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# PROBLEMS OF INNOVATIVE THINKING ADVOCACY WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

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## **Abstract**

The opinions of members of religious communities on innovative processes are varied and generally inconsistent. Many of them deal with the issues related to repeated re-evaluation of traditional dogmas of faith (depending on their nature and character) in accordance with the current needs and demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the century that reflects the innovative potential of Christian morality. The authors of the article predominately contemplate on the innovative methods of spreading and deepening Christian faith among young people, with an emphasis on the application of new information and communication technologies. Basic assumption of the article claims that the Church is supposed to continuously support various modern interactive forms of communication with believers, especially within the 'knowledge' society, as well as to create an adequate space for public debate on religious topics.

*Keywords:* religion, faith, innovation, innovation process, open approach

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## **1. Introduction**

Throughout the history of humankind, a man has always been trying to find satisfactory answers to complex questions of human existence. While discussing the origin and meaning of human life, people often derive their claims from various normative statements related to religion they practice. However, the rise of the 'knowledge' society and the impact of globalization processes often force young people to scrutinizingly analyze and critically evaluate the evidence of faith in God as the Creator of the world, largely on the basis of rational arguments. Many individuals can see the literal interpretations of biblical texts as statements easy to doubt and deny, particularly due to the so-far existing achievements of various scientific disciplines (such as Medicine, Physics, Geography, Logic, etc.). In the course of history, even the teachings of Jesus Christ have gone through many interpretative and promotional changes that have been constantly uncovering new messages in the attempt to highlight the timelessness of the Gospel.

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## **2. The role of innovation in the spread of religion**

The base of every religion is a set of beliefs stated in the 'holy' books such as the Bible, Koran, the Avesta or Bhagavad Gita. The religious practice linked to preservation of religious dogmas closely depends on their interpretation by the clergy or by the subjective perception of individuals [1]. At the same time, we can say that the common feature of most religions is, above all, the conservative thinking of their followers and others involved. In spite of this fact, at present it is necessary for various religious movements and registered churches to respond adequately to the new challenges in order to retain the numerous bases of their believers. They should pay special attention to 'activating' new followers as well as to stimulating the interest of the existing believers in spiritual matters through a diverse offer of services. The innovation process may be one of the specific instruments designed to fulfil the requirements mentioned above.

In connection with the spreading of Christianity, any change in faith or shift in religious practice of an individual or a group of believers capable to affect the actual religious adherence is considered as an innovation [2].

Enrichment of religious life of a man (e.g. the possibility to visit freely whichever of the 'sacred' places; pilgrimage, new forms of promoting the religious literature through electronic formats (e.g. e-books), organization of gospel music festivals, as well as public support of practices such as exorcism, sectarianism or fortune-telling) can be all considered as innovations. When defending the innovation process in the context of the issue of religious development, it is therefore important to remember that the uncontrolled secularization (process of turning sacred into worldly, mundane) of religious traditions and customs can easily become the cause of disintegration of traditional Christianity. The term 'secularization' is frequently (and often improperly) used as a universal framework for defining the innovative changes in the Church. Nowadays, a fast lifestyle, an excessive busyness and a primary emphasis on building a consumer society are responsible for extruding the religious influences from human activity [3]. In addition, people are aware that the abandonment of religious practices has no significant impact on the nature of their everyday lives. For people living in the material world, the faith often becomes a sort of 'supplement' needed only when something bothers them and they cannot find a satisfactory way out of a difficult situation on their own.

The innovation process can be – with regard to religion – perceived from several perspectives. The innovations can have highly religious or socio-economic nature [4]. The first of the possibilities shows the change in the interpretation of up to now proclaimed God's truths. Such a modification is quite often a source of confusion among believers and at the same time a reason of a certain wave of objections. The usual aim is to re-define or at least to indicate a new view (new interpretation) of already-known interpretive meanings of the Gospel intended to uncover the original idea of the author. Expressed opinions usually claim that previous arguments are outdated or

inappropriate for the described period. The impulse encouraging the exclusively religious innovation is typically an attempt to rationalize biblical scenes and to subject them to subsequent group justification. The Church also gets a unique opportunity to purify theological disciplines from all evil and from some false or misleading statements, which have gradually become a part of the religion over time.

An alternative way of innovative thinking is represented by a change in the qualitative level of services provided by the religious organizations or registered churches. Representatives of the clergy may address these concerns through introducing new methods of education and further training of believers or new ways of practicing missionarism and charity. Other selected innovations relate to applying the latest information and communication technologies in teaching and promoting of religion. Some innovations also deal with the formulation of standard conditions in which nursing and spiritual care (treatment of the diseased or re-socialization of addicted people) are provided. The outcomes of innovation processes must not be in conflict with the Christian teachings.

Innovations are always results of creative human activities. Their practical application depends on the particular individuals who recognize and respect the same basic religious principles. To avoid the weakening of solidarity during the implementation of changes of any kind, it is necessary to bring into accordance the views of the clergy and the pluralistic opinions of the believers. The social nature of innovative process in the Church is always influenced by the interaction between the innovator (who does not necessarily have to be also the initiator of the innovation), the recipient of the information, the promoters, and – according to the character of religion – also the ‘administrator’, the decision-making authority (the Church authority) [2, p. 45]. All people involved must be convinced that the positive effects of realized idea are ever in favour of the religious life development. Only then, they are willing to continue to actively contribute to forming new relationships that enable full-value faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, it is written: “Faith without works is dead” (James 2.17).

