The Church as an Agent of Social and Economic Development
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Most observers of social life consider various aspects of reality to be influenced by religion. However, this commonly shared consensus wanes when the quality of this influence is considered. Due to different determinants, there are people proclaiming opposing opinions. These extend from the acknowledgment of the positive role of religion within the developmental processes, to the more critical approaches which attempt to produce a balanced picture of the advantages and disadvantages mediated by the impacts of religion. Finally, there are some that identify religion as being the source of the pressures which are hindering or even undermining sustained progress.

Through following the discourses around this subject-matter, there emerge a few important conditions for reliable study. Accordingly, in order to provide an objectified picture of the essential linkages, by the means of which the developmental influences of religion seem to be conveyed, it is necessary first of all to avoid the extreme points of view which have too easily been assumed and taken for granted, for example the Enlightenment view of the essential uselessness of the transcendental component of religion. Another important necessity is to eliminate a too rigorous narrowing of the field of study which happens when several variables are detached from their wider context in order to become the focus of the study. Without doubt it will eventually not be helpful to remain closed to, or to exclude in advance, alternative outlooks which may easily become complementary to a given disciplinary perspective.

On the basis that they reappear in different contexts, there emerges from the observations outlined above, the conclusion that each investigation, which is focused on the influence of religion upon society, needs to be considered holistically. This means that within the field of investigation there ought to be two types of interactions. The first type are those which are substantially religious and are contributing to the strategy which is aimed at putting into practice the subsequent elements of the religious and moral mission of the community. Secondly, there are those interactions which are fostering the desired social and economic transformations which are contributing in their own way towards sustainable societal development.

There is therefore a necessity to develop a perspective for the study, enabling the pro-developmental influences of the ecclesiastical bodies not to be artificially separated from the purely religious component, since this component is a person’s reference to the transcendent. It is this reference that conditions the modes of thinking and acting of the members of a particular religious community. In order to reflect adequately both the supernatural and natural elements of the religious way of operating, two complementary perspectives will be employed, both those of theology and those of the social sciences. On this basis, an adequate departure point for the study will be developed (1).

The conceptualization of the Church, developed in this way, will allow her to operationalize her nature through a range of many-sided reciprocal linkages, created on the pattern of a network. Within the frames of this network, two important processes occur. The first has a purely religious character and relies on adapting to the current socio-cultural conditions those unchangeable values and norms which emerge from the transcendental strata. Then, by means of the everyday contacts which occur between members of the religious community and representatives of the surrounding environment, the concepts are gradually detached from their first contexts and translated into ideas, rationalizations and valuations, and eventually into social practices and behaviors. In this way, the transcendental...
components of religion become a part of the everyday experience of the people who make up the inner and outer environment of the ecclesiastical community (2).

The complexity of the whole process of transforming the supernatural element, which is mediated through the interpretation of the sources conveyed within the particular tradition of each religion, forms special structure of internal arrangements. Their aim is to ensure, on the one hand, fidelity to the liabilities stemming from the transcendent tradition, and on the other hand, the clarity and credibility of a given testimony within a particular socio-cultural environment. How this division of roles is defined has its own influence on the Church’s pro-developmental agency; thus this is also included within the field of our investigation (3).

1. SEARCHING FOR AN ADEQUATE PERSPECTIVE FOR THE STUDY

In the light of the careful investigation of the history of Catholic social teaching, the picture of the Church which emerges from the subsequent official documents and studies has become more and more dynamic. Within the social and cultural dimensions, this dynamism expresses itself in the numerous interactions connecting the various formal institutions and informal communities, formed on the pattern of a network to which there can easily be added further mesh in order to extend it. Although the substantial task of the Church is to realize her purely religious purposes, which of course are necessarily related to those of a social and cultural nature, lately these have been emerging and flowing from those who were subjected to them. Furthermore, the process for the adequate fulfilling of all of them necessitates the skillful inscription of the representative institutional embodiments of the Church at each point and at every time that rapid change becomes a social reality. This serves to develop a set of appropriate social and personal, as well as formal and informal relationships and ties. Where there is a structure of reciprocal dependencies and interactions, in certain circumstances it may well become profitable for both sides: as much for the Church as for the secular.1

