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THE GRACE OF VOCATION AND THE EXPLANATION OF EXISTENCE: A STUDY BASED ON THE YOUTH OF ST. RAPHAEL KALINOWSKI

INTRODUCTION: BASIC QUESTIONS AND INITIAL ANSWERS

Regarding the figure of St. Raphael Kalinowski, we can pose a series of questions, questions about the life and work of this restorer of the Discalced Carmelites in Poland, who died a little over 100 years ago in Wadowice. Among them, in the first place the question arises about the figure himself, about this person who was a national hero and a saint, about his identity: Who was Józef Kalinowski, known by his religious name as Fr. Raphael, and how did he understand himself?

In this matter – in our study – this question does not have a purely theoretical character. It is not one of the questions that science raises, which always tends toward generalizations, and which in treating a person, tries to place him in a universal framework common to all men. In such a framework, the answer would be more or less known. History, psychology, sociology and other sciences employing empirical methods provide such a huge amount of data, that on their basis we could make a judgment on the theme of St. Raphael with relative ease. With the help of the historical context and thanks to general psychological laws and mechanisms regulating social life, our acquaintance with St. Raphael could extend very far. However, it would be only an acquaintance – an external and superficial one.

It is therefore clearly necessary to state that on this “wide path” of science, we will never truly find what we are seeking. For this reason, the above question has a character which is decisively more existential and theological. It goes more deeply. It does not touch a person as such, as a person in general, or even his

essence (philosophy). It touches a concrete and unrepeatable person, with all of his traits and personal characteristics, which no one else possesses. It touches someone who, apart from his natural qualities, was granted special supernatural graces, among which the most essential seems to be the grace of vocation.¹

And so in the end we do not raise that question, since as long as it is formulated by someone from outside, it would not bring much to an issue which is so personal. Józef Kalinowski himself sets the question. He asks: “Who am I?” Over the course of the years, he asks this question with ever greater lack of peace, but with greater spiritual maturity. He does so not only because he knows theoretically that “whoever does not question himself, does not lead a human life,”² but above all because he is impelled from inside, where in the greatest seclusion he experiences a frightful drama. On the one hand, he experiences a profound feeling of existential emptiness and lack of fulfillment, and on the other hand, a mysterious voice comes to him, which only in the twenty-eighth year of his life, during his greatest personal and social trials and darkness, he calls the voice of God.

Nevertheless, no one knows about this personal drama. He himself helplessly tries to communicate to those closest to him about his existential emptiness and the inability to find himself. Moreover, he is silent to the end about vocation. He doesn’t say anything, until he is completely overwhelmed and is given the certainty that indeed God Himself comes to Him from this other side. In any case, he is helpless up to that moment. “Every calling from God is always addressed to one person, the Individual; it is on this basis that effort and examination depend, that the one who is called must be alone, going on his own path, walking alone with God.”³ Remaining alone with his destiny, in complete separation, in absolute loneliness, Józef Kalinowski questions himself – about the meaning, the place, and manner of living out his own existence.

The answer which he gives every time – whether in word or action, at a precise moment or after many years, in life or after death (since the saints speak to us and fulfill their mission also after death, in the *communion of saints*, by shedding light on the darker things!) – is none other than precisely the test of explaining the existence granted and at the same time entrusted to him. It is an attempt to discover its deepest mystery, explaining the principles which govern it, imparting to it its

¹ Cf. H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Teodramatyka*, vol. I, *Prolegomena*, Kraków 2005, p. 455–466.

² PLATON, *Apol.* 38a, cited in: H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Teodramatyka*, p. 459. Cf. PLATO, *The Apology* 38a: “I tell you that to let no day pass without discussing goodness and all the other subjects about which you hear me talking and examining both myself and others is really the very best thing that a man can do, and that life without this sort of examination is not worth living, you will be even less inclined to believe me” (in: PLATO, *The Last Days of Socrates*, New York 1959, p. 71–72). [Editor’s note: Translation of all direct quotations from non-English language sources is by Michael Gibson.]

³ S. KIERKEGAARD, *Dziennik (wybór)*, Lublin 2000, p. 182.

deeper meaning, and establishing it on more solid foundations. It is an answer given by the believer with his whole life, and not just by words. It comes gradually, in the degree of growth in faith. It comes most often at unexpected moments, and as such it is not exclusively its answer. It is rather a humble recognition of the answer, which God Himself gives to him. And though at this moment it seems to be given in common – by him and by God – the answer becomes the fulfillment of his deepest longings, which however is never in the end exhaustive. It always remains open for further dialogue, which arises from further concerns, doubts, and questions as well as the concrete call to show forth obedience to the word which is directed personally to him. This answer has its own layers of meaning, and above all its center, its constant point of reference – indeed that point, which makes his existence cohesive and exemplary for others. It is this point where God's call and the human response, the human question and God's grace, meet together.

Arriving at this point is the goal of our investigations. It is not an easy task to carry out. We need help, but not just any help, but first-hand help, from a person who is most competent and reliable. Nevertheless Józef Kalinowski, although he knew seven languages, was not always a perfect purveyor of his deepest experiences. Expression was not for him his strongest point. On the other hand, he knew how to wait patiently and in solitude – since he was completely independent of others – in order to carefully reflect on himself, on the shape of his own life, on his destiny. This was his tremendous asset – even more so, since he did not do this on the outside. He cared above all for the internal content. He took interest in life from the inside. He searched with perseverance for the thread drawing together all the elements of existence. Whatever he expressed in words never corresponded to the truth of his deeper self.

An even greater difficulty arises from the fact that he had beyond average reluctance to share his experiences, especially when the deepest matters, connected with his most personal secrets, came into play. Above all, he avoided like fire the explanation of the vocation which he felt. He kept it all to himself. In a way similar to Edith Stein⁴, he was ready to say to each person: *secretum meum mihi* (“My secret to myself”) (cf. Is 24:16).⁵ He only said what was necessary, and did so very carefully, sometimes in a veiled manner. In this situation, we must place emphasis not so much on the words he uttered, but rather on the life of St. Raphael Kalinowski, which is so rich and eloquent. And yet, many things we will be forced only to guess at, while others we can conclude on the basis of the general principles of the Christian life, and still others in the form of an echo which only after many years resounds in

⁴ See H. CONRAD-MARTIUS, *Moja przyjaciółka Edyta Stein*, in: *Edyta Stein albo filozofia i krzyż*, Kraków 1989, p. 3. Cf. *Edith Steins Briefe an Hedwig Conrad-Martius*, München 1960, p. 73.

⁵ H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Teodramatyka*, vol. II, *Osoby dramatu*, part 1, *Człowiek w Bogu*, Kraków 2006, p. 30.

the Church and finds verification therein. However, this in no way means that we will allow ourselves to conjure up and depart from the truth, from reality.

In spite of the aforementioned difficulties, we wish to strive for our chosen goal. Our contribution in undertaking an examination of the vocation which St. Raphael Kalinowski discovered through many years and with such toil, is in general quite modest, although it may seem ambitious and surpassing human capacities. In tracing chronologically the events of his life and delving into the texts which he left us, we wish to arrive at those fascinating layers of his soul, which disclose the uniqueness and distinctiveness of this person, recalling that “the more something is unique, the more it is universal.”⁶ We wish to understand the riddle of his personality not only on the basis of external, accidental facts, but likewise by reference to eternity and the ultimate goal. And this, as we know, explains everything. Concretely, we wish to examine that decisive event in which the word of God’s calling and the word of human response met together, wishing the same thing: cooperation in the one plan of salvation.

It is not therefore a matter of a factual reconstruction of St. Raphael Kalinowski’s life at its external level. It is rather the archeological digging up from under the many layers of historical sand of that one leading idea, lying at the foundation of all the following days and decisions of his life. It is a matter of gathering together on these pages the fragments of profound thoughts, desires, hopes, inspirations, experiences, and voices which he shared in letters with those closest to him, and later in his *Memoirs* [*Wspomnienia*] with succeeding generations. They had after all such power that they set into motion his entire existence.⁷ It was a question of bringing out into daylight that divine-human experience of the grace of vocation, which in a decisive manner weighed upon the entire succeeding life of the saint.

It seems that a glance at the relation which is established between a vocation, which is always an intervention of the invisible grace of God, and the experience of existence and the attempt to explain it before oneself and others, is from a theological point of view, a glance at what is thoroughly present (if we take into account the tremendous confusion that exists in this field today!) and becomes a valuable key to penetrating the mystery of the person of Józef Kalinowski. In addition, it allows us to grasp the vocation itself not so much from the angle of its essence, which may always veer off into theoretical and abstract reflections, but above all from the angle of the event. In this aspect, there are not so many saints whose existence may provide equally rich material illustrating the working of God’s grace in the history of a concrete person.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Cf. A. ZAGAJEWSKI, *Poeta rozmawia z filozofem*, Warszawa 2007, p. 30–47.

A perspective of this kind, on the other hand, has tremendous significance for contemporary man, especially for youth. After all, he needs more than rationalist theories, explaining the essence of God and the essence of man; he needs to enter into the salvific event and open himself to God acting in Christ who “reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear” (GS 22). The figure of St. Raphael Kalinowski, and especially his youthful, dramatic struggles for internal cohesion and fidelity to God’s word cannot only give comfort to individuals who today encounter similar spiritual battles, but can also shed great light for the whole Church in her mission of forming a person and supporting him in the task of opening himself up to God’s word. This study, containing a symbolic message, is intended in the first place to serve the young, who are searching for their path in life and attempt to recognize God’s will for them.

Wishing to make further reflection easier, let us set forth two fundamental questions: What poetically joins the dazzling grace of God with the prose of daily existence? And does the experience of being called help to clarify one’s own existence?

1. VOCATION AND EXISTENCE IN GREAT DARKNESS

1.1. Archeology of vocation on the basis of “some bits of data”

We possess one and only one text which directly touches upon the vocation of Józef Kalinowski, in reference to the years in which a vocation is usually discovered, namely, the years of intense personal development between the fourteenth and twentieth year of life. This is the record which he himself left in the *Memoirs* written in the years 1903–1904. We read there:

“Truly when I consider certain facts, I should have tried to be admitted to the clerical seminary in Vilnius. And since I didn’t act in this way, a considerable part of my life and mainly the years of my youth were broken into two disconnected parts, became without benefit for me and my neighbor, and so were wasted.”⁸

Since we don’t have other texts which tell about the beginnings of the vocation of Józef Kalinowski, in what manner and in what circumstances it was communicated, recognized, and accepted, and this is a “unique text,” we must thus pause to reflect on it further.

The difficulty of interpretation lies in the fact that this text comes from a later period in Fr. Raphael’s life, literally from its last stage. Fr. Raphael was almost 70 years old at the time, but he is describing events from 50 years earlier, from the time of his

⁸ J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia 1835–1877*, Lublin 1965, p. 14.

youth. It is therefore a record *post factum*, very late in time and relatively very general. It is in truth the reflection of a mature man, who can see himself objectively, and like an external observer can take a calm look at his life as it has been fulfilled, and can even be tempted to judge it critically, but does not talk in words about his youthful experiences and of that which took place in the very interior of our hero. It does not say anything whatsoever, if the voice of God's calling at a particular time or in a particular form was communicated to Józef.

