

Pregledni znanstveni članek/Article (1.02)

Bogoslovni vestnik/Theological Quarterly 83 (2023) 2, 327—338

Besedilo prejeto/Received:07/2022; sprejeto/Accepted:06/2023

UDK/UDC: 27-1-58Rode F.

DOI: 10.34291/BV2023/02/Trontelj

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A Possibility of Religious Experience in the Life of a Contemporary Person According to Theology of Franc Rode

*Možnost verske izkušnje v življenju sodobnega
človeka v teološkem nauku Franca Rodeta*

Abstract: The article presents Franc Rode's teaching on the possibility of religious experience in the life of a contemporary person as he discussed it in his textbook for fundamental theology "Osnovno bogoslovje" (1979). Rode was a lecturer of fundamental theology at the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana between 1967 and 1981, i.e. in a time when Slovenia was a part of a highly secularized SFR Yugoslavia, which was founded on atheist Marxism. In his discussion, Rode presents existential and philosophical reasons for experiencing God as the absolute meaning of life and the final aim of the world. He shows the individual's intuitive need for transcendent in a modern society, based on a technological development that demystified the natural world and on the political vision of a laicized state.

Key words: religiosity, faith, fundamental theology, socialism, secularization, secularism, Christianity, Yugoslavia, Franc Rode

Povzetek: Prispevek predstavlja nauk Franca Rodeta o možnosti verske izkušnje v življenju sodobnega človeka, kot ga podaja v svojem učbeniku za osnovno bogoslovje z naslovom *Osnovno bogoslovje* (1979). Rode je bil predavatelj osnovnega bogoslovja na Teološki fakulteti v Ljubljani v letih 1967–1981, tj. v času, ko je bila Slovenija del močno sekularizirane FLRJ Jugoslavije, osnovane na ateističnem marksizmu. Rode v svoji razpravi predstavlja bivanjske in filozofske razloge za izkušnjo Boga kot absolutnega smisla življenja in končnega cilja sveta. Izpostavlja tudi posameznikovo intuitivno potrebo po presežnem v sodobni družbi, temelječi na tehnološkem razvoju, ki je demistificiral naravni svet, in politični viziji laične države.

Ključne besede: religioznost, vera, osnovno bogoslovje, socializem, sekularizacija, sekularizem, krščanstvo, Jugoslavija, Franc Rode

1. Introduction

The twentieth century was a time of increasing secularization process in Western societies.¹ A radical division between state affairs and religious life occurred in the period following World War II, especially in the countries with newly introduced socialist regimes, such as SFR Yugoslavia. The trend of decreasing traditional religiousness demanded theology to rethink its role in society and face the new reality of contemporary people if it wanted to speak to them. The purpose of this article is to discuss the academic teachings of Franc Rode about the possibilities of religious experiences for secular people of his time as he systematized it in his textbook "Osnovno bogoslovje" (1979) [Fundamental Theology]. He laid a theoretical foundation for the religious experience and the acceptance of Christianity in modern society. Rode was a professor of fundamental theology at the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, which was the time of the Yugoslav socialist rule.

2. Rode as a Lecturer at the Faculty of Theology

Rode (born 1934) was a lecturer at the Department of Fundamental Theology and the Department for Dialogue.² He also served as the head of the Department for Dialogue for some years. Until 1981, when he finished his academic career, Rode had been giving regular lectures in compulsory subjects, such as missiology, the doctrine of atheism and Marxism³, and theology of non-Christian religions (Trontelj and Osredkar 2017, 378). He started to teach fundamental theology (former apologetics) in 1971. This subject was considered to be the main subject in the eponymous department with the highest number of weekly lessons. Rode's aim in a discussion of fundamental theology was to explain the foundations of the Christian faith to both Christians and non-Christians (Rode 1979, 1). His students remember him as an insightful lecturer, full of fresh and striking thoughts (Petko-všek 2014, 157). During his professorship, he issued two editions of his textbook on the subject of fundamental theology. The first was published in 1974 and the second followed in 1979. In this research, we used his second textbook because it is an extended edition that offers a deeper insight into Rode's teaching.

¹ This paper was written as a result of work within the research program "Religion, ethics, education, and challenges of modern society (P6-0269)", which is financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARIS).

² The Department for Dialogue at the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana was founded in 1973 following the reform of the Second Vatican Council. Both individual departments were united into one in 1995. Hence, in the present day, there is a Department of Fundamental Theology and Dialogue.