Similarly, in the case of the Church, her position and legitimacy within the social environment might be strengthened, and therefore her agency as well, by the means of adopting new tools and methods for putting into practice subsequent aspects of the Church’s religious and moral multifaceted mission. In turn, within the secular camp, particular institutions of political and civil society, apart from strengthening their social legitimacy within the public sphere, can also achieve a new quality to their agency, already being performed, through utilizing the influence of the religious motivation being delivered, in order to act more sincerely and effectively, marked by empathy and imagination leading to acts based on careful considerations regarding not only its own interests but also the interests of others. Finally, the religious imagination can be broadening within the context of its own agency so that it becomes possible to introduce innovative ideas, conceptualizations and solutions.2

In the course of their reflection, a network of mutual references and linkages was placed at the centre of the interest of the scholars and researchers who strove to describe and explain the state of reciprocal interdependencies between the different manifestations of religious activity and the processes of the social and economic foundations for sustainable development. At the same time, on the one hand, within this area of study, there can be observed an increased activity among scholars which is expressed in the numerous projects focused upon tackling this subject-matter. This creates an impression that it is as if they want

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1 Broadly the network theory of the Church depicted as a sum of linkages ordered in two intersecting directions vertical (human being towards transcendence) and horizontal (internal relationships within ecclesiastical community, exchanges between the community and representatives of political and civil society) exposes T. Jarosz, Public relations w dyplomacji Stolicy Apostolskiej, Warszawa Wydawnictwo Wydziału Dziennikarstwa i Nauk Politycznych UW 2013. 50-68.

to make up for the lost time when these types of studies were not conducted, a situation which was caused by the paradigm of modernization which then prevailed. More precisely, this was influenced by the central assumption which regarded religion as being an institution which is either indifferent to development, or even counter-productive to it. However, on the other hand, despite the zeal for researching these matters, this still continues to have a visible and persistent influence within the above mentioned paradigm. This observation is confirmed by some participants within the meta-theoretical debate focused upon the current state of the studies and research currently being undertaken within the area we have been discussing.3

According to some voices of criticism, in order adequately to enhance a range of reciprocal relationships between the interacting religious and secular actors, it is necessary to overcome the rejection, stemming from our inheritance of the Enlightenment, of the transcendental and supernatural aspects of religion. Recognition of the fact that the impact of these factors has a crucial influence upon the processes being investigated, introduces a fundamental change in the approach to the subject of our study as well as to the method which must be adequate to a renewed understanding of how the subject of study can be redefined.

The underlying elusiveness of the elements of religion which emerge from the transcendental strata, determines the specificity of the point of departure of any study placed within the field of our interest. It must be assumed that apart from the perceptible cause-effect correlations, there is a space for such factors which are working behind these but, although they are emerging from the inapprehensible strata of transcendence, they actually contribute to observed changes of reality.4 It is also necessary to be aware that the variables which lie in the field of our interest are most frequently correlated analogically to the pattern, adapted from genetics by Mary Eberstadt, of the double helix which within its first context was meant to reflect the structure of a genetic code. However, in her view, the double helix can also adequately illustrate the complexity of the sets of relationships interpenetrating and reciprocally determining each other within the entwined realities of family life and religious faith. This closely overlapping connection between both parts of the helix at first glance multiplies difficulties with distinguishing which one of the investigated variables is independent and which one dependent. However, further considerations lead to the conviction that both being so closely related, to an equal extent they unceasingly affect each other.5

As a result of this, there emerges the conclusion that the influence of religion upon society might be grasped profoundly only while conglomerates of broad, indirect and many-sided correlations are holistically taken into account. It helps if we exclude the excessive use of the researched influence of religion upon the social transformations which convey developmental changes. The interdependencies we are considering here are often observed through a lens which is either excessively focused on, or detached from, the wider context of the elements of the religious message or agency.