However, there are in the text two interesting points, which are worth digging out and examining. The first refers to "some bits of data" which Fr. Raphael Kalinowski has in mind, and which we can only guess at, that were signs of his vocation and would predispose him to enter the seminary. However, we do not know which "data" he is referring to. One may suppose – and this is most likely – that Fr. Raphael had in mind certain personal, natural traits: eg. talents, disposition, sensitivity, and perhaps the hobbies and interests for which he was known. He himself does not provide many concrete details for us. His biographers stress on one hand his great virtues of mind and heart, his above-average intellectual talents, especially in the field of exact sciences, his tremendous uprightness and honesty, his friendliness and kindness, and on the other hand – his shyness, indecisiveness, lack of practicality, and even a certain lack of resourcefulness in life.⁹ The testimony of Jakub Gieysztor is curious:

"I knew Józef Kalinowski from childhood, as my cousin, and I loved him as one of the most respectable of men. However, whoever knew him had to be amazed that this person could be nominated Minister of War for Lithuania! His intellect shone forth with what he knew, revealing a man of the highest conscience, constant work, but created more to be a bishop of the Catholic church, rather than a man of revolution."¹⁰

His inclinations and natural gifts are not however what define a person in the end and allow a person to recognize God's will for himself. A Christian does not recognize his life's vocation on the basis of these. No psychological tests will assist him. The calling by Jesus of such people of disparate character like Peter and John does not permit us to draw conclusions about someone's vocation on the basis of natural gifts. Biblical authors – as Blaise Pascal astutely noticed – never did so. "It is an astounding fact that no canonical writer has ever made use of nature to

⁹ See C. GIL, *O Rafał Kalinowski 1835–1907*, Kraków 1984, p. 12–41; S. ADAMCZYK, *Niespokojne serce*, Kraków 2007, p. 13–31.

¹⁰ J. GIEYSZTOR, *Pamiętniki Jakóba Gieyszтора z lat 1857–1865. Poprzedzone wspomnieniami osobistymi prof. Tadeusza Korzona oraz opatrzone przedmową i przypisami*, vol. I, Vilnius 1913, p. 46–47. This is however, even later testimony than that of the *Memoirs* of Fr. Raphael, expressed on the basis of external and very general observations.

prove God. They all strive to make us believe in Him.”¹¹ Natural gifts after all are characterized by certain boundaries and are disproportionate to the grace of vocation, which is always supernatural. God enters into the history of a concrete person from on high, as if vertically, and His action cannot be discerned thanks to natural signs. And besides, who among men possesses natural inclinations to carry the cross? We therefore learn of “the holy vocation” – as St. Paul the Apostle teaches – “not on the basis of our (natural) deeds, but according to the decree[of God] and [His] grace” (2 Tm 1:9). God directs to the heart of the concrete person, whom He has chosen in his eternal decrees, at times not conforming to human standards, His personal word of love and calls him to complete obedience. This is qualitatively a second word – after the first, the creative one, which he declared when He called him from nothingness into existence. This time it is a word of grace, and even – as von Balthasar says – “of grace upon graces, which raises up to the role of partners in dialogue with God.”¹² Of course, the grace of vocation may correspond to the natural inclinations and expectations of a person, but it does not at all have to. The vocation itself has such strength, that the one called should cast out all his own longings and abandon his own natural plans – not to say material things – in order to respond only to God who is calling. The answer must express readiness to offer in service one’s own nature – his whole existence.

We do not know if in his early youth Józef Kalinowski already had a hint of the grace of vocation at work in him and if he heard the voice of God asking him to leave everything and follow Him. The documents made available say nothing on this topic. However, we do not possess any others. We likewise do not possess any documents which would establish, whether the community of the Church where he lived and grew up played a hand. The intuition and experience of the Church have a tremendous significance in this view. Vocation after all is never a matter exclusively of the individual himself, but is always that of the ecclesial community, which actively participates in its growth, and in addition helps to discern and objectify it. God, the giver of the grace of vocation, has his Bride on the earth, who “is with child [...], groaning in pain as she labors to give birth” (Rev 12:2; cf. Gal 4:19) and who “tenderly looks after her children” (1 Tess 2: 7–8). He also has his “helpers,” “assistants” (cf. 1 Cor 3: 5–9), those which can truly be called “fathers.” (1 Cor 4:15). Vocations are never conceived *in vitro*, but always in the womb of the Church and come into the world exclusively through the community which in faith receives God’s word and actively helps it to bear fruit on earth.

Józef Kalinowski was born precisely in such a community. His family was a true “domestic Church.” He was baptized in the parish church of St. John in Vilnius. He was raised in the spirit of the best Catholic traditions. While still a small child

¹¹ B. PASCAL, *Thoughts* (243), New York 2007, p. 91.

¹² H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Gli stati di vita del cristiano*, Milano 1995, p. 343.

“on the hand of his servant he was carried to the relics of three blesseds [Jan, Antoni, and Eustachy]”¹³ in the church of the Holy Trinity in Vilnius. From childhood, he was acquainted with the catechism and taught to pray. From his loved ones, he always had the best example.

“His father was a devout Catholic from First Communion up until the last sacraments on his deathbed – so writes his son Jerzy of him in his family notes. – In his days at the university, before his lectures, he always stopped by St. John’s Church for Mass. He never missed his prayers.”¹⁴

The other family members gave him a similar example. However, the person who exercised a special influence on his interior life was his stepmother, Zofia Puttkamer, who was a very devout person who prayed until late at night, attended daily Mass, received the sacraments frequently, fasted on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, and was known for her great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In addition, she zealously performed acts of mercy. For Józef, only seven years younger, she was a person who was spiritually close to him.¹⁵ Of great significance is the fact that she offered her youngest son to God – her son Jerzy, who indeed eventually became a priest.¹⁶ He is precisely the one who testifies to Józef’s beauty of soul and of the positive influence of his mother on the development of his vocation. He does not tell us, however, at which exact moment the grace of his particular vocation was granted to him and above all, whether Józef was aware of it. It will remain in the sphere of general statements, characteristic of those times as well, which distinguished the “Christian vocation” and the “vocation to holiness” as if the first were not a call to holiness, and the second – which we will call the “particular vocation” – depended exclusively on external factors and human interventions:

“That freshness of feelings, that love of God was so beautifully used by my mother, in order to scatter about the flicker of hope in Fr. Raphael, already glowing earlier, of a vocation above all Christian, which later, under the influence of his greatness of soul, external circumstances, and other more mature minds and hearts was transformed into a vocation to holiness. And thus was it accomplished so wonderfully.”¹⁷

¹³ J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 6.

¹⁴ Cited in: S. ADAMCZYK, *Niespokojne serce*, p. 15–16.

¹⁵ C. GIL, *O Rafał Kalinowski*, p. 12–27; S. ADAMCZYK, *Niespokojne serce*, p. 12–31.

¹⁶ R. BENDER, *Powstaniec-zakonnik. O Rafał Kalinowski*, Warszawa 1977, p. 12.

¹⁷ *Wychwalajcie mężów sławnych. Wspomnienia o świętym Rafale Kalinowskim*, selected and edited by C. Gil, Kraków 2008, p. 17.

In the work of awakening priestly and religious vocations, those who have the most say, other than the family, are members of the clergy. They sow the word of God, water it, and nurture it in human hearts, they help in the discernment of spirits, and lead on the paths of God. At times, however, they discourage and cause scandal. Fr. Raphael himself in general has pleasant recollections of the clergy. From the time of his stay in Vilnius, he mentions Fr. Mokrzecki, Fr. Godlewski, Fr. Jakubowski, Fr. Eymont, Fr. Minoryena, and Fr. Tołowiński – as pastors who were very zealous and knew how to capture the heart of the youth.¹⁸ Nothing however indicates that he had closer contacts with them or that some particular thoughts were emerging in him, which would lead him to choose a similar way of life. As he was struck by the personal impact of these wonderful priests and remaining each day in a climate of edification and spiritual zeal which they created around themselves, there remained in him a general picture of the priest as a spiritual leader, a man dedicated to God, who awakens “a feeling of worship in awe and love.”¹⁹ He distinguished the white color of the Dominican habit from the black cassock, but he seems not to have had a greater concept of what religious life entails.

In this context Fr. Raphael likewise recalls the role of religious practices and devotions which sustained his spiritual life. Among them he mentions prayer, retreats, frequent reception of the sacraments, and an atmosphere of silence at his boarding school. At any rate “from a religious point of view – he writes – nothing was lacking to us, expect perhaps our good will.”²⁰ It was still worth taking a look at the very walls of the churches, the monasteries, and the architecture of his native Vilnius, which were as a “record, whose pages served as a type of apostolate on the soil of the fatherland,”²¹ and thus created that type of religious climate, which was to facilitate the arrival of the word of God’s calling to the human heart. Above all, it is worth calling to mind the presence in the heart of that amazing city the Chapel of Ostra Brama with its miraculous picture of Our Lady of Mercy, to which devout mothers brought their children, offering them for the service of God through Her intercession.

We do not know whether the mother of Józef Kalinowski performed this act, as she died immediately after his birth. And we do not know whether, in her name, her step-mothers, Wiktoria or Zofia, physically did this. What we do know, however, is how Kalinowski’s further life unfolded. We know that at the conclusion of his 15-year stay in his native city, that is after passing his final examinations at the Szlachecki Institute in 1850, he did not ask “for admission to the major seminary in Vilnius” and by this gesture had still not handed his whole existence into “the

¹⁸ J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 5, 10–11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

exclusive property of God.” We also know from him, that *because* (“*izem*”) he did not do this, “a significant portion of [his] life, and especially the years of his youth were broken into two incompatible halves, became without benefit for [him] and his neighbors, and turned into a waste” – as he expressed in the fragment of his *Memoirs* cited above.

Was this really the case? Was his decision not to enter the seminary truly the reason for the breaking of his life into “incompatible parts?”

1.2. Existence broken into “incompatible parts”

Leaving his family home and pursuing further studies at the Institute of Agronomy in Hory Horki, Józef was not convinced of the wisdom of his choice. If he indeed decided in the end to go there he did so “very reluctantly” and because “in these younger years he did not know what to begin.”²² It is not to be excluded that that doubt touched upon not only the type of school and further career, but also the purpose of life, and perhaps his personal vocation, and that it was precisely this, this agonizing doubt, pinching him like a sharp pebble in one’s shoe (*scruple*), that became the cause of great interior anxiety, of a misunderstanding of his own existence, and in addition – of mistakes in life, which he came to commit in the succeeding years. There is much to indicate this. “One erroneous step led to another”²³ – he notes in his *Memoirs*, taking into account the interruption of his studies where he had been up to that time and the departure to Petersburg for further studies.

The Petersburg period belongs to the most dramatic and saddest in his life. These were years of confusion, loss of orientation, and dangerous vacillation on the waters of this world with a will to keep himself on the surface, but from time to time falling into the depths of his own weakness, and from the depths of this weakness digging out a precious gem of meaning and hope for the future – years which were marked by deep interior struggles, which show at the same time an ever-growing feeling of longing, engulfing his whole being. Everything in his life at this point has a dual character.

The religious crisis which he experienced at that time is well known. “I neglected devout practices” – he confesses years later. But he is quick to add:

“I had an interior drive toward devotion here and there, which strongly but fleetingly was awakened in my soul. However, I was not faithful to that voice.”²⁴ It was like a shipwreck. The rupture made itself known at all times and in many ways.

²² Ibid., p.14.

²³ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁴ Ibid., p.34

Above all, from that time, for the next ten years, he did not go to confession. He lived on the surface and as if without major qualms of conscience. He jokingly managed to admonish his sister-in-law, who at this time rarely wrote to him, saying, “please correct yourself before your Easter confession”²⁵

– while he himself lacked the courage to approach the sacrament. But it was also true that in the meantime, an intense desire to open his heart before a confessor was awakened in him, which on a certain occasion led him to the confessional, but unfortunately, he did not experience any peace, because no one was there. This experience drew forth in him only an outburst of unexplained tears.²⁶

Józef retained the custom of observing Lent which he had taken from his home. On this occasion, he participated “in the whole series of sermons that he had to listen to, and other acts of reparation and Christian penance, which for forty days took from him independence of thought,”²⁷ and yet without significant interior transformation. He did not allow the word of God to penetrate the depth of his soul. The next year, for a change of pace, he neglected even this practice. This was probably only because, as he treated going to church as equivalent to going to the theatre and public amusements, and thus as only an element of cultural life, he had no desire for anything and seldom left his home, “although at this time a throng of well-known actors, preachers and ballet dancers came to Petersburg.”²⁸

The only thing to which he remained faithful was the reading of books. He took great pleasure in this. He read many of them and with zeal for fear “in the face of the future hunger that awaited him in Brześć.”²⁹ However, not all of these books were edifying. On the other hand, those which might have edified him, for example the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, did not hold his interest for long.³⁰

Józef had the opportunities for taking fruitful advantage of religious instruction and catechesis. The priests in Petersburg, with few exceptions, were very careful and conscientiously carried out their pastoral duties. In addition, during his trips on vacation to his family, he met good priests. One of them lent him books. There was also a certain priest who very much touched his heart and with whom he had the opportunity to meet later in Petersburg, but unfortunately, Józef did not keep regular contact with him, “from which – as he regretfully admitted later – would have brought considerable benefit for the soul.”³¹

²⁵ Letter 15, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Brześć, February 4, 1861 in: J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Listy*, ed. C. Gil, vol. I, part 1, Lublin 1978. All the letters of St. Raphael Kalinowski referred to in this article come from this collection.