Since the innovation management is not an exact science, we are not able to predetermine any strict rules that would reliably lead the Christians to deepening their faith, to the thorough adoption of Christian doctrine or Church discipline. The basic assumption of both success and further inspiration for the innovative solutions of the problems depends on knowledge created and originally used by secular organizations. The applied innovations should be based on so-called ‘smart copying’ [5]. Its essence lies in an early identification of successful solution to a similar problem in another institution which leads to an adequate adaptation of the outcomes to our own needs and requirements. The goals of using the already realized *open innovation process* are both acceptance and further development of ideas originating from outside the religious sphere. The primary emphasis is placed on ideas that can be used in a notable multidisciplinary way, in regard to providing Christian education.

Another priority is put on the interconnectivity of various cultural and industrial sectors, which may reciprocally influence each other with regard to the quality standards of their activities. The spread of promising ideas among the subjects occurs without worries about losing the possibility to obtain a reasonable remuneration for the sale or abandonment of exclusive ownership of the product (idea, technology, working procedure and so on).

Above all, the different perception of the importance of particular arrangements and valuation of their practical significance has resulted in the exchange of information leading straight to progressive creation of market with the innovations.

### **3. The impact of modern technology on popularization of religious education**

Progressive development of information and communication technologies in the recent years has enabled faster and more effective achievements of the goals that would support the continuous spread of Christianity among believers. The consequences of various technological changes provide registered churches with a chance for easy adoption of knowledge from external sources in order to improve the cooperation particularly with young generation of believers. Those are people who feel and express most doubts towards the faith in Jesus' resurrection [6].

The direct processing of data in a virtual space, its immediate distribution and possibility to get the instant feedback from the target audiences have fundamentally changed the way we communicate. Mutual exchange of information takes place in a new dimension that is no longer limited to personal contact.

So-called *open access to knowledge* is one of the most popular, more and more frequently used forms of disseminating religious ideas [7] mediated via the Internet in order to achieve the maximum degree of sharing the presented messages. As it seems, the preferred feature of the open access to knowledge is the free availability of messages of salvation preached in the Gospel. Moreover, the basis of the open access is also voluntary publishing of scientific research results, opinions and considerations about religion for anybody interested in studying them. Information source may be considered as open in case it is available to every potential candidate without the need to apply for a special permit, or in case that the conditions of access to the content are, on one hand, not too difficult to meet, and, on the other hand, they are primarily non-discriminatory (no unequal treatment is created). Permission granting the access to the information content must always be given neutrally; regardless of the nature or objectives of a particular applicant. Any subsequent promotion of the set of acquired knowledge provided by the applicant to other people should preserve the idea of 'openness' in accordance with the original extent.

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Occasionally, we can encounter a situation in which recipients can interfere arbitrarily with a published work and they are also able to edit it [8]. Thus, many non-professionals are motivated to examine the Christian traditions and to become naturally involved into the processes of cognition [9]. However, these opportunities fulfil their meaning only if there is also a sufficiently large network of people who are willing to assist with correcting the deficiencies that typically appear in the form of misleading interpretations. Probably the best-known prototype that implements the described possibility to contribute to the information society is *Wikipedia*, the free on-line encyclopaedia. The essence of *Wikipedia* builds on the idea of common processing of heterogeneous information within the open spectrum of knowledge of its contributors. Mutual regulation of correctness of the contents provided by users is supposed to ensure distribution of knowledge in different languages, in the best quality possible. Despite the fact that openness represents tremendous opportunity for *Wikipedia* and its future rise, it is, on the other hand, also the main reason for its continuous struggle to be accepted as a reliable source of information.

#### **4. Discussion**

When discussing the uses and possibilities of the mentioned methods of open access in the contexts of spreading our spiritual ideas or religious ideology, we should consider all the risks and consequences of freely available, public access to the knowledge very carefully, in advance. Motivation to

support the above-described model clearly depends on tasks we defined to fulfil. Therefore, it is necessary to repeatedly re-consider the actual effectiveness of the step we plan to take. Will our opinions, assumptions and published studies be attractive enough, will people access them and freely share the ideas with others? Is it possible to assume that the interest of believers in religious matters will increase? Will they be inspired to actively share their own materials to promote religious education? Once we are able to positively answer all these questions, we will have an opportunity to effectively use open access to promote religion and ecumenism. Both the contemporary trends in communication and the Internet itself enable us to understand the nature of public sharing of information.

## 5. Conclusion

The current world of Christianity cannot do without an open dialogue with a diverse spectrum of modern philosophies and ideologies. The Church must see each individual as a representative of a specific cultural background, tradition and personal history. Regardless of the philosophical beliefs, race, nationality, sexual orientation or social status of the believers or non-believers, the Church should pay attention to ethics of the relationships that is built on mutual respect, cooperation and open communication. Thus, we believe that the greatest innovation in religion is *tolerance*. Tolerance requires consideration and acceptance of the opinions of others and very often also embracing the innovative results of scientific and technological progress. The key intention lies in the repeated opportunity for young people to discover – naturally, in daily communication situations, together with their friends and families – what it means to live a life based on the values of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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