Another feature, extracted from the above sets of two-sided influences, assumed as underlying the determinants of the religious institutions catalyzing the developmental processes, is their dual nature. Namely, some of them are vertically oriented, that is, they reflect the consciousness of believers which is derived from their strivings aimed at establishing and strengthening individual and communal linkages with the transcendent. However, the strategy for achieving this leads through horizontally oriented relationships occurring within the communities in which the members of a particular congregation live and work. They serve as the means of expounding the religious awareness of transcendence. Due to the coexistence of both types of relationships, vertical and horizontal, it is necessary to employ into the field of our investigation two complementary perspectives. The aim of both is to facilitate the process of achieving a deepened insight into the nature and specificity of religious institutions and what characterizes their agency, especially while interacting with their secular counterparts.\(^6\)

The vertical orientation, as presented, might be adequately reflected by means of a theological perspective. The focus is geared here at the factors, emerging from the transcendental strata, which are reflected within specifically religious ways of intuitive and rational consciousness, as well as experiencing and communicating the content of faith and morality. The influence of religion upon the processes of development are seen here as indirect, that is, mediated through the axio-normative frames provided by religion, which most frequently take the form of worldviews. These frames generate broad-spectrum explanations of the wholeness of the reality which is surrounding particular people. By means of these are delivered the basic life orientations which are developed in the light of the ultimate purposes of human beings, and these have their roots within the wider tradition of a particular religion. They are the source of the further conceptualizations, meanings and directives which are drawn from them. On the basis of all of them, the process of the structuring of the agency takes place which, being motivated by religious faith, might be directed equally towards the strictly religious and the secular dimensions.

Similarly, as the theological perspective facilitates the process for capturing the genesis and general orientation of religious agency so, due to the fact that this agency stands out from that undertaken by other societal institutions, by having its own distinctive cultural and social features, it is possible to deepen the insight uncovered by the theological approach. It can be achieved by placing at its centre the sociocultural aspects of the religious agency. In this way the perspective may be broadened and room be made for the social sciences. Due to the theoretical and methodological rigor which characterizes them, reflecting their ontological and epistemological underlying assumptions, the aspects of religion being taken into consideration here, together with their agency, can be deeply explored within the normatively determined theological perspective. However, this time it is going to take place within the horizontally oriented perspective which is not entering beyond the settings of what is natural and temporal.\(^7\) It can be achieved by utilizing the ability to make empirical descriptions of phenomena already investigated within a theological perspective. What can be particularly profitable is the possibility of describing and explaining the complexity and dynamism of the interdependencies and interactions occurring within the closer and the wider environments of religious institutions. They will be understood as a single or as networked acts stemming from the main transcendental and supernatural values and norms assimilated by religious socialization. Thus, there might be revealed some important aspects of the

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factual impact upon social reality, made by religious organizations and the agency developed by them.

To sum up, the Catholic Church is a dynamic institution which, due to the trajectories of various social transformations, is continuously searching for the most adequate mode for realizing its mission. This task is very complex and multidimensional and is determined by the unchanging elements emerging from transcendence, such as different beliefs, moral convictions, values and norms. However, due to the changing social and cultural realities of the surrounding environment, each time the content of the transcendental strata has to become the subject of processing. The aim of it is to transform its constant and unchanging essence into a meaningful and persuasive message addressed to people immersed within a particular temporal and social milieu.

In accordance with the course of the preceding considerations, the institutions composing the community of the Church are responding to the pressures and challenges of contemporaneity. Their representatives are working out new methods of acting which are taking the form of missionary and pastoral strategies and tactics for achieving particular sub-goals. By referring to the language of economics, it can be said that in this way the Church enriches and extends her experience, and emerging from this, there is an offer which is addressed to the representatives of the closer and wider environment. Notwithstanding, it should, however, be noted, that the same network of official relationships and informal ties can serve as a means of transferring certain benefits in the opposite direction. In this context, there arises the following question: in which way are the positive impulses generated and transmitted from the network of religious institutions towards the institutions and social groups which form the societies surrounding the Church? What is the nature of the concrete establishments and solutions emerging from these impulses?