²⁶ J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 34.

²⁷ Letter 10, to Masia Kalinowski, Petersburg, July 22, 1859.

²⁸ Letter 7, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 19, 1858.

²⁹ Letter 14, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, September 29, 1860.

³⁰ Cf. J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 34.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

The aforementioned examples clearly show that the faith which was rooted in the family home, when it did not find support in the actual community of the Church, and when it was constantly exposed to the winds of life in the big city, started to waver and by this very fact ceased to form his life. Józef Kalinowski did not know how “to find a place to rest on, and the course of [his] life was in constant vacillation.”³² There arose in him a general emptiness, apathy, stagnation, and a lack of interest in anything: “In the depth of my soul I felt no attraction to anything,” – he wrote years later in his *Memoirs*. And he adds: “As I veered off the normal course, the person I was became property. I knew I was alive, but nothing contributed to stability in life. Everything was foreign to me.”³³

In his *Letters*, in which he currently described his emotional and spiritual state, one can see very clearly the sense of loss and lack of ability to manage himself. He completely misunderstands himself. His “I” continues as if imprisoned in some dark spheres of his own existence, which deprive him of light, perspective, the vision of wider horizons, and clear criteria by which he could direct himself.

On the one hand, amusements wear him out, but on the other, they promise much afterwards and he even willingly enjoys them. He hides himself, where possible, and fears that his shield before the blows of the enemy “would splinter and leave himself defenseless,” but it also happens that he amuses himself with them and “in the vanities of this world seeks medicine for himself.”³⁴ The company of his friends wearies him, and he therefore lives alone, but after a moment he suffers from loneliness – and the need to converse will satisfy... “with long monologues.”³⁵ On one occasion he complains about the city and wishes to escape from it, for it “disturbs him,”³⁶ but again he agrees that, so long as he lives there, he must endure “the fog of Petersburg,”³⁷ and even manage to abundantly “take delight in its pleasures,”³⁸ in order that in the end – when he had to stay a few months outside the city – “sigh in longing for Petersburg.”³⁹ And so it was in everything.

Most often, with repeated expressions, as he uses to describe his state, we find “vacillation,” “flexibility,” “movable property.”⁴⁰

“A person who is more fickle in his dispositions as I am, I have never yet seen. For me there is nothing easier than to go from one extreme to the other

³² Ibid., p. 35.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Letter 2, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 19, 1856.

³⁵ Letter 9, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, February 6, 1859.

³⁶ Letter 6, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 10, 1857.

³⁷ Letter 9, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, February 6, 1859.

³⁸ Letter 6, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 10, 1857.

³⁹ Letter 11, do Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Chutor Aniutin, September 25, 1859.

⁴⁰ J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 34–35.

unexpectedly and to find in me a completely changed essence from the one it was a hour ago.”⁴¹

The state of his soul likewise had a bearing on his physical health: “My health is no better or worse and depends on my humors. Today I feel healthy, and the day after I am sick; and so it changes.”⁴² His temperament and health are not only similar to the changing weather, but often frequently depend on it. He suffered from all types of sickness of soul and body. Fortunately, he was convinced that “every ailment of the body has a moral cause. A moral remedy is therefore needed to maintain harmony.”⁴³ Despite this, after a moment he allowed himself to willingly give himself over “to moral apathy”⁴⁴ and “laziness,” with which boredom “is favored.”⁴⁵

This youthful wavering was not something innocent. One cannot so easily justify it, claiming that it will pass by itself, or that it will simply go away when a person lets off steam from his youth. It has an influence on the formation of character and bears upon his relations with people. And this includes not only present relations, but future ones as well. After almost four years’ stay in exile, taking into account his experience at that time, Kalinowski very critically, but also with a sense of great realism and a sober look at life, writes thus about the effects which his days in Petersburg left in him:

“I am not free from my failings perhaps not so much of misanthropy as of isolation. The strong emotions, which I experienced in my turbulent youth, when I gave free rein to all my passions, both permitted and not permitted, deprived me of the root of a quiet and balanced character.”⁴⁶

Only years later does he remark that this fickleness “flowed mostly from the imperfections of his soul.”⁴⁷ However, in Petersburg, he did not know this. And he did not know either what was the kind of “imperfection” – on which illness it precisely depended. The lack of an accurate diagnosis was on the other hand a cause of loss and complete dissatisfaction with himself. “Besides, is there anything in the world that does not bring disappointment along with it?” He many times promised himself happiness after achieving some goal in life, but then immediately became convinced that “there always remained an empty spot, which could not be filled with

⁴¹ Letter 2, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 19, 1856.

⁴² Letter 8, to Masia Kalinowska, Petersburg, January 1859.

⁴³ Letter 9, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, February 6, 1859.

⁴⁴ Letter 6, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 10, 1857.

⁴⁵ Letter 9, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, February 6, 1859.

⁴⁶ Letter 92, to Masia Kalinowska, Usole, February 24, 1868.

⁴⁷ J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 35.

anything.” “For as regards me – he wrote in a letter to his brother – I feel that nothing will satisfy me, for something will always be lacking to me.”⁴⁸

He nevertheless has an awareness that his understanding of life is too theoretical, bookish, and grandiloquent. He is cut off from reality and so does not yet truly live. And at this point he was certainly far from the fullness of life. He writes to his brother: “We [that is students, the residents of big cities] only understand life and know it in theory, while as for living on the other hand, we practically do not live – we only pass through life.”⁴⁹ He takes into account that the only thing which can stop his “feverishly excited imagination,” which at this moment “flies wide and high and throws itself in every direction” are only “several painful failures,” which force him to humble himself and “adapt himself more to reality.”⁵⁰

2. VOCATION AND EXISTENCE IN FLASHES OF LIGHT

2.1. Existence rooted in the truth and in the community

There is still a second, more positive and promising aspect of Józef Kalinowski’s youthful years. Despite the great interior division and being lost in the new world of the big city where he lives (in spite of himself, but not without his own will), there appear at this time of his life several significant points of light. Through the soiled window of human existence, their first rays radiate. It is true that they do not scatter all his doubts and do not brighten his entire interior space, and above all, they do not disclose before him and do not shed light on the grace of vocation, which at least for the external observer continues to remain completely hidden, but they certainly disclose to him his proper way and raise up in his heart some greater hope.

We must remember that in all his confusion Kalinowski was not isolated. In his soul, the basic spiritual struggle of the 19th century takes place. This was the century of great interest in human existence and the birth of existential philosophy. All of Europe, from Paris to Petersburg, discusses at length on the absurd and the sensible, the despairs and hopes, on the pains and joys of human existence.⁵¹ However, unlike many of his contemporaries, who were bogged down in the recollection of existential experiences, Kalinowski enjoyed a deep interior light, which manifested to him horizons unknown to him up to that time and marked out the goals which by himself he never would discover. Thanks to this light, he begins to understand his past and present. He also brings himself up to an initial clarification of what

⁴⁸ Letter 2, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 19, 1856

⁴⁹ Letter 6, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 10, 1857.

⁵⁰ Letter 2, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 19, 1856.

⁵¹ Cf. C. MIŁOSZ, *Wstęp*, in: L. SZESTOW, *Kierkegaard i filozofia egzystencjalna. Głos wołającego na pustyni*, Kęty 2003.

was happening in him. At any rate, his thoughts and desires as well as decisions, which he begins to undertake by himself, are flashes of wisdom and dignity which not many in this century could attain.

Already in the first letter which we possess, written from Petersburg to his brother Wiktor, in a feeling of tremendous responsibility for his own life and those of others, he clearly presents the existential drama taking place within him. He has before himself people who are disposed and generous, who have “their soul on their lips and heart on their hands” and are ready to enter with him into relations, and perhaps even more deeply participate in his life, while he himself, pressed to the wall by this human love, felt unprepared to give a response in the same measure. He notices that he needs a little more time in order to return the love that was offered to him. At this moment, nothing else remained for him, except either “to remain completely lonely” or “to constantly play out the comedy.” As to the first, which would mean leaving out these people, he fears it terribly and in no degree desires it, for he values the company of others too much and at least in no way pictures himself as a recluse; however, he knows with complete certainty that for now it is not permitted for him “to be completely open” and “to share his feelings and impressions with anyone;” nonetheless, he seems to sense that it must cost him feelings of loneliness. As to the second that is of this double game, he does not permit thoughts of deceiving himself or anyone else; at all cost, “he would like to avoid in the course of life any such false pretense.”⁵²

Let us leave aside for a moment the question of loneliness, which is an issue more complex, subtle, and existentially difficult to develop: he will grapple with it for the next several years (and we along with him). Meanwhile, let us turn our attention to the second point, on the problem of lying, with which he deals at once and in a radical manner – in one short stroke. He does not intend to stay in interior dishonesty, at the same time “playing out a comedy” before people. Such amusement does not interest him. The truth has a fundamental significance for him. Even the thought of falsifying existence never entered into consideration and does not do so now. That which he bears in the depths of his heart, and which he took with him from his family home, is too precious to be lost so easily. Being lost on the level of thoughts and feelings, as Józef Kalinowski experienced in Petersburg, does not mean complete loss. The youthful testing of his own powers and learning from mistakes does not lead him to mistakenly jeopardize his whole life. *Veritatis splendor* – to use the expression of John Paul II (cf. VS) – takes precedence in the end above the dreadful dark powers of dishonesty. That splendor of truth, which already in his youth shown forth in his heart, helped him now to find the taste and joy of true life, and in the end also to calm the tension between solitude and the community.

⁵² Letter 1, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, November 4, 1856.

Even at the time of the greatest cognitive anxiety and spiritual wavering, Kalinowski did not fall into the philosophical nihilism characteristic of the representatives of the nineteenth century Russian elite or more precisely, the bitter way of life which indeed led toward the complete falsification of existence. This current, casting its adherents into the vortex of impulsiveness and sensuality (allowing them to taste all the pleasures of life, but also boredom along with it), hopes and disappointments, a certain fascination, but also the loss of a sense of meaning, in the end led to bitterness with life, a lack of hope in setting goals for oneself, a resignation from all ambitions, estrangement from the community, complete loneliness, and in the end, an existential feeling of “uselessness.”⁵³ “The *useless person* [...] has an awareness that he did not take up his own vocation,”⁵⁴ and precisely for this reason is isolated from social life.

Kalinowski, on the other hand, standing on the foundation of truth, does not permit thoughts that his existence might be “useless” and without benefit for the community. He does not let nihilistic sadness dominate him and does not fall into an overpowering isolationism. He does not question the community and does not estrange himself from it. If in the Petersburg period, he could not and even was not allowed to open himself completely before others and establish new friendships, “to be completely open” and “to share his feelings and impressions with someone,”⁵⁵ he still had a living awareness that he forms an integral part of the community. But he also has the deep conviction that only in harmony with the community, and thus on the basis of authentic relations, can he discover his vocation in life as well as the meaning which will also help him to stabilize indeed his whole life in the end. He therefore does not act separately, he does not burn bridges, and does not break off relations, but patiently begins to rebuild the columns and span that had been harmed. The first of these is his family. No matter how distant he found himself physically, his family was spiritually the closest to him and he feels among them most certain, most safe. He therefore turns to his family first, and from it begins the gradual opening of his heart and the establishing of harmonious relations. The means which served to remove the distance was his correspondence.

