

LITERATURE AND RELIGION IN THE RESEARCH
IN THE GERMAN-SPEAKING AREA

Summary

The tradition of research in the borders between literature and religion from German-speaking writers dates back to the 1920's: Especially in the post-war period where there was a remarkable growth in conscious thought relating these two fields. However in Germany, contrary to Poland, this research has mainly been conducted by theologians — both Catholic and Protestant. Amongst the Catholics, R. Guardini, H.U. von Balthasar and G. Kranz made the greatest contributions to this issue. The first two of them were, above all, students of Theology, who wanted to construct their research with the help of literature. Kranz wanted to construct the is theory using Christian literature and to collect material that would exemplify the presence of themes inspired by Christianity in World and European literature.

On the Protestant side the most important researchers were, P. Tillich and D. Sölle. Tillich aimed at creating a method of investigating the correlations between theology and culture (including literature). D. Sölle is associated with new material within this investigation, which appeared at the turn of 1970's.

On the Catholic side numerous works were written (independently) by scientists from the Ecumenical Institute in Tübingen — especially, D. Mieth and K.J. Kuschel. The first of them asks to what extent is literary narration a written reflection on morality. On the other hand Kuschel speaks about Christian literature, this is the literature “for which Christ is the most authoritative, competent and decisive person, whilst trying to understand humans and the world”.

Despite the rich tradition of achievements in the field of literature and theology, from the German-speaking perspective, it still evidently lacks the profiled area of problems as well as methodological diversity. The fact that in Germany, mainly theologians are interested in theological themes in literature, has an influence on the types of questions being asked.

The greatest number of dissertations deals with the relationships between literature and the Bible. Also some works about God are being written by contemporary writers: about poetic dogmatics (A. Stock), theopoetry (H. Timm) or esthetic theology (K. Huizinga). In the meeting point of theology and literature there also appears work dealing with moral problems as well as those related to the application of literature in catechetics and homiletics. In the opinion of G. Langenhorst the dialogue of literature, theory of literature and theology is in fact an unsuccessful attempt of communication undertaken by theology: An attempt which has not been accepted by either theorists of literature or by writers. Despite that Langenhorst notices profits from the influences of literature and theology: Based even on a mutual broadening, the areas of experience and the enriching of language. In the research between the borders of literature and religion and also between theoretical literature and theology, there is a significant output of Polish investigators — both from professors of literature and theologians. Their achievements are worth popularizing in Germany.

Translated by Ryszard Zajączkowski

Słowa kluczowe: literatura, religia, teologia, krytyka literacka, niemiecki obszar językowy.

Key words: literature, religion, theology, literary criticism, German-speaking area.