

## *From Editors*

Despite the secularization of the Western world, religion is becoming increasingly present in political analyses. This is closely related to the growing impact of religious motivation on national (at the level of national states) and international politics. The phenomenon is not a new one if we take into account the role of religion in the so-called third wave of democratization, for example; nevertheless, acknowledgement of the religious factor has not always gone anywhere beyond simple information. For some time now, particularly in view of the role of the religious factor in conflicts in the Middle East or Africa, religiously motivated terrorism, or the so-called Arab Spring, religious topics have come to stay in the discourse of political science for good. Moreover, a new sub-discipline has emerged in the form of a political science of religion.

The main topic of this issue is a methodological question: How should religion be studied by political science? Articles on this subject have been contributed by Michał Gierycz, Krzysztof Gładkowski, Tadeusz Jarosz SDS, and Rev. Piotr Mazurkiewicz. They discuss fundamental issues, namely how should a political scientist know what religion is, or even whether the term should be used in the singular or plural? Where should he turn to for knowledge about religion? What does neutrality of worldview and religion consist in, a must in empirical sciences? Can the interdisciplinary approach in contemporary sciences be overcome? They also reflect on the difference between neutrality of worldview and religion in science and methodological atheism. Is a thesis about the methodological atheism of political science true? Does this atheism have any negative impact on the knowledge and understanding of political phenomena, and if so, can it be overcome? Can only a functional definition of religion be used in the context

of political science, or are there appropriate methodological methods in place to enable the introduction of some elements of the substantial approach as well? Thence the questions featured in the titles of these articles (even if not always followed by a question mark): *Can Interdisciplinarity Be Overcome in the Political Science of Religion?*; *Overcoming Reductionism. On "In-depth" Systems Analysis in the Political Science of Religion.* *Ecclesial Politology: in Search of an Adequate Perspective of Viewing the Church in Political Studies.*

Other aspects of the main topic appear in the miscellanea. Rev. Adam Romejko applies René Girard's theory of mimetic mechanism to the analysis of political discourse in Germany concerning its neighboring countries. He argues that it reflects a quasi-religious sense of the Germans' political affiliation with the "civilized" Western-European order, which legitimates their "educational mission" to societies which choose to organize their political sphere differently.

Chantal Delsol analyses the influence of Judaism and Christianity on the perception of historical time. The shift from a cyclical concept of time to a linear one results in "opening up" time and introducing hope into the history of mankind, including political history. The Enlightenment, by secularizing the hope of salvation, transformed it into a belief in progress, promising fulfillment within the confines of this world. Messianic promises could not be fulfilled in the temporal dimension, however, through a simple accumulation of goods. Such an approach results in disillusionment and attempts at finding consolation in instant gratification. Consequently, the society – also in the political sense – becomes short-sighted.

Fred Lazin analyses the evolution in the status of Jews in the United States from the 1930s onwards. In particular, he focuses on the US migration policy towards Jews, the approach of the American society and political authorities, and the influence of Jewish organizations on US politics.

The next article by Joachim v. Wedel analyses the political idealism which tries to place the last things (salvation) in history. By referring to the thought of Saint Augustine, Luther and Paul Althaus, theologians representing three different historical periods, the author argues that Christian theology has always spoken up against an immanentisation of the idea of salvation.

In the next article, Marguerite A. Peeters comments on the international policy of promoting reproductive health in the African context. Under the banner of

improved safety, sustainable development, or freedom, solutions are proposed aimed at promoting abortion, contraception, in-vitro procedures, sterilization or a new kind of sexual education. This leads the author to ask whether developed countries are not trying to impose a demographic policy on poor countries in contravention of the fundamental ethical principles and human rights?

Equally interesting is the last chapter which presents accounts of conferences and reviews. On the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *The Politics and Religion Journal (PRJ)*, Miroljub Jevtić looks back at the history of this sub-discipline in the Serbian context. The very first lectures on the political science of religion were delivered at the University of Belgrade's Department of Political Science in the academic year 1993/1994. Since then, a number of students and postgraduates have received formation in this area. Many years of consistent efforts have resulted in the publication of a magazine in the English language which enjoys much recognition today in the academic circles.

The collection also includes a report by Jolanta Kulska on the international conference on *Socio-Political and Religious Ideas and Movements in the 20th-21st Centuries* (Riga, October 4-5, 2018), and a review of Chantal Delson's important book *Les pierres d'angle* by Michał Kmiec.

It is our hope that articles published in this issue of our magazine will help readers answer the fundamental question about whether political science is/must indeed be "atheistic in the proper sense".

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