Kalinowski’s letters to his family⁵⁶ not only provide many interesting details connected with external events, but above all disclose his interior and speak of the

⁵³ Cf. L. MACHETA, *Demon południa i zafalszowanie egzystencji. O acedii starożytnego mnicha i zbledności inteligenta rosyjskiego XIX wieku*, Kraków 2003, especially p. 77–142.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁵⁵ Probably because of his changed vision of life; we do not however, have evidence that he already thought of the path of vocation already at that time.

⁵⁶ The first letter that we possess dates from November 4, 1856, Is this in fact his first letter to his family? This we don’t know, but probably not. At any rate, the first three years of his stay in Petersburg are for us a period that is keeps our intellect always in the dark, and are so little documented, that we are consigned to move ahead practically blindfolded. The testimonies are too sparse to be able to clarify for us what we would like to know.

deepest needs of his soul. They are full of simplicity, open and direct; they carry a rich emotional content, emanate with warmth, and at times jump out with their seriousness and charm by their depth, while at other times, they disarm with their sincerity and sense of humor. They always express great trust in those dear to him as well as the desire and need for constant communication. They are the calling of someone who lives in a spiritual desert, in great loneliness and with hunger for true bonds of friendship. "I therefore start from grumbling: is it reasonable to be silent for so long and not to console myself with any news from home?" – he writes in his first letter to his brother.

"In the course of a whole month one could find an hour of free time and send at least a few lines. I don't understand this long and general silence [...]. With such a lonely life as I lead in the capital, a few words received from home cannot be appreciated enough, as they are read with such pleasure."⁵⁷

The family, however, does not always manage to enter into the spirit of these laments and does not always answer his letters, but it does not in the least disturb him; he is already determined to maintain this spiritual bond. After all, it was not his family, which found safe shelter in the quiet of the countryside, but he, tempted on every side, tormented and bombarded by uncertain propositions which the city afforded him, who had the need and even the necessity to maintain at least one open and true relationship. At this point, his survival seemed to depend on it.

"As I regard from every angle, you are incorrigible, dear Wiktor; now I have lost complete hope, that I could lead you to a regular correspondence, I must therefore take you as you are and deny myself the pleasure of receiving letters from you; however, this will not be a reason for cutting off correspondence on my part, as now I will write even more often to you; for me it would be too much of a loss, if I would deprive myself of chatting with you [...]. Have mercy on me and write even just a few words about yourself; after all, it's surely not a lack of time or ink, and you produce enough paper in your paper mill."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Letter 1, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, November 4, 1856.

⁵⁸ Letter 2, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 19, 1856. There is, however, one letter written already after Józef Kalinowski left Petersburg, which – as usual during that period – speaks of his constant love for his family, but at the same time bears witness to some earlier period in his life, in which "he tended toward indifference" regarding it. We do not know under what influence this occurred, for what reason, and when, whether it was precisely in Petersburg, or even earlier: "It was sad for me, my dear ones, to part with you, whether this was a premonition of parting for a long time, or whether it was from attachment to your company and a feeling a bit of irreplaceable loss, made my farewell to you sadder than ever. Up to now I sincerely confess to you, although I loved you all no less than I do now, I bid farewell to my loved ones with sadness, but not with such a feeling of sorrow as the last time: apparently I still

Józef therefore does not cut off the weakened bonds with his family, but rather tries to build them back up and strengthen them with toil, finding in them a refuge for himself. The same attitude applies to his bonds with his country, with its language, and its rich spiritual culture – the second column, on which he wishes to establish his young life. Although his fatherland did not have its own borders and government structures, it is still always the great house in which those closest to him live; it is a powerful community which is always ready to bring him into the current of national life and widen the circle of its open relations. At the same time, unfortunately, it is for him only the subject of nostalgic memories and unfulfilled longings. After several years living abroad, but still in Petersburg, Józef Kalinowski looked for the reasons for digging up the foundations on which the building was so strongly established up to that time:

“For what reason did I exchange the light meadow, to which I was headed, for the heavy burden of my present situation? Who put into my head the idea of casting out Horki and instead choosing a voluntary, perhaps permanent emigration from my native Poland? After all, do I even know when I will return to it? Can I call this a full life when it is a matter of separation from the family and a question for any perspective?”⁵⁹

have not frozen over and did not arrive at the peak of indifference, to which I tended for some time” (Letter 12, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Vilnius, August 10, 1860). And there is also a letter written from Brześć – a small town, which by its monotony recalled the country atmosphere of his family home – in which Kalinowski years later indirectly explains to his family his former negligence in correspondence. “I would be happy to talk with you all for as long as possible, as I knew how to once in Petersburg, but I cannot somehow wait for the inspirations which in the big city, with its various causes for edification, came upon me almost at my beck and call. Now I am beginning to excuse those persons, who settling in the countryside, lose all will to correspondence, if only for lack of inspiration from outside [...]. In Brześć, in this regard, as in the country [...], we lose the habit of pouring out emotions, and everything stays with us.” (Letter 15, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Brześć, February 4, 1861). And finally there is a letter, still later, in which he acknowledges that in spirit, regardless of his own weaknesses or that of his family, he “always” turned to the people closest to his heart: “Cast into the life of a wanderer for over ten years, in moments of sadness, failure, or disappointment, my thoughts always revolved around those people, with whom my heart always rested; I could therefore better than anyone else appreciate the importance of relationships with family and friends, the cooling of which no circumstance has had any influence up to now and surely will not have” (Letter 30, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Brześć, September 21, 1862).

⁵⁹ Letter 9, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, February 6, 1859. This same feeling of disappointment at his stay far from his fatherland takes on a more understandable form almost a half century later: “When I cast a glance at the sad results of a life known by far more talented [...] companions than me, one must arrive at the conclusion [i.e. state] that we all on foreign soil looked like plants transported from the ground of the family onto a foreign ground. – It remained for us either to wither completely, or to be [...] smothered by the local vegetation.” (J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 35).

This sincere confession, indicating the time and place of committing fatal errors, not to say sins (of “separation” from his family and native land as well as damaging his relations with his family and God Himself), discloses at the same time the power of his present spiritual life, of his interior openness to his family and fatherland, and in the end, of his deepest longings and interest in all of reality. Behind the series of questions expressing regret for his youthful errors, there are hidden in reality questions about something greater. Józef Kalinowski, while not an evangelical youth, asks about “a full life” and therefore about the meaning of life, about its final goal, about eternal life.⁶⁰ Leaving behind his concrete experiences of family and fatherland, he directs his views to wider horizons (perspectives).

2.2. Seeking the purpose of life and “longing for another world”

It is curious, nevertheless, that in the letter we have analyzed Józef at first speaks of daily matters, of little significance, and banal. He somewhat routinely mentions matters which always take place everywhere, and to all people: of his miserable state of being and other various illnesses afflicting him, of the “foul weather,” and of how his family again “forgot about him” and “secretly” keeps silence, about the burning down of his favorite theater and the decadence of the new daily paper,

“which promised to be a literary powerhouse and unite in itself all the strong points of all the nations which still speak Polish, and in the end about the death of people who, because of bad weather, were defeated – in a word, about the afflictions of this fallen world.”

And he says all this without pathos, calmly, and even casually, allowing himself to add a note of bitter irony to those who are too attached to earth and who put all their trust in money: “God may let me be a false prophet, but I wish I could leave my creditors in sorrow, since [I also] aim toward the land, where without money one can cross over and the journey there does not cost anything.”

Kalinowski knows, however, of what he is speaking and to what he is aiming. He knows what he wishes to share with his brother, and through him, with his whole family. He certainly does not intend to leave their attention focused on superficial, earthly things, of which he writes expansively in his letter, for it is truly another reality that interests him. It is not simply external appearances that interest him, but the foundation of existence.⁶¹ And this is precisely what he wishes to communicate.

⁶⁰ John Paul II writes: “In the young man [...] we can recognize each person, consciously or unconsciously, approaching Christ, the Redeemer of man, and posing to Him the question. The young man does not ask so much about which precepts he must observe, but how to attain the full meaning of life.” (VS 7).

⁶¹ John Paul II writes: “Wherever men and women discover a call to the absolute and transcendent, the metaphysical dimension of reality opens up before them: in truth, in beauty, in moral

It is true that it was not easy for him to call things by their name – even among those whom he most trusted and before whom he tries to be the most open and authentic. He therefore speaks of many different things, goes in circles, and shifts around, until in the end, he reluctantly admits: “in truth there is not much that holds me in this world,” and a little later he poses a troublesome question: “where can one find refuge, when everything that was nearest to me as regards beauty and emotion was whirling around in a mist?” These statements, with the fragrance of metaphysics, disappearing into the thicket of many other statements, must have been noticed by those closest to him, eagerly fished out, and properly interpreted and must have met with a fitting answer on the part of his family⁶², since in the next letter, written just a few days later to his sister-in-law Masia, Kalinowski expresses his joy that he has found a kindred spirit, who understands the deepest desires of his heart: “I also owe you thanks for sharing in my longing for another world.”⁶³

In this brief sentence, Kalinowski summarizes his experience, which he reluctantly shared in the previous letter.⁶⁴ “Longing for another world” is for him a very important and unusually delicate experience, of which he cannot openly speak with everyone, for fear of being accused of high-flown rhetoric. It forms the main-spring of his existence, a key mechanism on which his interior integrity and personal integrity depend. This spring causes his life to be suspended between heaven and earth, and by this very fact, it becomes a dramatic life, in which two extremely distant poles are joined: on one hand, it forces him to open himself to the present and to what is human, while on the other hand, it opens him to eschatological reality, and thus to God. This spring is not, however, so strong as to carry his life over into a world of complete fulfillment of all his needs and expectations. It has, however, such power, that it can protect it from breaking into small fragments and falling into an eventual lack of meaning: it pulls him after all from the trifles of the present and does not allow him to seek satisfaction in them. One should mention, however, that this “longing for another world” is for Kalinowski a pretext for

values, in other persons, in being itself, in God. We face a great challenge at the end of this millennium to move from *phenomenon* to *foundation*, a step as necessary as it is urgent.” (FR 83).

⁶² However, we do not possess a letter from his family documenting this fact.

⁶³ Letter 10, to Masia Kalinowski, Petersburg, February 22, 1859. It is also worth noting that two sentences earlier, Józef openly opposes his sister-in-law, who – according to him – “is not right in taking his last letter literally,” which means that she is not right when she interprets some parts of this letter too physically, probably guided by exaggerated concern for his health. Kalinowski therefore leads her out of error, explaining how things really are on the physical level and how one should understand them, removes her fear, and only later touches upon the metaphysical level, thanking her for “sharing his longing for another world.”

⁶⁴ This experience was expressed in two sentences: “in truth there is not much that holds me in this world” – “where then can one seek amusement, when everything that was nearest to me as regards beauty and emotion was whirling around in a mist.”

escaping into abstractions. He understands this very concretely, precisely as the mainspring of existence, although he never uses this expression.

This can be clearly seen, for example, in the whole series of small life decisions, that were not lacking to him at this age. As he learned from the regretful experience of the past, he no longer gives himself over as prey to whim or accident. Every decision is carried out with an honest assessment and with the involvement of his entire existence. However, it is not such that he at once measures it very highly. The goals which he establishes for himself are ordinary, daily ones. Initially, he wishes only to find some place and an appropriate profession by which he could serve society. At least, that is how it seems.