³ Rode was a great connoisseur of contemporary atheism. He published numerous written discussions on the topic and was giving lectures on atheism throughout the years of his work at the Faculty of Theology. That was most likely the reason for him to be called to the Secretariat for Dialogue with Non-Believers in 1981.

3. Historical Circumstance of Rode's "Contemporary Person"

The historical background of a modern European secularized society goes back to the beginning of the Renaissance in Europe when the developing sciences began to emancipate from theological concepts. Since then, the technological-scientific civilization has started to evolve opposite to the Christian metaphysical vision of the world (Moltmann 1988, 20). The Renaissance introduced a new understanding of man as the measure of all things, the idea that was subsequently radically promoted in the Enlightenment era when reason was liberated from the influence of civil and religious authority. The rationalist perception of the world caused a modern human in the West gradually lose his sense of the transcendent which eventually led to the following dichotomies: modern secular thought is superior to all past forms of understanding reality (including Christian faith) (modern vs. traditional); religious statements are excluded from a reasonable discourse because they do not meet scientific rationality (science vs. religion); religious language refers to human personal experience only (faith vs. reality); all religions are equally valid (indifferentism vs. Christianity) etc.⁴ (Dulles 1977, 191–192)

3.1 Who Is a "Contemporary Person"?

Let us explain who is a "contemporary person" as understood in Rode's textbook. Rode also uses the term "modern human" (Rode 1979, 106). A "contemporary person" is an inheritor of rationalist philosophy who tends to deny the positive, supernaturally revealed religion and demands autonomy of reason and conscience. A modern person accepts the "truth" when it shows its inner plausibility and refuses the acceptance of the truth transferred by the outside authority of the Church or even God (106). However, a "contemporary person" seeks answers to the meaning of life and thus, shows susceptibility to the transcendent but the preaching of the Church has not yet reached his or her heart (131). These foundations of a contemporary person's spiritual attributes are part of a wider historical technological development and consequent cultural and social changes which shaped modern people's perception of reality.

What affected modern human's stance on religiousness most was the process of secularization after World War II. Secularization (not to be confused with secularism) has led to the emancipation of culture and civilization from the Church's influence (65). Religion lost its role in public life and was limited merely to the private sphere. Contemporary people who have lived in such an environment evolved two main personal attitudes toward the transcendent: agnosticism and atheism. They are both not following any religion in the traditional sense. While the first perspective reflects religious indifferentism without denying God's existence, however, the second refuses the concept of Absoluteness and the very idea of God (66).

⁴ "An Appeal for Theological Confirmation" (1975), a document by an ecumenical group of eighteen theologians from the USA, issued in Dulles 1977, 191–192.

Therefore, a “contemporary person” in Rode’s textbook is a modern, secularized human person of the twentieth century, an individual of the Western world in particular. A contemporary person favors natural reason and is reserved to traditional forms of religion, especially Christianity as the predominant religion of the West. Even more, modern opponents of Christianity refuse Christianity (Rode and Grmič 1971, 13). In Rode’s perception of a “contemporary person” we can certainly recognize a reflection of the society that he was surrounded by. Rode had worked at the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana during the time of the Yugoslav socialist regime. It is legitimate to understand the then Yugoslav as the actual realization of the “contemporary person” in Rode’s discussion, especially since studying modern atheism and establishing connections with the secularized, irreligious people in the Yugoslav (or Slovenian) environment were one of the main purposes of the Department for Dialogue (Perko 1990, 127).

3.2 Secularism in Yugoslavia

The decline of religious beliefs and practices is a leading historical trend in the Western world, particularly in many European societies (Casanova 1994, 213; Greeley 2004, ix). Generally, this trend is related to the secularization process (Casanova 1994, 211; Greeley 2004, ix⁵). Apart from philosophical reasons, politics has had a major role in restricting the expression of religious life in the public domain in many European countries. In this article, we want to consider the case of socialist Yugoslavia. Political socialism in Yugoslavia was grounded in the philosophy of Marxism which became the main doctrine of the communist party (Jović 2009, 60; Alexander 2008, 1). In 1952, the latter also changed its name to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, similar to Marx’s Communist League of 1848 (Jović 2009, 60). The leading communist party set the only life truth of the new world: establishing the classless society, and then protecting it by the state apparatus. The purpose of Marxist philosophy was to form the “atheist man” in the private and collective sense of the system (Fuček 1994, 633). The communist society formed a world without God and produced godless people (Rode 1995, 260). Marxist socialist regimes promoted practical materialism which did not do a favour to religious teaching and wanted to eliminate religion or, when that was not possible, at least encourage religious indifference among their citizens and make religious belonging the private (silent) matter of a person (Fuček 1994, 633; Casanova 1994, 215).

