterized by weak thinking. The common moral-minimum was set very high. The ethics of “Solidarity” was not afraid of the word “truth” and it incarnated many more concrete values than we are wont to remember. It is indubitable that the Christian belief in the truth which liberates belongs to the core of the “Solidarity” tradition. Skepticism and axiological minimalism were not in fashion back then. The almost universal presence of lies and evil in everyday experience reduced the intellectual attraction of skepticism, which, anyway, was systematically used as a technique of absolution by the government for acts of aggression and injustice. This is also probably the reason why discussion about the oppressive character of the moral example adopted by “Solidarity” was not especially lively in those times, which is not to say that it did not take place at all. On the contrary, the firmness of moral judgments of those who now pose aporia, their conviction about the validity of such standards, their faith in the unequivocal and clear boundary between good and evil outdid Savonarola back then.

THE SOURCE OF VALUES. The fourth quasi-religious trait of the “Solidarity” community is connected to the authority of the movement’s imperative, and to a certain degree, all of the firm values voiced by “Solidarity.” As we remember, they were not taken from within the scope of political or philosophical conceptions, instead they were lifted directly from the Gospels.

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<sup>10</sup> For the concept of conversion cf. Pierre Hadot, *Filozofia jako ćwiczenie duchowe* [Philosophy As a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault], trans. Piotr Domański, Warszawa 1992, p. 177; also: A.D. Nock, *Conversion*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, p. 1.

148 This is indirectly visible from the extraordinarily metaphysical moods of those political elites. We should recall the wave of loud conversions to Christianity and curiously frequent public professions of faith.<sup>11</sup> Let us clearly underscore the fact that these were not the sorts of declarations typical in the 70's, of willingness to dialogues or expressions of careful benevolence toward the Church as a fellow wayfarer, no, they were fiery confessions of faith in the triune God! Actually, the religious fervor of many of those who converted created anxiety even among the most fanatical members of the Church. I do not mean to be caustic, instead I am concerned with a fact brimming with consequences. In the political culture taking shape then an answer sufficient to the question, "Why Solidarity?," was not something related to autonomous reason, the common good, the market or nature, instead it was St. Paul and *The Sermon on the Mount*. With all due respect for conservative and liberal milieux in Krakow and Gdańsk, one must say that they did not leave a marked stamp upon the immense movement's character. In "Solidarity's" discourse – paradoxically, both for believers and non-believers – the categories of devotion and solidarity rose to the level of religious imperatives, and not to reason or even the myth of reason. This is well-expressed in the indisputable formulations of Fr. Jozef Tischner, who developed the idea of solidarity from St. Paul and the conscience and not, for example, from the categorical imperative. To the unease of many sympathetic supporters of "Solidarity" among Western intellectuals, the experience of "Solidarity" grew out of Revelation rather than the Enlightenment, it was preceded by an act of faith, and its books were the *Gospels* and the *Apostolic Letters*.<sup>12</sup>

## Other Sources

Is there anything strange about that the fact that in its spontaneous formation "Solidarity," in many important respects, resembled the Church? Could it have been otherwise? Is it not that for the generation raised behind the Iron Curtain, the Church constituted the only well-known model of a free public forum which was not under the control of the party? For most of the later members of the union the only experientially accessible zone of freedom in relations, which exceeded the borders of the family and one's circle of friends, was the world that began behind the walls of the parish. Precisely the Church was the place where an alternative community of communication sustained and multiplied itself. Indeed here, and not at a university or in school, people learned a language capable of upholding a

<sup>11</sup> Dariusz Gawin noted that the meeting of the left with the Church in "Solidarity" was possible thanks to the fact that the Christianity of the first "Solidarity" was free of nationalist-Catholic elements. The return of this tradition into "Solidarity's" sphere during martial law was one of many signs that the coalition would divide internally as it did during the 90's.