“The time is soon coming” – he writes to his older brother – “in which I must make a final decision about my further career. I have so many open paths ahead of me, that I myself do not know which one to choose; certainly, by choosing too much, I will manage to take the worst; those paths which have been opened up before me, some with stars, others with troubles, and still others strewn with glitter, and all are sufficiently endowed with thorns.”⁶⁵

He therefore reels off his thoughts on the topic of various professions which he could pursue. He is open to each one of them: from army engineer to civil engineer to school-teacher. This in no way means that they all attracted him. For example, he seems to have a distinctive aversion to the profession of school-teacher. He does not, however, allow his feelings to carry him. He grants primacy to his common sense, which never leaves him: “After thoroughly examining *this question* – he states – I settled on what offered a better, certain, and peaceful piece of bread in Vilnius rather than leading the life of a nomad, full of regrets and troubles, in the hope of future successes”. And it also is not most important what profession he chooses in the end, but precisely the hierarchy of values he adopts: intellect above emotions, a stable and rooted life above one that is mobile and scattered, and above all – and this seems to be his specific character – nothing which is not conditioned by his personal choice – a poor and simple life above one which is pompous and lofty. A little further on, he expresses this briefly and pointedly: “I am not accustomed to excess, and I do not wish for honors.”⁶⁶ Five years later, intending to withdraw into the countryside, in a way even more disarming, he admits that it is enough for him “that there be milk, a piece of meat, a few roubles for books, and fresh air. I have less than a few needs.”⁶⁷ This authentic modesty and unpretentious simplicity do not in the least mean some minimalism in life and do not draw him away from proper

⁶⁵ Letter 5, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, May 7, 1857.

⁶⁶ Letter 1, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, November 4, 1856.

⁶⁷ Letter 18, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Ciechocinek, August 16, 1861.

goals. They also are not an expression of accumulated complexes or of some kinds of inhibitions. Quite the contrary, they seem to be an expression of that Franciscan spirit, which soon persuaded him to “find out about the rule of the Capuchin Order”⁶⁸ and to seek the goal of his life not in material but in spiritual goods.

This directing toward a higher purpose and “longing for another world” can also be observed in his theoretical considerations on several existential issues. For example, in a letter to his sister-in-law, he thus writes of his ambitions:

“Every person should be ambitious, but ambition is only a good attribute when it carries with it the embryo of sacrifice of the whole personality: it is noble and generous when it aims toward noble and generous goals. It is a crime, when it aims exclusively to a personal goal.”⁶⁹

It is not an idea that is heard about and then mechanically repeated. And even if Kalinowski in any of the churches of Petersburg heard any Lenten instruction on the theme of ambition, this statement is a perfect example of the way he knew how to digest it and apply it to his life. The affirmation that healthy ambition cannot be directed towards a “personal goal,” but must be open to some “noble and generous goal,” and most of all, that it must bear within itself “the embryo of sacrifice of one’s whole personality” confirms not only his great spiritual maturity, but also how he, as a young man of 23, felt the need of giving a Christian mark to his distinguished human experience and interpreting it in an evangelical spirit. One cannot, however, fail to notice that likewise the grace of vocation, of which the Gospels speak so extensively, demands from the person called a “total sacrifice” and readiness “to leave everything” (cf. Mt. 19:27, Lk 14:25–33). Therefore, it could be that it is already making its way to his heart, and penetrating through the most basic existential experiences, gives them a deeper meaning by its brilliance. At any rate, Kalinowski speaks of ambitions in a very personal and concrete way, always seeking the authentic good, and not appearances:

“I would not like to change my destiny, whatever that might be, in order to be ambitious like the heroes of today: the financiers and generals. I am far from the point of not recognizing the benefits of material independence, but I would never sacrifice moral independence for this goal. Do you wish to see a portrait of such an ambitious man of our times? He has no other desires except possessing beautiful horses, in order to wonderfully display himself on Newski Prospect, to show off his acquaintance with some beautiful woman, as often happens in the world, to call himself the friend of some outstanding

⁶⁸ Letter 40, to Ludwika Młocka, Vilnius, December 27, 1863/January 8, 1864.

⁶⁹ Letter 10, to Masia Kalinowski, Petersburg, February 22, 1859.

personality, to marry a woman with a great inheritance, to show himself as a free-thinker up until the age of sixty, and to have in a ballet orchestra, access, in the degree possible, to the rank of general and to die as a senator! Such are the ambitions of today.”

No matter how much Kalinowski's desires are of a completely different kind, yet after a further reading of the words written above he reminds himself that he has entered into a field of matters that are extraordinarily lofty, which he does not understand in their fullness and of which he cannot be certain. Therefore, in order not to submit to the rhetoric of his own arguments and not fall into the trap of unnecessary pathos, he skillfully hides behind a language of self-irony and allows himself to be laughed at: “However much the tone of this letter is more proper for the reflections of a great saint or a martyr, despite this, I do not wish to deprive myself of the pleasure of laughing at my own cost as I write the next section of this letter.”⁷⁰

The next section is a new existential experience, which in still another way checks the authenticity of his “longings for another world.” His departure from Petersburg, and admission to work on the building of a railroad on the steppes of the Ukraine – for that is what is at issue here – is transformed at last into an experience of loneliness and the desert.”⁷¹ His six months of work “in conditions that were not favorable for him,” “far from people” became the first, serious, and longer test of those desires, which up to that time he could recognize only in the small, individual decisions undertaken up to that time or in the theoretical considerations he pursued in the bustle of the big city. The criteria he applied were realistic and very simple. He first ascertains if the rough conditions in which he presently lives cause a “loss of humor,” and next – if unhealthy “needs for companionship” are emerging. The test turns out positively. After all, he feels peace of heart, warmth of spirit, interior freedom, willingness to serve, and at the same time resignation from constraining attachments. For him this is a sign that the longings he bears inside bear a character of permanence, and are not the product of his own imagination and whims – they are not the effect of a subconscious flight from real life. In the letter to his family, one can thus take pride in the discovery of new horizons, which bring more certainties into his life:

⁷⁰ Letter 10, to Masia Kalinowski, Petersburg, February 22, 1859.

⁷¹ Both definitions of this new experience, as an experience of „loneliness” and „the desert,” are definitions of Kalinowski himself. The first appears in the letter cited later, written from Chutor Aniutin. The second, on the other hand, comes from his *Memoirs*. Fr. Raphael described in them the spiritual climate in which a number of Poles found themselves living on the distant steppes of the Ukraine, whose fortune he also shared at that time: “All of them, however, were as if in the desert, without any help from companions, from the fatherland, and without the help of the church, but yet in a setting both friendly and honest, even though it was insufficient for the soul.” (J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 51).

“With constant loneliness, I managed to form inside me an interior life and I will tell you sincerely, that this continual work with myself and above myself, far from people, brought about a great change for the good in me. I recognized the whole enormity of the need for lasting religious ideas and at last I returned to them. (In great measure I owe this to one invaluable book: the *Confessions* of St. Augustine...). I look at life more calmly and become much more indifferent to its pleasures.”⁷²

2.3. The discovery of his own identity and his life vocation

Kalinowski was aware that living in a spiritual desert did not automatically eliminate his various defects, nor did it dispel all the doubts connected with the later tracks of his life. It did not by itself dissolve the dualism between the role he played in society and that which he truly was inside. It did not remove in the end the burden of his brokenness and lack of personal unity. Rather, it made all of this stand out. Kalinowski became aware that “there is still much work on himself remaining,” and even that “he trembles a bit for himself, when he recalls [to himself] the whirl of his life in the capital,” and how he “knows its temptations too well.”⁷³ The awareness of his own weakness which he attained in solitude does not, however, paralyze him in his later spiritual struggles after returning to Petersburg and does not drive him into a dark nihilism. The manifest dualism and the chasm between the external presentation and the interior truth answer each other in the voice of a healthy conscience, which forces it to keep its bonds with all of reality and to further reflection on the basic existential question: “Who am I?” He is forced to enter with the whole external world into his own depths, but not in order to hypocritically conceal this ruffled world, but in order to bind it in every inch with itself and lead it to its desired unity. In a letter to his loved ones he thus conceives his actions:

“I write to you constantly about myself, but I am so busy with myself now, or even more briefly, my person gives me so much for reflection and causes so much troubles, that I put little weight on things which do not have a simple connection with me.”⁷⁴

He writes still more profoundly of his identity, of his understanding, and the meaning of his own existence in his next letter to his family. This is his last letter in Petersburg. Again – he would say – “he thinks and writes about himself.” However, in reality, this thinking and speaking about himself do not mean egoistic

⁷² Letter to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Chutor Aniutin, September 25, 1859.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Letter 13, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, September 17, 1860.

concentration on himself or lack of thought for others. Quite the contrary. He speaks of existential experience which in no small measure is associated with the Christian mystery of love; in which the self is revealed precisely in the wonderful bond with another person; in which his “I” begins to reveal itself thanks to the mysterious question on the part of “you;” in which solitude is not a turning away from the world and isolation from people, but the place of discovery of one’s own unrepeatable existence and openness to another. This is one of the more profound texts which he composed in his youth.

“When I remind myself of the stacks of books and the thoughts of others which I devoured – I consider myself like a thief stealing from others, often poorer than myself and myself not contributing anything. Such uselessness of mine is truly the cause of frequent worries to me. In similar moments, when I begin to make an examination of conscience with my company, I stand before it as a debtor before a creditor and can only console myself and in the end calm down that there is no lack of will to pay back what I owe, that the money is still coming in, but has not yet come out of the mint. My only wish is that I might never lie to myself.”⁷⁵

This text deserves a longer commentary. Kalinowski, speaking of himself, of his life up to this point, in reality does not stop at himself, does not moralize, and does not take satisfaction in tormenting himself with pangs of conscience, that he still had given people nothing of himself, but rather expresses his calm realization of his own life as a relational being. He understands that a person can discover himself only in relation to another person, in openness to that person, and in a selfless gift for that other person. A person will not find peace in his own heart until he regards himself as the debtor of another, until he awakens in himself gratitude regarding others and begins – at least in his heart – to pay off that debt... with his very self. Kalinowski’s statement is not theoretical, nor is there any intellectualism or pathos characteristic of moralists in it. It is on the other hand a subtle opening to the deepest Christian mysteries.

Kalinowski expresses that Christian truth, which many years later the Second Vatican Council would express briefly and profoundly in one concise sentence: “Man [...] cannot fully discover himself except in a sincere gift of himself.” (GS 24). This key declaration of the Council, cited many times by John Paul II, is found in the section dedicated to the communal character of the human vocation in the saving plan of God. The Council points to the fact, that all are created in the likeness of God and are called to one and the same goal, which is God Himself. And they carry out this vocation only through the mutual love of neighbor, which becomes

⁷⁵ Letter 14, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, September 29, 1860.

a reflection of the Trinitarian love between the individual Divine Persons as well as the Christological mystery of the Incarnation, which is fulfilled in the Cross of Christ. The Council, speaking of the vocation of all people to “perfect love,” refers to the teaching of St. Paul the Apostle (Rm 13:8).

We don’t know whether Józef Kalinowski, in writing his letter to his family, read and meditated on the Letters of St. Paul, and whether the ideas which he shared with his loved ones are inspired by the Word of God, or whether they are the fruit of independent reflection based only on his own existential experience. In his letter, however, we do not find any reference to Holy Scripture, or even to faith, and yet we cannot fail to notice the great convergence of ideas with the thought of the apostle on the theme of love of neighbor (of which he speaks in the second part of the letter to the Romans, Chapter 12 and following). And this is not only on the level of words, but above all that convergence can be seen on the level of the dynamic of love, and still more deeply on the level of its source. Just as St. Paul calls on Christians to “offer their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, as an expression of their willing service to God” (Rom 12:1), and further explains concretely, that this “offering of one’s body” is to be reflected, among other ways, in that Christians “should not be in debt other than that of mutual love, since love is the perfect fulfillment of the Law” (Rom 13:8,10), so that Kalinowski understands (thanks to the Bible or thanks to his experience?), that love of neighbor is not some type of timid emotion, which quickly lights up and quickly burns out, but precisely by the constant offering of one’s own life and by becoming “a debt” of its own type, which is paid off by a person’s very self to the point of giving up everything. And just like St. Paul, who has a deep awareness that an imperative of this kind, of sacrificial love of neighbor is possible only on the decree of the love of God, “who did not even spare His own Son, but handed Him over for us all” (Rom 8:32), so Kalinowski does not cling romantically to fulfilling deeds of love of neighbor arising from the body, for which he could be praised before men (cf. Rom 3:27; 8,5–6; “We are debtors, but not to the body” – 8,12), but at first patiently waits and with respect contemplates the very source of love as well as what takes place in that source: “money is being made, but have not yet been issued from the mint.”