2. FROM A RELIGIOUS MESSAGE TO CONCRETE ABILITIES AND VIRTUES

From the perspective worked out above, we are enabled to reflect on the impact of religious institutions upon development as it is broadly understood. Within its range, both halves of the relationship appear to be interdependent and inter-affecting. They form a complex structure, a network of relationships and linkages connecting the individuals who are located in the closer and wider social environment of a given religious community. In this way, the religious element forms an immanent part within the secular social environment, while retaining its own identity. This means that religion together with the communities and individuals which represent her institutions cannot be artificially separated from the rest of society. They can, therefore, impact upon society, influencing the formation of a variety of opinions and views, attitudes and behaviours, as well as upon individual and social abilities and virtues. The way in which this impact is exercised is the subject of this part of the study.

As has already been considered, the substance of the interactions developed in a religious environment is not only determined by the spiritual-moral and intuitive-mystical elements emerging from the transcendental dimension. Every time these elements are shaped into a concrete, empirically graspable message, it is as the result of a rationalization, defined as an attempt to take hold of specific, fundamentally inapprehensible elements of the religious message as coherent and logically sound beliefs, such as the defined truths of the faith, its moral standards and symbols. From the perspective of this study, all of them remain in a more or less direct relation to the formation of specific existential attitudes, individual and collective behaviours and social practices within the elements of human life, in particular the social, economic and political.

Since there is difficulty with capturing the essence of the specific fragment of the religious message, resulting from its immersion in the transcendent as well as the necessity to make continuous attempts for its ever more precise definition, the continuous growth of religious institutions is unique in the context of the challenges of different times and places.
It can be viewed as a process of seeking ever more adequate forms in which to embody the spiritual and supernatural, while identifying its original structure. This identification is a part of the process for defining the relations through which the representatives of religious institutions affect the actors located and engaged in different social circles.

The first, most internal and primary part of the structure, as outlined, is its ideal dimension. Within it, the surrounding reality is interpreted in a theological and philosophical sense, with the perspective focused on the supernatural and transcendent. Thus defined, the cognitive horizon encompasses all the important aspects of human life, viewed as a crucial element of a broader social and material reality. Within it, the ultimate purpose and meaning of human life and human reality is explained. This is the meta-narrative and meaning-forming function of religion. It is most fully expressed in the provision of the ontological and epistemological assumptions which form the foundation of various world-views. The typical axio-normative and paradigmatic patterns and directives, such as the conviction of the essential goodness of the material reality created by God, the equality of all human beings, and their responsibility for the natural environment, can also be found in world-views whose authors refer directly to religious roots. This is, however, also applicable to world-views which are primarily secular and influenced by conservative, liberal or even socialist thought.

However, despite the fact that their authors do not refer to religious inspirations, a deepened analysis of their content show deep, systemic analogies between the religious and secular methods of describing the complexity of human life and its explanation.

Apart from the inspirational function of religion in the creation of the conceptual foundations of various world-views, the basic ideas, thoughts, values and norms of the analysed dimension of religion also have a control and verification function in relation to the alternative secular concepts. The best example is the definition of ‘development’ itself, especially in regard to the general perception, due to the influence of the theory of modernization, through which it has been viewed as being synonymous with financial welfare. Accordingly, the driving force of development was economic growth, leading to the accumulation of material resources. This wealth was then supposed to be shared according to the socio-cultural conditions of particular societies. Several programs, based on this narrow definition of development, failed in the second half of the last century, leading the scientific community to question its validity and social usefulness. A heated debate ensued, leading to the recognition of the need to broaden this perspective. The singular underlying political and economic dimension was eventually extended to include the social and cultural, including the moral and spiritual elements. This change is obviously inspired by religion. Central to it are the two aspects of welfare: the spiritual and the material. These were forced apart by the authors of the theory of modernization, but are now seen to be intertwined and mutually complementary.