<sup>12</sup> The inadequacy of categories pertaining to societies of citizens for describing the phenomenon "Solidarity" are described by Marek Cichoński in an undated personal typescript, "The Experience of the First 'Solidarity': Between Moral Absolutism and Political Self-Knowledge in Poland."

non-socialist discourse related to common interests such as freedom, the good, justice, solidarity and peace. For the average person the experiences they took away from church recollections, meetings in parish circles and clubs, religion lessons, street processions, mass pilgrimages, celebrations of anniversaries (most important being the celebrations surrounding the anniversary of the first millennium of Christianity in Poland), and, of course, Papal Masses – these were the only known form of freedom which could be experienced with other people, even more, with the whole community. Did the forms of mass piety cultivated in the Polish church not influence the popular (and as we know not always real) conviction about the deep division between the nation and its rulers, that the hidden community of the spirit endures regardless of external appearances? Did they not uphold the potential of what Rafał Matyja called “civilizational anti-communism,” and what upheld one of the biggest mysteries of “Solidarity’s” miracle – its universality?<sup>13</sup>

This, of course, does not mean that there is a possibility of reducing all the phenomena connected with this union movement to one model. Many of its elements, like the idea of a democratic community, one would be hard pressed to find in the Church of the 70’s and 80’s in the forms which animated “Solidarity.” The concept of a society of citizens is probably the best example.

Other inspirations can be found in the tradition of Romantic metaphysics – more sensitive to the dimension of a spiritual community than the institutionalized dimensions of the state. There is nothing strange in the fact that in the epoch of “Solidarity,” when people were forced to find their place outside of *Realpolitik*, there was a growing interest in this very strong tradition. Lectures about Mickiewicz in the Gdańsk Lenin Shipyards are an emblematic example of how easily the union community could find itself in the Romantic vision of a church of souls on pilgrimage.

Other sources of the movement under consideration here can be found in the communist ideology, which has many qualities of secularized religion. This factor was, however, compromised by practice and theory and did not play the sort of role it did in other Polish “months,” and yet, in some ways, it created the frames of teleological discourse, in which were rooted the concepts of goal, progress and social justice. Even though communist historiography was, in those times, relegated to the role of a discourse legitimating the rulers, a discourse without bite (with regard to reason, not the wallet), and yet, in a certain sense it forms the foundation for many of “Solidarity’s” philosophical presuppositions.<sup>14</sup> We cannot totally abstract from the fact that the public discourse about the final justifications for

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<sup>13</sup> Rafał Matyja, “Myśl polska wobec cywilizacji komunizmu. Antykomunizm lat 1950–1980” [Polish Thought About the Civilization of Communism]. In the collection *Antykomunizm po komunizmie* [Anticommunism after Communism], edited by Jacek Kłoczkowski, Kraków 2000, p. 169–175; also, Jarosław Gowin, “Antykomunizm i przyszłość” [Anticommunism and the Future], *Rzeczpospolita Plus Minus*, 9 June 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Not without reason did Czesław Miłosz underscore in the 90’s that the fall of communism caused a “metaphysical hole” in the Polish social reality.

150 social and political solutions was not resolved just by Soviet tanks, but in a philosophy that had at its disposal a goal-oriented view of the world and history. However comical it may seem, the rulers of the PRL never stopped liking dressing up in a philosopher's garb, pretending that metaphysics constituted an important field of the controversy at hand.

We also cannot forget the quasi-religious character of communist *praxis*. In other words, when writing about the ecclesiology of "Solidarity" we cannot forget about the ecclesiology of Socialist Realism, even if its external manifestations were often a sad parody of the Church. One must also remember the widely disseminated theses of the mutual closeness of the Christian and communist ideals. In the 70's a search for meeting points was still a frequent activity of not only state-intellectuals, but also of respected Catholic intellectuals.