Insofar as we don’t know to whom we must attribute this great work of issuing the “money” of love in the “mint” of his heart – to Kalinowski, or to God’s grace?! – it is, however, such a strong experience that it becomes for him a clear indication, which “comforts him and calms him down.” It becomes a powerful light, which on the one hand doesn’t allow him to exaggeratedly worry himself to death because of a lack of external works of love, and on the other hand, – already spurring him on to do them in the future, as he is called to perfect love. In order that the loftiness of this mystery touched by him in his intellect may not distract him from the

existential truth which he esteems in himself above all and wishes to experience to the end, Kalinowski announces the same warning to himself: "Only that I might never lie before myself."⁷⁶

This last idea, in the attached true form, appears one more time, after almost forty-five years, when already as a priest, he would write his *Memoirs*. It is therefore also worth turning our attention to it, since it not only joins together distant moments in time, but also serves as a guide in showing his internal personal integrity, and perhaps even uncovers the mystery of this unity, namely the grace to live by love. Writing the *Memoirs*, the saint returns in memory to a certain secret of the past, which in fact relates, more or less, to the same mysterious happening from the time we are just investigating. This took place in his native Studzionki, and concerned neither more, nor less of the monetary "debt" which Kalinowski felt in the face of the Bernardine Order's fund collector, who invited him to his village. Since the young engineer did not have money with him to give to the friar, after reflecting for a short while, he answered the friar that "instead of an offering of money, he would serve the Church with his own self."⁷⁷ In the *Memoirs*, he notes that this was fulfilled after many years, since God indeed called him to serve in His holy Church. However, here also the greatness of the vocation to the priesthood, which he tangibly experiences, did not conceal from him the main light shining over his existence, as he asked himself the fundamental question: "only, will I indeed serve in the spirit of truth?"⁷⁸ It was as if he wanted to ask: "Am I not lying to myself?" Will I indeed go on the path of love?"

From the above, it clearly follows that a person's vocation to perfect love is a living, dynamic one, developing constantly. If it is carried out in a spirit of truth, at a certain moment, depending on what is pleasing to God, it may be transformed into a particular vocation, which likewise has its own dynamic, which means it can develop in a direction of ever greater openness to a mission planned by God and known only to him. In any case, however, the development of a vocation is linked with the renunciation of everything, with self-sacrifice, with the payment of one's own self. It is never without pain. On the other hand, the existential fruit of fidelity to God's calling to perfect love is a new hierarchy of values.

⁷⁶ Ibid. In this same letter, two sentences further, he writes in this way on the subject of the influence of J.I. Kraszewski's book, *Pamiętniki Nieznajomego* on the discovery of the mystery of his own person: "I met with myself there, *en beau*, one has to understand, and I found there many things which calmed my lack of patience, by the very fact that I have so much in common with no ordinary hero, no ordinary writer, and one with an exceptional knowledge of the human heart."

⁷⁷ J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 38.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 38–39.

In the life of Józef Kalinowski this can be seen especially clearly already after he left Petersburg, in Brześć, where powerful things beyond value were accomplished. The “house” filled up only “with books,” of which he earlier dreamed, at present began to “bother and burden with toil.” His “military exercises” in the army, of which he had passionately written to his family at the time he was choosing an occupation, now “give nothing but regrets.” Even “the friendship of several persons and heartfelt conversation,” which earlier “had to suffice as my only spiritual nourishment,” by comparison with pure love, which presently “he tries to inhale and breathe within himself,” are nothing, and even less than nothing, as they can destroy his longing for another world. Nothing thus remains for him but only love, which he can and should practice. Thanks to the light of truth, however, he begins to understand one more aspect of this love, namely its creative power, which on the one hand “builds up society,” and on the other, “awakens to life” his own self. This is why he also wants it to be a “link connecting with life.” This is as much as he can do himself at the present moment. The rest, on the other hand, “he leaves to Providence.”⁷⁹

There follows accordingly a whole series of deeds of love, of which there is no need to describe in detail, since they form a simple consequence of his internal truth – of that which he is and to what he is called. It is enough to point out the more significant ones: taking care of an abandoned child which he found in Vilnius,⁸⁰ the opening of a school in Brześć for abandoned youth,⁸¹ extended care for Ludwik, a half-orphan, to whom he assured training as a gardener as well,⁸² and lending aid to prisoners from the broken regiment of the uprising.⁸³ Kalinowski does not escape from this world into some type of soaring worlds beyond, thought up in his mind, but rather fulfills his longing here and now. By his concrete love of neighbor he touches life, true life, which just a few years earlier he knew only from theory. Now he begins to understand and clarify it. He begins to draw together his existence, which had been broken into “incompatible pieces.” This happens exactly at the moment when he sees the limits of his capacities and opens himself to the possible working of Providence. Or better: when he sees and begins to understand that the working of God’s grace depends on a humble and patient waiting at the turns of human existence, until it desires to open wide the doors and admit into its interior the shining and warming ray of divine light and hope.

⁷⁹ Letter 16, to Masia Kalinowski, Brześć, June 28, 1861.

⁸⁰ Letter 12, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Vilnius, August 10, 1860.

⁸¹ Letter 22, to Ludwika Młocka, Brześć, February 5, 1862.

⁸² Ibid. and ff.

⁸³ J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 66.

3. EXISTENCE AND THE GRACE OF VOCATION IN THE RDAMA OF FAITH

3.1. The essential existential question: marriage

We do not possess any evidence from the time of Józef Kalinowski's youth, neither from his personal testimony, nor from the circles of those around him, which would clearly state that he felt a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. There is, on the other hand, evidence speaking of the exact opposite. From a "secret" letter of Ludwika Młocka to Masia Kalinowska, written in 1861, it is clear that persons near to him and close to his heart took seriously into consideration, perhaps more than he himself, only marriage. Nothing else came into consideration. Młocka, enchanted not so much by Józef's external appearance and training, as by the "rare beauty of [his] soul," seriously considers arranging for the marriage of Józef and Celina Gruszecka, Masi's sister, to which the latter's mother was opposed earlier, "because Kalinowski at this time did not have a steady income enough to support a family."⁸⁴ In the circle of families connected with the Kalinowskis, this was a serious impediment. For Młocka, however, these material impediments did not impose a greater problem. She counts, after all, on "what is mutually pleasing to Józef and Celina."⁸⁵ She therefore writes letters and makes concerted efforts to bring the "chosen couple" to the altar. In case her efforts do not succeed, she had another variation available. However, the whole time, it is only marriage that comes into consideration. She does not allow other ideas to come into play. Józef Kalinowski himself, however, is very closed in, sober, and rational. Even if at the deepest spiritual level the greatness and attraction of the mystery of marriage attract him as well, and at times bring him into understandable embarrassment, engendering more than a few doubts as to the shape of his own life for a long period of time, these things look completely different on the level of emotion.

This topic has great significance for us. We will thus attempt to analyze in detail the attitude of Józef Kalinowski regarding marriage, beginning from the first written records he handed down to us. In 1856, and thus when he was 21 years old, he wrote to his brother Wiktor, perhaps somewhat in a dreamy state and under the influence of romantic feelings, but perhaps more in view of a desire to please his brother, who less than a year later was to wed Maria Gruszecka: "what could be more wonderful than the joining together of two creatures and their mutual self-giving." At once, however, soberly thinking of his own self, he added, "But the entire poetry of married life quickly fades before the prose reality of its smaller details; from afar

⁸⁴ C. Gil, *Ojciec Rafał Kalinowski*, p. 34.

⁸⁵ Letter to Masia Kalinowski, Ciechocinek, August 19, 1861, as the completion of letter 19 of Józef Kalinowski, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Ciechocinek, August 19, 1861.

it has so much attraction, it is an earthly paradise, but close up, one can see many new colors which darken the picture.” And somewhat further he writes: “Married life has lost much of its charm to me.”⁸⁶ To be sure, in this same letter he will still write that “he is spinning powerfully around a certain Zofia” and that he is “completely obsessed” with a certain Marguerite, and yet he has a clear awareness that these are youthful “foolishness” and jokes which cannot be taken seriously.

In a letter to his mother, he writes about the same topic, but he is more careful in expressing his emotions, and even rational beyond expression, which he himself realizes. On one hand, he is jealous of Wiktor, for “he has already chosen a certain path and will no longer remain in this vacillating situation,” which takes away interior freedom, but on the other hand, he extraordinarily harshly evaluates the “emancipated women of Petersburg,” who according to him are very fickle and too easygoing in their relationships to awaken his interest. Such is the way he explains himself to his mother:

“Perhaps, Dear Mother, you find unnatural an understanding like this of a young man about these topics, which should not repel but rather attract him; this is how it appeared to me at the beginning, but it took very little time to suddenly pass over to completely new ideas, and to neglect such acquaintances; for this reason, I am almost nowhere in this company at this time. Why should I afflict and wear myself out, why should I be a slave of my adopted emotions, when I could spend the same time more happily, more profitably, and more independently in another place? I understood this perfectly and so, without the least qualms of conscience, I usually spend my evenings at home.”⁸⁷

In his next letter to his brother Wiktor, one can sense even more strongly the great difference of experiences which accompany his brother, around whom one can feel the “scent of happiness” descending “from the seventh heaven,” where he, “flies on the wings of love,” and he himself, who, unfortunately, “has his wings clipped a little” and “cannot rise” as high as his brother. All the same, however, “with true pleasure and sympathy” he is ready to read all the letters of his brother on the topic of his planned marriage, knowing how “dear” this topic is for him. At the same time he recommends to his brother that on the “hand” of his future wife, Miss Maria Gruszecka, in his name, he place a “fraternal kiss,” in which he himself with certainty “will wish to take benefit.” In this context, for the first time in Józef’s letters, the first and last name of Celina Gruszecka, Maria’s sister, appear, with whom after a few years all will try to match him: “To Miss Celina (why can I not

⁸⁶ Letter 2, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 19, 1856.

⁸⁷ Letter 3, to his mother, Petersburg, March 20, 1857.

say: Cesia) and Mrs. Gruszecka you will express my deepest respect.”⁸⁸ At this moment, this is all that he can afford.

In his next letter to his brother, who in waiting for his wedding day, remains in “a romantic mood,” Józef does not manage to get himself to “speak poetically of the marriage state.” At this moment, for Józef himself, “this state does not bear much attraction.” He knows, therefore, that “he will not find in it the peaceful life” for which he is longing. He does not, however, despise the married state as such. Even further – he does not exclude the possibility that he may embrace it:

“By losing myself the very capacity of using these quiet and peaceful, but lasting and peaceful delights, exchanging them for a more troublesome and burdensome life, the more I learn to appreciate what I have lost, if not permanently, at least for a long time and I most precisely understand your state and your hopes.”⁸⁹

He expresses this understanding of marriage and openness to an eventual marriage himself even more strongly after Wiktor’s wedding: “May I find another woman, even slightly approaching your golden woman, I would marry her today, if she would only wish to accept me as her husband.”⁹⁰ It seems, however, that this is a rhetorical flourish. In his speech, what dominates is rather a wish to flatter and please his brother for his fitting choice in life, more than a true desire to find some inaccessible woman of his dreams. Kalinowski is too much of a rationalist, to allow himself fantasies of this kind. His ideas stay strongly down to earth.