At this juncture, we need to point out the inner differentiation in the secularization phenomenon. The term secularization has gradually developed its contemporary meaning: the passing of responsibilities from ecclesiastical to political authority (Cox 1965, 19). In Western practice, this means that the Church does not interfere in state politics and that the state keeps away from the Church’s te-

⁵ Greeley argues that the dominant role of religion in society has been destructed by what we could call the “general historical development of Western civilization” and by political reasons. On the one hand, philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution rationalized human perception of the world. On the other hand, what has also contributed to the decrease of the Church’s influence in public life, was the fact that Churches were usually “on the wrong side” in the political revolutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Casanova 1994, 211).

aching and internal organization (Osredkar 2013, 464). When pushing religious institutions and religious life out of the public sphere is encouraged by the state politics we deal with secularism, an ideology that negates faith and the idea of God (Cox 1965, 21; Pastor 1994, 973). Thus, if secularism alienates God, it often leads to atheism which is “the extreme limit of secularism” (Amato 2009, 8). It is possible to claim that Marxism stimulated secularism (Halík 1993, 9). Yugoslavia was highly secularized under Tito’s rule (Martin 2005, 82). This was obvious in the case of the SR of Slovenia where religiosity was weakening permanently after World War II as a result of both the general Western secularization process and the official political secularism, based on the Marxist ideology (Juhant 1991, 236).

The struggle between atheist Marxism⁶ and religious belief was present in postwar Yugoslavia. The first years after the war were characterized by political pressure on the work of the Church and by arrests of individual priests for political reasons. The government tried to make Church independent from the Vatican and Pope’s leadership to create a national Church of Yugoslavia. Such political actions intended to weaken the Catholic Church which was the only organization in the country outside the direct control of the Party (Pirjevec 1995, 167). The government wanted the Church to stay out of Yugoslav politics and be cut off from public influence, especially among young people. The relations between the state and the Church improved after the Second Vatican Council when the Church officially renewed its attitude to world affairs as we show in the next chapter.

Despite the obstacles which the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia was going through, the attitude of the Yugoslav government towards religions was broadly more tolerant than in some other socialist countries.⁷ For example, when the Yugoslav government at times “only” obstructed the dialogue with Christians, Czechoslovakia eliminated it (Mojzes 1981, 12). Finally, among Yugoslav republics, the Catholic Church received the greatest liberties in Slovenia where the Catholics showed collective vitality and represented a significant factor in public life.

3.3 Pastoral Response of the Church

The Catholic Church acknowledged the rising atheism in the world at the Second Vatican Council. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

⁶ Marxist philosophy was atheist because it substituted the idea of God with technological progress which can create general welfare and enables personal prosperity by making everyday life more comfortable. Marxism reduces the perception of the *truth* to a practical truth and disregards its higher foundation (Rode 1977, 26–27).

⁷ Yugoslav communist model was different from that of the Soviet Union and its allies after a 1948 dispute between the Parties of the Soviet Union (Stalin) and Yugoslavia (Tito) which led to Yugoslavia’s breakaway from the Soviet bloc. Titoism, the doctrine of Yugoslav Marxism, was ultimately evolved by 1953 when a socialist model of self-management was introduced. The model served as the basis of Yugoslavia’s political and economic decentralization in distinction from the Eastern Bloc countries which practiced central planning and centralized management of their economies. The consequence of decentralization in Yugoslavia was a weaker influence by the Party over many societal matters, including religion. The Party namely had a negative attitude towards the Church leadership mainly for its wartime activities, i.e. anti-Partisan position and occasional collaboration of Church representatives with the occupying forces (Mojzes 1981, 129–130).

“*Gaudium et spes*” proclaimed atheism as one of the most serious facts of our time (1965, no. 19). Modern atheism in Western industrial societies has arisen as an effect of the secularization process (Groth 1994, 55). The significance of the Second Vatican Council, in this regard, was the fact that it promoted pastoral renewal and greater openness to matters of contemporary culture.⁸ “*Gaudium et spes*” emphasized the Church’s intention to announce Christian messages to all people and that is where the Church’s need to continuously investigate signs of the times and understand the surrounding world has originated (1965, no. 2; 4). Rode’s teaching reflects the adoption of new directions of the Church.