### The Religious (and Manichean) Interpretation of "Solidarity"

We have said that the first "Solidarity" formed itself as a kind of "community of values." However, it seems that only Martial Law shaped and deepened the religious interpretation of August. Historical "Solidarity" was deeply Christian, Papist, and Marian, yet it was much more deeply political than we think when we take into consideration the second half of the 80's. Its postulates were institutional, social and existential. Growing out of meta-politics it remained within it more out of circumstances than sincere fervor. If for the sixteen months of freedom the declared apoliticalness was for many a matter of tactics, a kind of game of appearances, then after Martial Law meta-politics became the only available space of action, and the oasis for these actions, both literally and figuratively, was the Church. Precisely after December 13<sup>th</sup> the memory of the sixteen months of freedom was reinterpreted in the categories of religious community, instead of economic, geopolitical, or institutional.

Here we have to underscore the role of the Church as not only as a moral shelter, but as a substitute institution, a kind of temporary *respublica*. Much of what was independent happened within the Church and most people did not see this as a temporary situation. I remember how paradoxically professor Janina Zakrzewska's voice sounded when, during one of the weeks of Christian culture, she talked about the provisional character of the situation where the Church acts as a gallery, concert hall or theater. The weeks of Christian culture, workshops, discussions, Masses for the fatherland interwove "Solidarity" with religion into a knot that was hard to untie. If we claim that only Martial Law made "Solidarity" into a religion then we have in mind the rapid rising of the religious temperature within "Solidarity" during those times. It gives the impression that if until then religion accompanied the union, now it became its center. This cannot only be explained practically (church buildings, Masses as the only legal gatherings, lack of wiretapping) without considering the fact that Christianity constituted the only way of maintaining the spiritual unity of the

shattered union. If the ties binding the members of the first “Solidarity”<sup>151</sup> were only similar to members of the Church, then during Martial Law religious community began to replace political community.

One does not even have to mention that this situation posed a great danger to the evangelical mission of the Church. This is why it could not take place without internal tensions between the Church and “Solidarity,” which, it seems to me, could be best understood along the universal-particular axis. The situation was further complicated by deep divisions within the community and the movement’s tendency to gravitate toward political Manicheanism during Martial Law. Harassment and repressions caused the commentary of those times (differently than in the “Solidarity” church of the sixteen months of freedom) let the thread of negativity play an important role in its rhetoric. When reading most of the texts written by the underground during the second half of the 80’s one cannot help but be shocked by their radicalism and lack of any real discourse. “Solidarity’s” proselytism is replaced with excommunications, and the openness of old is replaced with condemnations. Circumstances that mobilize the rank and file at the same time encourage them to abandon discourse with those on the outside. The category of “them,” despite the obvious, allowed the movement to maintain a myth of a lasting unity. It was helped by the downright vacuousness of the authorities who did not miss any chance to symbolically underscore their foreignness in relation to the community. Yet, the main thing was the clear and distinct experience of evil, the injustice and lack of understanding of the authorities, their ill-will, their lack of sovereignty and their betrayals, which shifted the conflict away from politics toward not only meta-politics, but rather metaphysics. In opposition to their Western colleagues, Polish intellectuals treated Ronald Reagan’s words about the “Empire of Evil” without any irony.

This is how the initial community of consciences slimmed down and radicalized itself. The intense experience of evil caused “Solidarity” to veer toward Manicheanism. The fact it avoided this danger is achieved thanks to the Church, which, actually, was often criticized during those times for lack of resolve. Paradoxically, the main accusation was a lack of political engagement, rather than an excess! By fulfilling the role of an *intra-respublica*, the Church, as the defender of the persecuted and the “sign of contradiction,” could happily reject politicization. By remembering the universality of its mission it could not exclude anyone, even the excommunicated. The Bishops did not lose sight of the fact that salvation, not condemnation, is the job of the Church; and because the Church cannot refuse to lend a hand to anyone, and thus should treat the exclusionary label Catholic-in-the-opposition with as much caution as Pole-Catholic. It is hard to over-estimate the gains from this caution for the political community. To put it succinctly, it seems to me that in that political climate if Primate Jozef Glemp had not been in charge, and instead it would have been one of the leaders of the opposition, then Polish society would have never accepted the Round Table talks. After all, can the devil be saved?