Another dimension, whose genesis is ingrained within this new perception of development, is that of the legal and organisational. This ingraining is to be construed primarily as being the result of the struggles of a particular religious community to provide the conditions necessary to allow the unrestrained and continuous communication and development of those truths of the faith which were considered real at the specific stage in the historical development of the community. After the actions, focused on the propagation and socialisation of the contents of religious faith, are embedded in an institutional legal and organisational framework, the next step is the development of the particular community.

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This step is the process of applying external forms to the specific contents of the faith. These actions can assume the form of specific behaviours and practices – both individual and collective. They can be strictly religious acts, such as religious rituals, or can take the form of other, non-religious activities. They are, however, always inspired by faith, for example – a specific dogmatic truth or moral principle within a broadly defined theological or philosophical perspective characteristic to the specific religion or denomination. A broad range of practices, rooted in religion, define the character of the historic development of each religious community. Its members create their own, unique way of giving testimony to their faith. This involves the need to create appropriate regulations for the community’s life, based on various standards. In particular, these are the dogmatic, legal and customary, including the division of roles and functions within and outside the community, the rules of education and socialisation within the faith, together with communication models, the rules of cooperation focused on obtaining the material resources required to develop the religious activity, and finally, the methods for creating the desired relationships with the representatives of the institutional and social environment in order to acquire and maintain social legitimacy.

The structure of the inter-dependencies and connections, created by the method described above, is closely related to the way in which the members of the religious community develop their lives in the secular sphere, including all their social and economic activities. Individual behaviours or repeated sequences of behaviours, and even the same style of carrying out specific activities, are more or less consciously transferred to the adjacent segments.

In the case of the innermost dimension in the structure of the self-manifestation of a religious community, as already analysed, the influence of the element of transcendence is the most pronounced, while in the third stratum which we are now discussing the interaction of the social and cultural factors becomes most visible. Within this layer, the most adequate strategy for the realisation of the religious mission in the social environment is first developed. Then the process of defining the tactics for achieving operational goals takes place. This is inextricably connected with the need for the constant improvement of evangelisation and the pastoral tools and methods. Lastly, these developmental processes are critically reviewed and corrected as necessary within the community.

For the purpose of this part of the study, the individual phases, for the process of reading the supernatural content of the religious message, create an environment in which the correct thought and evaluation patterns, every day practices and social behaviours as well as the methods for achieving set goals are all developed. The first area of their application is the strictly religious sphere, where the collective effort of all believers reinforces the growth dynamic of the religious community. However, as discussed above, this growth dynamic extends beyond the religious community. This is an effect of the fact that the network of interactive connections forming a given Church community and its development reaches outwards from its borders. As the result of these connections, the general social blood-flow is enriched by the pro-development values and norms of the religion and the collective behaviour motivated by them. This is applied primarily to the models and patterns for engaging in and maintaining social interactions, communication and conflict solving, and the methods of creating and improving institutional and organisational solutions, as well as for the formation of particular abilities and virtues, both individual and social.

The analysis of the conceptual dimension for the process of ingraining the Church into the reality of a specific social environment proves the importance of focusing human life, both in the individual and social sense, on the values helping to read and explain its ultimate purpose and meaning, the existence itself and the surrounding material reality. Religious axio-normative, ontological and epistemological paradigms and assumptions serve as
constant reference points and as an ethical compass for the alternative secular concepts. In this way, religion developed within a Church community provides non-material, spiritual and moral components for the development of culture, which serve a double purpose in the process of forming further values and norms of community life. This function can be described as both inspirational and verification-controlling.