As we have already noted, socialist Yugoslavia was an environment with a strong secularization/ism process. Rode claimed that the Church was hardly convincing to the contemporary people because it was often negatively promoted by the media. Church was also blamed in school (Rode 1979, 228). People were mistrustful of the Church as an institution and reserved to the exclusive meaning of the Christian revelation as the Word of God. If the Church wanted to speak to people, it had to stop teaching Christian truths in the form of superior dogmatic formulas but rather interpret the act of revelation as an active force of God’s Word in history, most importantly as a personal relationship between God and man (107; 110). Christian message had to be addressed to the real situation of people living in the secular environment (Rahner 1977, 3; 9). We introduce Rode’s discussion of the modern human’s susceptibility to religious affairs in chapter 3.

3.4 Dialogue with Marxists

The Second Vatican Council encouraged dialogue with modern atheists and atheist governments to gain active liberty of believers in the world (*Gaudium et spes* 1965, no. 21). It is historically noted that Marxists have identified socialism with atheism (Mojzes 1981, 141). Therefore, Marxist socialist regimes had a negative attitude toward religions. In Slovenia, Catholic theologians eventually rejected Marxism, mainly after the Slovenian independence was promulgated (Mojzes 1994, 195). However, Rode was one of the more obvious critics of the Marxist regime even during the time of Yugoslavia. In 1978, he held a public lecture in Ljubljana in which he addressed the lack of democracy and social justice in Yugoslav society. He was critical of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the socialist myths as, for example, the cult of personality. Slovenian League of Communists called him for interrogation by Commission for Religious Affairs which threatened him with a jail sentence⁹ (Petkovšek 2014, 58).

⁸ The Church’s position on increasing secularization before the Second Vatican Council was distinctly reserved and even offensive (e.g. “*Syllabus Errorum*” by Pius IX. and the First Vatican Council and its sentences against rationalism). “*Gaudium et spes*” reflected a mature and balanced interpretation of this phenomenon of the modern world and adopted it as a pastoral challenge for the Church. (Halík 1993, 9–10)

⁹ Rode’s late Seventies critique can be understood in the context of the history of Christian-Marxist dialogue in Yugoslavia. The Christian-Marxist dialogue in Yugoslavia was practiced successfully in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Open discussions were organized in various Yugoslav cities (Belgrade, Opatija). After 1972, endeavours for dialogue were attacked by the Party because they introduced liberalization and alleged rising nationalism. The dialogue was then obstructed because of suspicion by the leading Marxists. See: Mojzes 1981, 140; 143; 147.

Rode is regarded as a noticeable contributor to the development of the Christian-Marxist (atheist) dialogue despite the occasional criticism of the Yugoslav regime. The work for dialogue became his focal occupation during the time of his job at the Secretariat for Dialogue with Non-Believers (further: Secretariat), a department of the Roman Curia, where he was named undersecretary in 1981 and secretary in 1993.¹⁰ The Secretariat was organizing meetings with atheists in places all over Europe and beyond. Most meetings were dedicated to dialogue with Marxists.¹¹ Rode was regularly debating with atheist intellectuals about social questions (Rode 1987, 53). The theoretical principle of the Secretariat's efforts was the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, namely "Gaudium et spes" which suggested a sincere and prudent dialogue.

4. A Possibility of Religious Experience

Over the past centuries, a scientific and social development have diminished Westerner's capability for perceiving the mysterious dimension of life which led to the demystification of the world (Greeley 2004, ix). Considering that religious thinking gives deeper meaning to worldly matters, the absence of religious perspective in the public society causes a simultaneous decline of human common sense for life (Rode 1979, 177). In some of his later writings, Rode tells that a secularized postmodern man is unhappy and anxious, which results in his or her inability to go through life (1993, 8; 2009, 36).¹² On the other hand, a human of the twentieth century has experienced enormous distress which especially manifested in both world wars and totalitarian regimes following World War II. This has brought up eternal questions on life and freedom, which means suffering and death (1979, 262). Theology had to renew its speech about God in a secularized environment to be effective. The starting point for delivering the Christian message needs to be different from that of the past. Theology should not build its arguments on the "self-evident" attributes of God or even on the fact of his existence but rather explain the basis that makes the reasons for faith justifiable (Rahner 1974, 80). In his discussion, Rode systematically deals with natural reasons for human religious inclination.