Luckily the final shape of the “Solidarity” religion was decided by the Church, especially its witnesses. Thanks to it the experience of Martial Law was not only a clear and distinct experience of evil, but also an encounter with what Aristotle called *metron*, that is, good personally incarnate. For my generation such a measure of humanity, love and freedom, and the most important metaphysico-political experience of Martial Law (or, maybe the most important experience in general) was the martyrdom of Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko. Thanks to these witnesses, the category of the blessed who suffer for justice, taken from *The Sermon on the Mount*, moved the conflict between “Solidarity” and the communists into the dimension of a universal strife between good and evil, truth and lies, but it placed them within the horizon of Christian love, not Manichean condemnation. Thanks to the martyrs, Martial Law gave Polish meta-politics an immense universalizing impulse, necessarily causing it to go beyond the closed horizon of its culture and history.

The solidarity shown (*apodeiksis*) by Fr. Jerzy made possible an overcoming of a particularistic solidarity rooted in a specific national reality without canceling out its importance, and at the same time giving a personal, unrepeatable, meaning to its axiological memory.

If it was a political experience, then only in the sense that we recognize Socrates’ mission toward the Athenians as political. As we can see after the passage of time the main intellectual problem of that time came from the fact that deeply Christian meta-politics was taken for politics *par excellence*, to the detriment of one and the other. Perhaps it was an unavoidable mistake. The communists jealously and doggedly guarded monopoly on governing gave everything a political dimension – from extravagant dressing all the way up to the Decalogue. This is really how it was. The totalitarian reaction of a weakening dictatorship politicized everything that seemed to have a trace of independence. How could it overlook the anti-communist and religiously-tinted meta-politics? The problem existed and was not based around the fact that meta-politics were written down in religious language, but on the blurring of an already indistinct boundary in Polish politics between politics and the pre-political sphere. We had to pay for it in the 90’s.

## The Religion of “Solidarity” After 1989

This fact appeared in full-force in 1989. Since this situation has been described many times over we will limit ourselves to a schematic recalling of the two most substantial sides of the controversy. This considerable division can be presented through the prism of the answers given to questions about the political utility of the religious meta-politics of “Solidarity.” After (oversimplifying things quite a bit) a part of the activists of the early days of “Solidarity” admitted that meta-politics (taken by them to be merely the politics of times of slavery) is no longer needed, while still others thought that with the moment of liberation *Realpolitik* would

take up the effort of realizing the standards created in the meta-political church of “Solidarity.” And to cap it all off, straying from the Church’s influence (often quite dramatically) after ‘89 made politics explode with elements of Manicheism that had been held in check under its influence. The lack of former opponents bore fruit in a zeal for finding new enemies, and sadly we must admit that only a few wise men kept themselves from intellectually compromising statements about “backwaters” and “bigotry” on the hand, and “betrayals of national interests” on the other. The enthusiasm in which the learned of both sides seemed to lose their wits in the 90’s continues to make us wonder today.

The aim of the first approach, which admittedly was more politically popular, was the building of the earthly state, as articulated by Ralf Dahrendorf in his much-discussed article where he presents a vision of the state and politics reduced exclusively to procedural and economic problems of the public forum. The zeal to eliminate meta-politics from political reality came to fruition with a weakening of the ties among the political community – ties that are crucial, especially in times of change and sacrifice. This state of things was not only caused by the acknowledgment of “Solidarity” meta-politics as an unnecessary *ersatz* of politics, but also by a distaste for its metaphysical, religious and nationalist contents. The solidarity of consciences, understood as a useless and dangerous ballast of national collectivism, was opposed with an individualism indispensable to build democratic pluralism and the free market. One did not have to wait long to see a naïve constructivist project of creating, *ex nihilo*, a new democratic politics in place of the ruined communist state. It was naïve mainly because it was totally blind to the shape of Poland’s deeply rooted political community, thus not free from its drawbacks, especially its pathological dualism and considerable lack of discourse (along with an immense moral pathos).