Józef Kalinowski most envies his brother who already chose the married state for what he himself does not have, that is “a peaceful and independent life” and a wife “so rich in mind and heart.” And he admits to him: “You have chosen the best portion for yourself.” At the same time he admires him for managing “to take advantage of the ordinary but most important circumstances and find happiness in them, not seeking it far away from himself.”⁹¹ Exactly a year later, he gives expression to his feelings of envy for the fullness of what his brother has found in marriage: “You now have everything you wished for. You have happiness at home, peace and independence, so what else do you need?”⁹²

In the meantime, Józef gave himself over to parties and entertainments of a different type, during which he allowed himself some innocent charming of women, while at the same time showing great respect, tact, and even a long concealed dignity towards them:

⁸⁸ Letter 4, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, March 11, 1857.

⁸⁹ Letter 5, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, May 7, 1857.

⁹⁰ Letter 6, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 10, 1857.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Letter 7, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, December 19, 1858.

“The day before yesterday, during a mazurka [...] – he confides to his brother – I opened up a conversation [...]. The outline of the conversation can now be quite extensive, when during a dance with a young woman one can talk about physics and chemistry experiments. Our conversation about physics took us far, as it took us to electricity and magnetism, and from there I had an open path to more emotional subjects, and perhaps only God knows how long on this road I would travel, if the mazurka had not finished; it ended only on a slightly stronger grasp of the hand, perhaps even without the young woman’s knowledge, but only by the force of electricity. It is not for nothing that the Orthodox popes want to ban these lessons as very dangerous.”⁹³

In a similar form, he pursues the topic of his being charmed by women in the next letter, this time written to his sister-in-law. Although he speaks this time of being in love, in reality he wants to give expression to the fact that his heart is still unfulfilled. In addition, for the first time in the form of metaphor (“visions”), there appears a critical distinction between the human desire for marriage (“I am pursuing them,”) and an actual destiny to it (“it is not they who chase after me”):

“The present season has an extraordinarily English character. I preserve it for a long time in my memory, for not only my mind, but also my heart was involved here. Recently, an English dart pierced me: I fell in love without any hope of requital! You are correct in supposing that I am caught up in visions; however, the difference consists in this, that they do not chase after me, but rather I chase after them. The object of my zeal is *Niema z Portici*⁹⁴, the beautiful Frenella, whose role a truly beautiful English woman depicts.”⁹⁵

Beginning with a letter written from the distant Ukraine, where “through prolonged loneliness” he works on his “interior life,” the tone of his statements regarding women and marriage changes. The letters become ever more concrete, personally absorbing, and serious. Only at times are there touches of humor. Often enough, on the other hand, his former customs of rationalizing things show themselves again. In these letters, it is not only an issue of theoretical flights of thought on the theme of the loftiness of the state of marriage, but about *his* eventual marriage. In the aforementioned letter from the Ukraine, the name of Celina Gruszecka appears for the second time. At this stage, it is still a relation of close acquaintance, in which one can only guess at a certain kindness and perhaps a hidden affection.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ *La muette de Portici* is a famous opera by a French composer Daniel Auber (1782–1871). Its Brussels premiere in 1830 became the rallying call to the revolution which led to the separation of Belgium from Holland. The Polish premiere took place in Warsaw on 15 January 1831.

⁹⁵ Letter 8, to Masia Kalinowski, Petersburg, January, 1859.

Kalinowski, after all, asks his brother and sister-in-law in his name to apologize to “Mrs. Gruszecka and Miss Celina for not being able to fulfill their commission.” He explains it so extensively and exactly, however, that he himself regards it as “a long excuse, but valid,”⁹⁶ and pursues the topic further. A year later, he writes to the same addressees: “I send my deepest regards to Mrs. Gruszecka [...], Miss Celina”⁹⁷ And a little more than ten days later, there again appears a matter of some kind “of purchase for Mrs. Gruszecka,” of which “he remembers, but up until this time has not yet done and at this moment is asking a friend to fulfill it.”⁹⁸

In the meantime, something happens in his life which strikes an important string of his heart and evokes several sounds, which however recall the tuning of an instrument instead of playing an actual melody. During his walk through Vilnius on vacation, he unexpectedly finds in a park an abandoned child, whom he resolves to take care of. He treats this event as a decree of Providence. It seems to him that he already has “a goal traced out in life.” In this way at least he tries to console himself, seeking a rational explanation for an incomprehensible existential situation in which he continued to find himself. The issue of marriage seems not to give him peace. Everything that has any connection with this topic reveals his personal situation to him. At times, however, he puts forward solutions that are too quick. In a letter to his brother and sister-in-law he writes: “I am very happy with the gift which Providence has given to me: in my present disposition not to enter into the bonds of married life, I have received a child without a wife, a rose without thorns.”⁹⁹ These last words are evidently a joke, masking his personal, existential puzzle, to which he cannot find a wise answer. With complete certainty, he takes into account that ironic speech does not at all solve the problem, which lies in the depth of his heart, and which surpasses his human capacities. All the same, however, at this moment he does not manage in his heart to do anything but give a signal, that he has an awareness and... it is suspended. The time for playing the entire melody had not yet arrived.

In the next letter, he again escapes from the merits of the problem, although he does so in a very subtle manner. That is to say, he transfers the accent on to the external circumstances, which would then explain his reluctance to enter into the marriage bond. The reasons which he presents – weak health, material dependence on others and a lack of stable work – are true and convincing, with no room for tearing down. Everything manifests his great personal maturity and responsibility for his fellow man.

⁹⁶ Letter 11, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Chutor Aniutin, September 25, 1859.

⁹⁷ Letter 13, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, September 17, 1860.

⁹⁸ Letter 14, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Petersburg, September 29, 1860.

⁹⁹ Letter 12, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Vilnius, August 10, 1860.

“If I were to be healthy, to be independent, or in the end had some permanent occupation in accord with my temperament – he writes to his sister-in-law, then I would yearn for family life; now I must restrain these longings, for why should I give free rein to thoughts which always or at least for a long time will remain a theory; so much is lacking in order to breathe life into them!”¹⁰⁰

It is significant, however, that he does not hide himself behind irony, but rather opens his heart and recognizes the deep need of communion with another person. Initially, he does so in a gentle manner, saying “I would yearn,” but then right away, as if not wanting to do so, he admits that these “longings” for a family life are actually foreign and to that degree obtrusive, that he must even “restrain” them. He very much desires marriage, but he knows perfectly well that a huge distance separated him from it, and perhaps never will be given to him. Marriage out of common sense, conceived in the mind, and thought out does not in any way enter into consideration. There must be life in it. However, at the moment, he has no visions: “so much is lacking, in order to [read: think of it] breathe life into it.” Instead, reasons against marriage constantly appear. He cannot fail to take them into account. He must reckon with them.

And at this very moment, when it would seem that thanks to the strong efforts of his intellect, everything has been resolved, or at least moderated to the highest degree, there appears – on a deeper level – something that gives him a sorrowful but decisive blow. Kalinowski is drawn into a great existential drama. In this same letter, in which he earlier set out in detail his own existential contradictions, he writes in the end four short sentences that synthesize the essence of the drama, its culmination. He does not write it off the top of his head, but with his entire being:

“A sad fate, but let the will of him who guides everything be done. In looking at the happiness of others, I see always the coldness around myself [...] These sad and serious thoughts cling to me during this solitude, which wears me out and casts a seed of forbidden fruit. I filled this entire letter with myself.”¹⁰¹

From this text we can conclude that Kalinowski allows himself to be completely drawn into the drama. From the very beginning, he declares his surrender “to the will of him who guides everything.” Here he is probably referring to the will of God, but Kalinowski does not disclose this, since he writes of Him with a small letter. The tone of his statement, on the other hand, indicates that this is an obedience that is neither easy nor joyful. After all, what he sees is “sad,” “serious,” and “burdensome.” He knows, however, that he can no longer escape the problem and deceive

¹⁰⁰ Letter 16, to Masia Kalinowski, Brześć, June 28, 1861.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

himself any longer. He must in the end stand up with his head held high, stare at Him with his eyes, and measure himself with Him. There is no other way out. His heart for too long remained burdened with unbearable solitude. At the same time, marriage, the highest earthly desire of his heart, which, in accord with God's original plan, was to be a medicine for this existential solitude (cf. Gen 2:18), became formally forbidden to him – it becomes “forbidden fruit!” And at the moment, it was not evident what else might or could enter in its place. There remained emptiness, darkness and still greater loneliness; the lack of understanding anything; the lack of any understanding or warmth on the part of another person: “always coldness around him!” These are the sad facts that the mind can only accept and interpret, but cannot find a way out of them.

The drama of Józef Kalinowski in relation to the question of marriage, as it was presented by him in the aforementioned letter, begins in 1861 and lasts for the following months. In August of the same year, Kalinowski for the first time met Ludwika Młocka, a friend of the Gruszecka family, who – as already indicated in the prologue to this chapter – charmed by the beautiful traits of Kalinowski's spirit, immediately begins fervent efforts to bring about his marriage to Celina Gruszecka, the sister of his sister-in-law, Masia. Kalinowski knew nothing of these activities. On the other hand, he does know about the workings of God in his soul, of which Młocka knows nothing, and the family only as much as it could cull from his letters. It happens, however, that exactly at this point follows an intersection of these different points of view, something which in drama is called the turning point, that is, there follows a complete change of mood, a series of misunderstandings in relations, and even a certain dissonance and as a result a distance between Kalinowski, guided by God's will, and the other persons of his circle, who were guided by purely human, earthly perspectives. Józef remains, however, unshakably faithful “to the will of him who directs everything,” and at the same time unconditionally united with people who do not understand him at all. One can even say that in taking over the initiative, he is the first to come out to meet it, he enters into their spirit, lowers himself, humbly explains... but will not break off the relations.

In the last months of 1861, he learns from Ludwika Młocka about the planned wedding of Celina Gruszecka to Adam Domański. We do not know how he received this news emotionally. In the matter itself it must have been an external confirmation of that “forbidden fruit,” which earlier was communicated to him internally. From the letter which he wrote to his brother Wiktor in December of the same year, it appears that his immediate family is clearly divided and disoriented by the unexpected turn of events, keeps its distance from him, and begins to be restrained in passing on information, and would most willingly cloak everything in silence and pass over with a wide arc this topic, which till recently had excited and absorbed its attention. Not only does the family not have the courage to go beyond its own

thoughts and pursue matters that have not been clarified, but still in confusion and guesses attributes to Józef “anger and injury,” which completely sways from the truth. Józef, on the other hand, is very quiet and balanced:

“It is so sad for me, that you must know so little of my attachment to you, that in the matter of another person so close to you, Wiktor recalls only in general. I send to Celina, with a feeling of brotherly affection, wishes of happiness, which are so difficult to get on this poor earth of ours.”¹⁰²

From a letter written to Ludwika Młocka in this same month, we learn that she also had lost the fervor by which she had been marked not much earlier in the matter of his marriage. She had expected, that thanks to her efforts with Celina’s mother, “hope will shine forth for him.”¹⁰³ Now, disappointed, she behaves with greater care. However, she does not lose sight of her goal at once. For the time being, she delicately shows sympathy to Józef because of the failure he has experienced. This sympathy appears, however, completely unsuccessful. After all, he is internally very calm. His feelings for Celina Gruszecka, which once gave him so much to think about, apparently already burned out. It even seems that – from a human point of view – a heavy weight had fallen from his heart, and his path of life became significantly more clear. With a great deal of freedom, relief, and a sprinkling of humor he writes:

“I can thank abundantly [...] I am still grateful for the sympathy for me after the incident discussed so carefully in your letter. It was not worth extending me this sympathy, for my heart had already from this side cooled off, and only cost me a pang of conscience. – The news of Miss Celina’s wedding (*le mot est lâché*) even gave me a certain pleasure...”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² The loss of the family in this regard, especially his sister-in-law Masia, will last for many successive months, as is reflected in his further correspondence: cf. Letter 22, 24, 27, 30. In September, 1862, Kalinowski still cannot understand the resentment which his family holds against him, as well as the mysterious silence which causes his relations with his family to remain in some sort of “undefined state,” cf. Letter 30 to Wiktor Kalinowski, Brześć, September 21, 1862.