The analysis which focused on the legal and organisational dimension proved the importance of religion in providing models for the development of institutional solutions which enable the implementation of particular values in a rapidly changing social environment. The determination of the members of the Church community to express faithfully the content of the deposit of faith and morality in the language of the particular culture, and to communicate it to future generations, sparks creativity in the search for solutions which enable the creation of the required structure of connections, protections and regulations focused on the optimisation of the process of fulfilling the tasks within the mission of the Church. In this layer, the inspirational function of the Church is realised in the search for the most adequate institutional and organisational solutions for the implementation of particular social, cultural and economic values. An analogous function may be found in the sphere of Church activity oriented towards the continuous improvement of evangelisation and pastoral methods. This, however, underlines the special meaning of the readiness to seek the most adequate solutions in conjunction with the introduction of changes, innovativeness and creativity.


According to the authors of many studies, the dimension of responsibility for the institutionalization of a Church community is shown as being the exclusive domain of her ministerial leaders. However, in fact, this responsibility pertains to all members of the community. It is oriented towards the need to remain prepared to introduce the required changes both in the philosophical-axiological sphere and in the legal-organisational sphere. In the case of the Catholic Church, a modus operandi is maintained which distinguishes ecclesiastical institutions from other social institutions, especially political ones. Its most important elements involve a group of actions, which can be categorised in the following method: firstly, the constant monitoring of the dynamics of social and cultural changes, and secondly, an in-depth and multi-faceted reflection aimed at capturing patterns in the observed transformations and explaining their consequences for the process of the self-manifestation of the Church. Lastly, the methods for the appropriate use of the channels for the socialisation of faith are defined, together with the conscience formation and religious and social communication which are typical of the Church. A close correlation between the various activities in the aforementioned areas enables the development of the given local Church community to be formed as the result of a commonly shared awareness amongst its members, as well as the unity developed over the longest possible time necessary for the norms and regulations to be established.

In this regard, the essence of the institutional Church is expressed in the constant search for the method of integrating the current and natural areas of human life with the transcendent and supernatural qualities. It is essential that there should be further analysis of the way in which individuals located in various sections of the ecclesiastical structure are engaged in the stages of the process we have discussed. The intensity of this process not only affects the life of the community and its missionary zeal, but it is also reflected in the method for influencing other segments of the socio-cultural and economic-political environment.

Cf. S. Deneulin, and M. Bano, Religion in Development, 135,141.
Contrary to the descriptions prevalent in the literature on the subject, which narrow the process of the interpretation of the religious message to the competence of individuals with spiritual and administrative authority, it is in fact the result of a long-term cooperation between all members of the community, paradoxically even those who found themselves on its borders due to the lack of engagement in its life or to extreme views and attitudes. The first question which emerges is this – how does the religious community collectively denote the content of the broadly defined tradition in order to connote the conceptualisations and notions adapted from the specific socio-cultural conditions of a given historical period?

In the case of the Catholic Church, this recognition is a dynamic and complex process. Its individual elements may be construed as acts of mutual inspiration and the verification of the experience of transcendence shared within the community. The reliability and authenticity of the emerging content of the faith and its moral convictions are confirmed by procedures developed over the ages. They form a complex network of multipartite connections within which the individual members of the Church community make their unique contributions in the shaping of the particular elements of the religious message in such a way that it becomes adequate to contemporary challenges.

The source and point of reference for all members of this network are the testimonies of a broadly defined tradition, the central place being occupied by the Holy Scriptures and the other texts which together form the tradition. The persons directly engaged in the interpretation of the tradition-forming sources are the representatives of the two essential institutions, namely theology and the Magisterium of the Church. Each of them, within its autonomy, develops its own way of interpreting the sources of revelation. They complement each other in such a way that the normative aspects of the Magisterium direct the work of the theologians towards the horizon of the overall faith experience of the members of the Church. At the same time, the more descriptive aspects of the intellectual strivings of the theologians serve constantly to deepen and broaden the understanding of the basic theological truths in the context of the ever-changing reality. This is how they contribute to the enrichment of the perspective laid out by the spiritual leaders of the Magisterium.