The other approach developed a rapid disenchantment with regard to democracy and the market. If it did not play a major political role, it is mainly because it represents a dangerous kind of fantasy, which pretends to be a program. What’s worse, it is a fantasy that paralyzes rather than builds up. Its victims were both the masses of voters disenchanted with the “soiled world,” and the politicians who compromised either their ideals or their effectiveness. Democracy, with its need for negotiating, party structures and ministry showdowns has very little to do with the myth of the 16 months. It was forgotten that the ethical ideals of “Solidarity” represent an ideal of a country “put at the feet of the gods,” and that politics can indeed be a technique of approaching this ideal – without ever realizing it (or, at least for so long as the effects of Original Sin will hold). The politicians of this formation, who took meta-politics for politics, condemned themselves to the role of moralists who boringly repeated how bad it was and how things should be – and they were rarely preoccupied with doing what it took to make things a little better. Why should it be any wonder then that their moral falls become events on the level of the sexual

154 scandals of televangelists in the United States? The smallest risk of their careers was the taking on the role of good-hearted simpletons. This is the personal price to pay for the conviction that the realities of meta-political unity and its moral standards can be mechanically transferred to public reality. Unfortunately, the price paid by those who choose this route is still much steeper: it is the particularization and partial discrediting of “Solidarity’s” ideals.

This state of things leads to a peculiar type of schizophrenia. The widely propagated conception of a heartless state forces the old meta-politics out of the public forum, instead of helping to transform it, to put it metaphorically, meta-politics is withdrawing into the Church. It is enough to go to a meeting with the Pope in order to see that, literally, the burden of an upbringing in the spirit of solidarity’s patriotism has fallen back upon the Church. This has its upsides. So long as the Church is able to represent the whole society, “the ethics of solidarity” will take on an universalizing impulse that will not be the property of any of the sides. I am worried that this situation also has its considerable drawbacks. Limiting itself to the circle of believers is not even the most important one, the most important one is the transcendentalization of “Solidarity.” Far from the everyday, distant from the profane, too otherworldly, it escapes into ritualism and loses the ability to deal with life and all the necessary compromises that go along with it. Unfortunately, this plays into the hands of traditionalizing “Solidarity’s” patriotism, it makes it into a museum piece and moves the categories of struggling for the good of the community, responsibility and sacrifice into the sphere of heroic virtues. This severs the question about “Solidarity” from the living affairs of structural and economic transformation, from the price that needs to be paid for it, sacrifices, social work, etc. Solidarity driven out of the life of the state harms both sides. There comes about a parallel schizophrenic reality, which functions among many Poles today, for whom the public sphere is again the world belonging to “them.” Pushed to the margins, taken over by excessive demands, solidarity often makes its return as the enemy of community. It’s a shame, because we are dealing here with an immense capitulation of societal ardor, which could serve, well, I still believe it does serve, transformation.

### What Kind of a Unity? What Kind of Community?

Independent of the changes which took place during the 90’s it is hard to deny that “Solidarity’s” ecclesiological vision of community continues to speak lively to the imaginations of Poles. Can one simply ignore the fact that the founding act was not accomplished under the walls of the Bastille, but in a Church? Of course one can. That is the reason why in Poland there are now proponents of the French model of separating Church and state. Their presence is a good argument for the thesis that if political science does not want to lose its contact with reality, then it also has to become a theology of politics – especially in Poland.