4.1 Existential Reasons for Religious Experience

Rode first discusses the human's essential qualities which can lead him or her to intuitively sense the transcendence and, thus, bring him or her a religious experience. These qualities are somehow anthropological, and they also apply to the "contemporary person". We are naming them the existential reasons

¹⁰ Rode was a counsellor at the Secretariat for Dialogue with Non-Believers since 1973.

¹¹ The Secretariat held meetings in Vienna, Oslo, Hong Kong, etc., as well as on Marxist grounds like Prague, Budapest, Zagreb, and Ljubljana (Petkovšek 2014, 58).

¹² Postmodernism is a philosophical term that is linked to a philosophical reflection of the final decades of the twentieth century and is characterized by scepticism and, ironically, a suspicion of reason.

for religious experience because they originate from the very essence of the human person.

Rode introduces seven possible standpoints of a human's intuitive experience of the sacral (1979, 178–182; Stres and Rode 1977, 60). The first ground for religious experience is the meaning of *eros* and its significant and mysterious role in the process of transmission of life through generations. *Eros* has formed a fundamental religious perception of the cosmic order as a reflection of basic family roles.¹³ The most powerful possibility for religious experience in this matter is the birth of a child. The child has always been, even to our contemporaries, considered a gift to the family.

The second opportunity for the religious experience of a human person is the awareness of his or her *individuality*. One's inability of comprehending his or her own being (e.g. the feeling of the incomprehensibility of birth and death, freedom, and sense of responsibility) and experiencing inexplicable inwardness (e.g. the question of conscience) can be a solid ground for experiencing transcendence.

Another field of possible religious experience is a feeling of *uncertainty about life* which manifests in deep existential anxiety. Life is threatened by evil which derives from a multitude of reasons: outside reasons, such as accidents and illnesses, or volitional actions of evil coming from free will. The evil leads to chaos that a man feels helpless about. One looks for help outside his control and experiences help from "above".

A human person looks for the answers to the *meaning of life* and the questions of his or her own existence and destiny. He or she inevitably learns about the mystery of life. Human nature does not possess all the answers. One has a premonition of a higher Knowledge which indeed knows the answers to the mysteries. Such premonition is the essence of religious experience.

Another dimension of life's mystery is the *existence of the outside (physical) world*. One can understand the material surroundings either as a necessary coincidence or a gift by the Absolute who wants the existence of the world and leads its destiny.

The final ground for spiritual intuition is the experience of the *finality of life*. While the medieval conception of both the world and human life followed the idea of finality in relation to the exclusive infinity of God, the following centuries have extended the meaning of space and time to the category of infinity due to the constant scientific progress of humanity. In recent decades, however, science (e.g. astrophysics) has shown limitations of human space and time and evolved a concept of nothingness.¹⁴ Human life is endangered by the feeling of emptiness which can lead to a discovery of the divine on the "other side" of the known.

¹³ In religious thought, the character of a father as an inseminator, defender, and master has found its higher meaning in the image of the sky. The earth was given the attributes of a mother who conceives, gives birth, and feeds her children. The character of a child links to the human race (Rode 1979, 178).

¹⁴ The human scientific and technical progression that gave an impression of absolute and infinite human power eventually got to the point of its limitations. Scientific discoveries bumped into the inexplicabil-

4.2 Philosophical Expression of Religious Experience

Human religious experience needs to be expressed in a rational discussion if it does not want to be fideist and limited to subjective sentience. Therefore, Rode sets out particular examples of philosophical reflection on religious experience (Rode 1979, 182–185). A well-argued discussion was required in the reality of secularized environment which considered religious experience as irrational.

The first fundamental question which emerges from the experience of life is the origin of creation: How did it all come to life? What was at the beginning? Why do the world and humans exist? These are the questions about the beginnings (Greek: *archē*). Human is impressed by the creation and looks for the reason for its existence in an outside cause.

The following question goes from origins to the final goal of creation: Where is it all directed? What is the final aim of creation? Religious perception finds answers in the divine which is the beginning and the end of everything.

Another philosophical aspect of religious experience manifests itself in human's inner demands of morality: Why do I feel obliged to be moral? Who is the basis of morality?

A human being needs to fulfil his or her life. He or she is looking for the meaning of his or her life. He or she is looking for happiness, life's progress, etc. The desire for fulfilment cannot be stopped because it would lead to losing the meaning of life. Yet one's life cannot be fulfilled by anything transient and final but since the desire for life's meaning is absolute, it has to be directed to the Absolute itself.