However, the mutually verifying cooperation of the two aforementioned institutions is subject to the inspiration and verification by yet another institution. This institution is composed of the members of the local Church communities. Their key role is played by the so-called sensus fidei – the sense of faith. This sense is derived from everyday existential experience during which the truths of the faith and moral standards are defined, with the cooperation of the theologians and the Magisterium, and implemented in life.¹²

Each of these institutions possesses a unique system for acquiring and transmitting information as well as for communicating with the other institutions. For example, in the exchange between the theologians and the Magisterium, these are the official documents of the Holy See and the conferences of the national and local episcopates, the studies and publications of the theologians, the symposiums, conferences, debates, polemics, discourses, as well as the official correspondence between the offices, commissions or individual theologians and their direct contacts. Along the line separating the aforementioned institutions, appointed to explore the mysteries of the faith and their interpretations, from the representatives of the broad group of members of Church communities, there are the official documents and the more accessible theological, philosophical and Canon-Law interpretations, the pastoral and catechetical teachings, the campaigns underlining specific values and norms, the local synods and the opinion polls, surveys, consultations, direct

contacts and pastoral discussions, feedback from such contacts, etc. Finally, on the scale of the whole Church, there are the ecumenical councils which form the institution which takes into account the state of awareness of all the members of the Church community, without exception, together with the representatives of the religious, social and cultural environments.

To sum up, the analyses undertaken reflect the process for seeking the most adequate method of underlining the values and norms emerging from the transcendent sphere of religion. This process is determined by the influence of the direct and indirect socio-cultural environment. Within it, all members of the Church community are included. They are interconnected by a network-like, multi-surfaced structure of relations and connections. This structure is asymmetrical in nature. This is the consequence of a precisely appointed scope of responsibility for the particular sections of interpretation of the sources of revelation and their repercussions. The purpose of such a division of roles, depending on their location within the hierarchical Church structure, is to direct each participant towards a perspective beyond the temporality of life. With reference to the language of religion, this should be described as turning to God. The subordination to this particular purpose determines all the remaining mechanisms within the described structure. They are devised primarily to serve the freedom of reflection focused on the ultimate goal of human life according to the perspective of the supernatural. The possibility of mutual inspiration and verification of each religious experience, both its cognitive-rational component and the emotional-volitional component, undergirds the search for institutional and organisational forms of expressing the religious faith and the sense of morality in a way which corresponds to changing reality.

Depending on how a single church community and the Church as a whole become close to realizing the model outlined above, of the collective searching for the best way of interpreting the basic principles of the creed received through tradition, it will become possible to intensify their pro-developmental influences. This possibility emerges out of the deepened sense of participation which motivates believers to be more responsible for their own religious life which is then reflected in the influence of this religion upon social life, as was explained in previous section of this study.

CONCLUSIONS

Relying on this analysis, it is possible to state that there is a strong and necessary correlation between two processes: the institutionalization of the ecclesiastical communities within their socio-cultural environment and the formation of the modes of thinking, valuing and acting which are fostering social and economic development. As was assumed at the beginning of the study, the core of this process is determined by what is most important from the point of view of the development of the ecclesiastical communities, namely a range of acts aimed at transforming the unchangeable elements of the transcendental strata. The result of these transformations takes the form of a persuasive religious message communicated within the particular socio-cultural environment. In turn, the latter sets the frames for the strategies of realizing the mission of the ecclesiastical congregations.

Eventually, together with the initiation and putting into practice of subsequent elements of the mission of the Church, relationships between members of the ecclesiastical community and representatives of surrounding environment are established. Within the network of exchanges created by the growing number of these relationships, there occurs the process of transmission of what has been developed within the Church communities into surrounding segments of society. Thus there comes about a range of rationalizations and evaluations, together with the activities, practices and social virtues underpinned by them. All of them can be perceived as being an outcome of the broadly understood processes of the Church’s self-manifestation. Then gradually, the Church community’s internal processes for developing its modes of operating is extrapolated into the external domains of the adjacent segments of society, and they gradually become detached from their original religious
context. In this way, their own existence is initiated as secularized concepts and views, abilities and skills.

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