What an important part of that reality is composed of the model of the Polish “community of values” can be seen both after discussions about the neutrality of the state, as well as after the controversy over the sources of constitutional order, or the very lively debates about the moral minimum of democracy. Finally, it can also be seen from the continuing and unwavering attractiveness of the dream of a spiritual unity of the community. Is that not the reason why Aleksander Kwasniewski’s unifying rhetoric was so widely appreciated by the electorate, especially when post-solidarity parties have earned themselves the labels of turncoats and sectarians? The promise of spiritual unity seems to be a very sought after commodity on the market of political programs, even if one has to pay for it with the price of memory and taste.

The religious character of warring versions of meta-politics lets itself be seen, especially in the discussion about the criteria for belonging to the community, which after 1989 took on the dramatic form of a controversy over the lustration and removing communist influences from the state. There is no way to overlook the fact of how many arguments within this controversy have overt religious sources, since the discussion often is concerned with the conditions of converting, matters of penance, merit and forgiveness, rather than matters connected with the functioning of the government, parliament or the courts.<sup>15</sup>

The background of these polemics is made up of various versions of the catechism of the political community of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth. The first can be described as a democratic polytheism, the second bears the marks of an elite Church of the saved. The former recalls the religiosity of the Roman type in that everyone who accepts the democratic order and its moral minimum can receive the rights of a citizen. It consists of a threefold principle of accepting taxes, law and parliamentarism. The act of accepting these regulations constitutes the moment of acceptance into the community. From then on one cannot speak about the past of the believer-citizen without risking looking like a schmuck (there is an exception for the elect who have specific rights to remind sins, forgive them, and to judge the factual weight of past deeds). The main problem of the polytheistic model is that its openness is quite unilateral, while the factual cost of taking in the mass of sinners is immense. The excluded are, namely, those who do not accept polytheism itself. There are many in Poland who feel uneasy around the smoke from the candles lit for General

<sup>15</sup> If the “Solidarity” of the 80’s is analogically compared with the early Church, then it’s hard to deny that the discussion about lustration and removing communist influence is reminiscent of the discussions the ancient Christians took up after the wave of persecutions by the Roman state. The trauma of betrayal and matters of penitential discipline play an important role on the one side, and on the other, the feeling of responsibility for the unity of the community. Can sins be forgiven only once, or many times? Was August the first chance or the last? Are all forms of denying the faith sins? Is cooperation with one’s persecutor for tactical reasons possible? Who has the right to judge faults? Who gives absolution? Are the unwavering the only ones who have the right to forgive sins? Does yesterday’s persecutor have the right to convert? Whoever has read the letters of St. Cyprian knows most of these arguments well, and will find in them the climate and argumentation of many present controversies.

<sup>156</sup> Jaruzelski and Marshal Pilsudski, especially since these are overseen by ministers who earlier participated in rites that did not shrink from making sacrifices out of people.

The predictable universality of polytheism was the advantage of the low entry requirements. It was assumed, with the best intentions, that the market and democracy would fulfill a saving resocializing function and that by compelling (at least minimal) acting for the common good they would be able to reinstate former persecutors, deviants and ordinary sinners. The parliamentary seat was supposed to take the place of excommunications; control panels that of goals; awards or, at least, mercy, were supposed replace punishment. Serious doubts about these assumptions came from the belief that the market and democracy not only do not generate values, but that they are also parasitical of them, and so the work of collective amnesty would seriously jeopardize faith in the justice of the young state. In other words, it was thought that the sinners would not convert anyway and that the faithful might lose their faith. One must honestly admit that present conditions confirm these worries.

The main complaint against polytheism was the thesis that it aims to maintain unity at the price of justice (understood as revenge), the truth (which persecutes) and memory (which rankles). According to the opponents of this thesis, this is the way in which meta-political polytheism was the promise of a counterfeit unity. This is because its logic actually leads to a tribalization of the community. What's worse, counter to popular assumptions, the battle for group interests does not arrange itself into a harmony of egoisms. The program of rescuing the Tower of Babel by mixing languages will end with the moment when the arguing builders steal the last brick. Those in favor of removing communist influences said, of course, it's about unity, but about actual unity. And that sort of unity requires steep requirements for acceptance into the community – a removal of communist influences and lustration.