The final question is about the human self. The person can come to the fulfilment of his or her nature and destiny and acknowledgement of his or her duty and responsibility only by the existence of *you*. Each human is a personal being. A fundamental need of human nature is to meet the other one and be with him or her, usually with the person that he or she loves or cares for. However, the desire of being with the other goes even further because the person seeks the higher *you* in his or her relations with others.¹⁵ Human yearns for the absolute *you*. Thus, human explores the Absolute as a personal entity through interpersonal relations. To be able to talk *about* God, one has to talk *to* God (Rode 1998, 2).

We may conclude that only religious experience and its philosophical reflection can lead up to religious belief.¹⁶ A mutual connection between religious experien-

ity of the universe which showed the limitation of human knowledge and possibilities and caused a spiritual restlessness.

¹⁵ This aspect of theology has evolved in the recent decades, and it is called a Relational Theology.

¹⁶ A religious experience without philosophical reflection would remain an unclear subjective feeling and could lead to superstition. On the other hand, a philosophical reflection of faith without a religious experience turns into an idealistic theological discussion. J. B. Metz stresses the importance of a narrative structure of theology that reflects an original experience of the Christian faith shared among Christians and with the world. Only a narrative structure of personal faith can lead to an inviting practical Christianity (1980, 163–164; 205–206).

ce and its thinking evaluation leads to one's certainty about the existence of the Absolute which is the beginning of the world and its final aim. In a religious tradition, this Absolute was named God. The final step to accepting God, as Rode defines it, is caused by the argument of one's inner willingness to accept God in his or her life. Only faith enables the leap from the laws of finality to the absoluteness of life. The final decision is mainly practical, not just theoretical. The decisive question is: Letting God enter my life and define it or defiantly refuse Him (1979, 185)?

4.3 Accepting Christianity

In this part of the discussion, Rode wants to rationally justify faith in God in Jesus Christ through whom God had spoken (198). This step follows one's acceptance of the transcendent. Christian faith fulfils human's yearning for God because it announces Jesus as the Saviour who brings answers to his or her fundamental questions and gives meaning to his or her life (207). The New Testament testifies that God definitely spoke through his Son who revealed the Divine mysteries and was Himself the fullness of God's revelation (*Dei Verbum* 1965, no. 4). Rode argues that if God has a face and name, they are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. But how does one recognize Jesus Christ as a Son of God? One's personal stance on Jesus Christ as a Son of God is determined by his or her inner willingness for recognizing his signs, i.e. his words and deeds which can only happen by accepting his person. One's selfishness and self-sufficiency do not allow him or her to recognize Jesus Christ as a deity. It is only possible to meet another person by affection for him or her. The same is true with accepting God (Rode 1969, 48–49). In front of Jesus, a personal decision has to be done: to choose light or darkness, faith or unbelief, and life or death (1979, 209). The divinity of Jesus can be accepted only by faith. Otherwise, His person remains enigmatic (208). An individual's faith in Jesus as a Son of God is finally possible by grace, the help that God gives to humans to comprehend the acts of Christ as acts of God. Some of Jesus's contemporaries have met Jesus directly but for the people of other periods, the meeting with Him is indirect through historical events and the testimony of the Church.

5. Conclusion

In contemporary times, the ability for religious experience has been declining. The contemporary person has a reservation toward the religious concept of God who works in human history (106). The idea of a transcendent God's intervention in the world does not correspond to a modern philosophical understanding of reality (1970, 84). Following the classical three-part structure of fundamental theology, Rode's discussion on *demonstratio religiosa* illuminates the possibility of religious experience as the main factor in justifying the sanity of religious life. Only by searching for the answers to fundamental life questions and the meaning of life, one can open up to having a religious experience and subsequently accept and comprehend God's active presence in the world.

Rode argued that an individual could experience God's presence in a then-modern society, known for its weak religiosity and prevalent rational interpretation of the world. He notes human's internal predisposition for the transcendent as the crucial circumstance for having a religious experience. In his discussion, the professor addresses human inwardness (both intuition and deliberation) as the main factor in recognizing the transcendent despite the anti-religious political and cultural environment of the time. Finally, Rode presents Christianity as a fulfilment of one's yearning for God. The paper researches Rode's theological discussion and concludes that a religious experience is possible in the life of a contemporary person due to his or her inevitable anthropological susceptibility to discovering the meaning of life. Reaching contemporary persons' hearts with the message of Christian hope was finally the pastoral challenge for the Church and theology.

Abbreviation

GS – The documents of Vatican II 1966 [Gaudium et spes].

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