It is hard to say today what caused the crisis of the idea of purification. Was it the fault of the political clumsiness of its spokespeople, maybe the criteria for converting that were too high, or maybe the polytheistic option was too attractive to pass up? It is a fact that the political religion which came out of initially reasonable assumptions morphed into a kind of elite vision of a Church of the saved – the road is closed to all those who did not survive the trial by fire. The act of moral purification not accomplished at the beginning had to change into a habit of continuously lashing erstwhile sins. The bitterness of the rhetoric not only made the conversion of great sinners impossible, but it also eliminated the gray, average, and lukewarm. One cannot demand the ardor of the primitive Church from the religiously average, nor can the penance last indefinitely. The extremely high demands scared off even the most determined, their stream has become nothing more than a trickle. What can one say, the whip is not the best of political offers.

Does the experience of “Solidarity” have a future? Can it still play a role in the form known to us so far? Above all, this question is concerned with whether its politicization and particularization did not go too far. Fr. Jacek Salij is right that the idea of solidarity should not be politicized without risking of destroying it totally.<sup>16</sup> Has not “Solidarity” become a tribal phenomenon of just one of part of the political spectrum today, thereby losing its power to mobilize the whole society? The question is dramatic, because in an obvious manner solidarity itself is the necessary condition for surviving the painful economic changes. To use Dahrendorf’s language, without the warmth of a community-in-solidarity the state will freeze over. Why could it not be a solidarity born of the “Solidarity” tradition? Plus, after the communist devastation of public life, do we really have any other choice? Foggy remembrances of the Second Commonwealth? I believe that both as a movement of the moral rebirth of public life and of social sacrifice, the experience of the 16 months constitutes a clear point of reference for the Polish political community. Only the experience of “Solidarity” is capable of creating the frames for a modern Polish patriotism. That is, the vision of a community based in the deeply rooted imperative of St. Paul, which is in no way in conflict with the aims of a modern state. What is patriotism if not solidarity, a readiness to bear one another’s burdens?

Independent of the two competing visions of the pre-political axiological order in the Third Commonwealth, there is a third model, which we can call the Jagiellonian, or out of consideration for its spokesperson – the Papal. It depends upon a community that is both universal and at same time based upon a very clear catechism of Christian-solidarity. Its great virtue is, as it has been very visible during papal homilies, its ability to overcome existing divisions, to bridge the gaps between Europe and the backwaters, between modernity and respect for tradition. Its important quality is its Christian-inspired character, even if it is not directly confessional. The experiences speak for themselves. One needs to have enough mercy to ensure the universality of the community and enough respect for the truth so that unity is not a mirage without any real content. The community cannot base its existence upon an the elimination of reason, memory and conscience. One must immediately add that, unfortunately, the greatest strength of this model of meta-politics, is also its greatest weakness. It is not the founding principle of any party, it is not in control, and it thereby loses influential promoters. The politicization of the opinion-forming media does not give much airtime to what does not serve the interests of the main players.

But the most substantial problem lies elsewhere. The Papal-Jagiellonian meta-politics does not have its own institutions. That does indeed make it a reality as immense as it is indeterminate. Poles live divided between an intense, yet unclear, feeling of communal solidarity, and the

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Jacek Salij in this issue.

158 brutally real regulations of individualism demanded by democracy and the market. The qualified unity which shows itself during pilgrimages or floods finds few outlets during day to day dealings with others. To judge from its past flashes, the hidden potential of solidarity is still immense. Will it be utilized? Without a doubt, its guardian is Pope John Paul II. Will the Church be its future guardian or maybe the developing world of social institutions and non-profits? It's hard to say. But one thing is clear, politics does not serve it well.