¹⁰³ Letter to Masia Kalinowski, Ciechocinek, August 19, 1861, as the completion of Letter 19 of Józef Kalinowski, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Ciechocinek, August 19, 1861.

¹⁰⁴ Letter 21, to Ludwika Młocka, Brześć, December 27, 1861. Despite these assurances, Ludwika Młocka, in the summer of 1862, still unjustly attributes to Józef a supposed resentment towards Masia for not persuading her mother to agree to his marriage to Celina, cf. Letter 27, to Ludwika Młocka, Brześć, July 10, 1862.

3.2. The grace of a particular vocation

“[...] but when I learned of the boyfriend and about the details of the matter, I was a little sorrowful and sad, not for myself, but for Miss Celina, who, amid many errors of upbringing, preserved a great deal of truly whole-hearted goodness.”¹⁰⁵

These words are a continuation of the same letter to Ludwika Młocka. They are written, however, from a changed perspective. If in the first part of the letter he expressed himself from a human perspective, as someone to whom a clarification and sectioning of a confused matter, in which he himself was involved, and which was “forbidden to him,” brought tremendous relief, so now – no longer taking himself into account, but the person he loves with a pure Christian love, but not with nuptial love – shows her true sympathy, “pain and sorrow,” because of the regrettable situation in which she found herself. What was the perspective, which makes such a love possible? Wishing in some way to approach this mystery, let us analyze in detail a fragment of one of the subsequent letters to the same addressee.

Ludwika Młocka, a person extraordinarily upright and noble, a married woman and a woman of great charity, from whom Kalinowski learned so much in his own life and to whom with whole-hearted gratitude writes: “You yourself do not even suspect the influence which you have on me with your golden, generous heart,”¹⁰⁶ in the matter of Józef’s marriage, however, maintains this same, human point of view and in no way wishes to depart from it. Regardless of the fiasco of marriage with Celina Gruszecka, on which matter she labored so hard and constantly returns to it, making accusations of a different type to Kalinowski, continues to attempt to persuade him to contract marriage with someone. From the very beginning, after all “in case of failure,” she had another resolution in preparation.¹⁰⁷ Józef explained his changed attitude very calmly, not referring to any lofty arguments. He likewise knew how to speak in a human and understandable way. In this sense and from this precisely human perspective he would not exclude marriage for himself. And he clearly speaks about this. Even more, he admits that “longing” for marriage at times still echoes within him. However, no longer does he entertain a long list of all his reasons against his marriage. They are only “thousands however”:

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Letter 29, to Ludwika Młocka, Brześć, September 3, 1862.

¹⁰⁷ Letter to Masia Kalinowski, Ciechocinek, August 19, 1861, as the completion of Letter 19 of Józef Kalinowski to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Ciechocinek, August 19, 1861.

“From the choice of a life partner I would perhaps not be distant, if not that thousands stand in the way as impediments.— If at times some imprudent longing falls upon me, may you, dear Ludwika, not think that it has its source in egoism and a lack of sympathy for the poverty of others, which you impute to me a little bit.”¹⁰⁸

We must emphasize that Kalinowski does not betray the internal truth, that marriage was “forbidden” to him, but he continues to attempt to defend his own position and the situation which cannot be understood with rational arguments: innumerable “impediments,” which however he no longer has the will to enumerate, and the “imprudence” of longings which he humbly admits, as if he were encircled by an unyielding woman, who perfectly knows what she wants to achieve. Wishing to remain in a harmonious, friendly relation with her, nothing else remains for Kalinowski except to be even more open and disclose the deeper truth. This likewise means the necessity of greater humiliation. He admits to her, therefore, that at times, he still suffers from...loneliness: “Speaking to you openly, my solitary [read ‘lonely’] situation disturbs me a bit, but there is no medicine for that, so therefore one must ascribe that sickness to the influence of nature itself.”¹⁰⁹ He does not, however, feel sorry for himself. He has, after all, his own perspective of viewing and experiencing these matters, which gives him a sufficiently large amount of light and strength, not only to bear the oppressive at times loneliness, but also to think soberly “about others.” In this way, he arrives in the end at the presentation of his own perspective, from which he observes and experiences the sorrowful fact that his desired marriage is, however, not granted to him: “God gives comfort to the unhappy and suffering, and it is sadder for me to think about those who avoid suffering and seek comfort in a place from which one should escape.”¹¹⁰

Did Ludwika Młocka allow herself to be led to the depths which were indicated to her, and did she understand Kalinowski’s line of reasoning? Did she admit to herself, that apart from human thoughts and imaginings, in this concrete case there might be present a completely different one—the thought of God (cf. Is 55:8–9), which can in no way be neglected? From further correspondence, we can conclude that in the matter of Józef’s marriage, it was not easy for her to consider another perspective. This resulted also from the fact that Kalinowski never flaunted his own devotion. He was extraordinarily moderate in using religious language. He always explained his state with understandable reasons. This time, however, he goes beyond this type of reasoning. He refers directly to the action of God, who “gives comfort and perseverance to the unfortunate and the suffering.” And he says

¹⁰⁸ Letter 24, to Ludwika Młocka, Brześć, May 16, 1862.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

this like someone who has a personal experience of this action of God in his own life. He therefore gives witness to this action. He bears witness to what he sees with the eyes of his soul, and which others do not see, and precisely for this reason, “they avoid suffering and seek comfort in places from which they should flee.” He suffers “for them” and experiences “sadness,” for “they do not judge by God’s standards, but by man’s” (Mt 16:23). And this sadness is especially painful because among those who judge by man’s standards are those who are close to his heart. However, this is not human sadness, which always closes and separates from others, but rather sadness from God, the sadness of one who is already granted a special vocation, no matter how much he is aware of it or reveals it on the outside.

The divergence or disharmony which creeps in and places the relations between Józef and those closest to him to the test – is caused by his own different perspective on his marriage. Józef’s point of view has its foundation in the mystery of God, revealed in the event of Jesus Christ. In his case, reference to this central mystery of the Christian faith is not questioned. It casts its shadow on all his thoughts, desires, decisions, relations, and actions undertaken. This is not his only judge.

“Of course – as Hans Urs von Balthasar rightly points out – no form of the Christian life may remain indifferent to the mystery of participation in the Lord’s Passion and must take it into proper consideration, since ‘persecutions will come to all who wish to live devoutly in Christ’ (2 Tim 3:12); but the truth is that only a few can understand this mystery as something which is decisive for their life.”¹¹¹

Kalinowski, on the other hand, in distinction from the people close to him, allows the mystery to govern his whole being.

Thanks to this “prohibition” of marriage and the painful existential emptiness associated with it, from the very beginning they will be filled up by a new, fruitful bond.¹¹² Initially, this is not evident, even for the person it concerns, but with time, above all thanks to repeated attempts which he passes through, this bond takes on an ever clearer shape and brings forth ever more abundant fruits. In the life of

¹¹¹ H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Gli stati di vita*, p. 376.

¹¹² H.U. von Balthasar, referring to the tradition of the Catholic Church, distinguishes two basic vocations in the Church: the general vocation to the Christian life and the special vocations to the priesthood or the consecrated life. He describes the fact of vocation in this way: “From a Christian point of view, the Christian finds himself in an either-or situation, between the general vocation to the Christian life (from which there usually follows a decision to marry) and the special vocation to the priesthood or the state of the evangelical counsels. He will be called to married life when he is *not* granted the special grace of vocation to the priesthood or the consecrated life. There is no surprise that in the tradition of the Catholic Church, special, qualitative vocations are praised (in distinction from marriage).” (H.U. VON BALTHASAR, *Gli stati di vita*, p. 368).

Józef Kalinowski, there occurs something of the likeness of what happened to the prophet Ezechiel, from whom God not only took his wife, “the delight of his eyes,” but still further gave him a clear “prohibition” of lamenting, weeping, pouring out of tears, putting on a garment of mourning after the death of a beloved person, and in addition, putting on himself a garment and accepting a status which would be completely incomprehensible for the people (cf. Ez 24:16–19). All of this had its defined goal. The prophet was to be excluded from the community in order to fulfill the mission assigned to him by God.

It seems that the drama of Józef Kalinowski can be fully understood only in the light of the “direct” intervention of God’s word, which gradually tears its way through the jungle of external and internal conditions and reaches with its “prohibition” the very heart of Józef, chooses it as His instrument (cf. Acts 9:15), and takes full possession of him.

It is clear that Kalinowski’s times, like the times in which we live, were marked by naturalism and historicism, almost not leaving a place for the interpretation of events and of life which the Bible teaches. We cannot be surprised, then, that calling things by name presents Kalinowski – not to mention the people close to him – so many difficulties. In addition, in the time we have been discussing, he himself continues to cause a weakening in himself of the possible interpretation which the Holy Scriptures provide, as well as to a weakening of the language, with whose aid might express his truth. He is not, however, still an active participant in the communal life of the Church and does not breathe to the full that Spirit, which gives life to and leads the Church of Christ through the twisted roads of this world. He still does not have a spiritual director nor anyone who is trustworthy and understanding Holy Scripture, who would teach him how to interpret his own life, entangled in history, in the light “of the Word, Who became flesh,” and who in history fulfilled the mission assigned to Him by the Father. And above all, he does not yet go to confession, the sacrament which would allow him to become clean, so that with his whole heart he might experience the mystery of Christ and His giving Himself up “for us,” “for our sins,” and in this way in its fullness be joined to God’s plan for the salvation of mankind.

All of this, however, does not mean that the living Word of God does not work in Him and that he does not fulfill his task (cf. Is 55:10–11). Nor does it mean that it does not shine “like a lamp in a dark place” (2 Pt 1:19) and does not reveal to Him the truth of his condition in the world and of “who he is” in reality. And it does not mean in the end that Kalinowski does not understand anything of His speech, and that everything in His life is only the work of accident and external conditions.¹¹³

¹¹³ In the introduction to his *Memoirs* (*Wspomnienia*), Kalinowski writes these words, which seem to contradict this statement, namely that in his life he was guided “here and there more by

On the contrary, he has a great familiarity with the Word. He tastes its sweetness on his lips, but he accepts it also when it fills his insides with bitterness (cf. Ez 2:8–3:6; Ap 10:8–11). This truth finds its expression in the same brief fragment of the letter to Ludwika Młocka discussed above. Not only does he write that “God gives comfort and perseverance to the unfortunate and suffering” – which with certitude flows from his experience of that sweetness of God’s Word, but he immediately adds something which speaks of its bitterness: “Through the strange dualism of human nature, I feel pain for my very self.”¹¹⁴ And when he is thinking of the “dualism of human nature,” he has in mind not nature as abstractly conceived, but his own interior dichotomy, which the Word of God reveals to Him and even causes in him. After all, he notices that from time to time he manages to experience with almost the same intensity two contrary longings. On the one hand, there is at times still an “imprudent longing” to which he admits with humility before Młocka, while on the other hand, there rubs against him more and more a “longing for another world,” which now receives already the feature of a concrete bond – a bond with the Word, almost enviously demanding fidelity.

In the meantime, in this sometimes intrusive splitting, everything is painful for him. On the painful experiences “of the heart” is placed a series of regrettable experiences from the external world surrounding him. The following months, year, two years (1862–1863) stand under the sign of ominous dark clouds, which as if by design, wished to weigh him down and take away all joy and meaning from his life. In his family – he confides to Młocka already after the outbreak of the January uprising – “there is not much of anything happy, as [in addition] in the entire moment at present.”¹¹⁵ “In Brześć – he writes to the same addressee a month later – the uncertainty of my own position bothers me,” and “it is so sad among us as it never was.” Then he further writes: “My state ‘poor my whole life’ – if not my own poverty – that of others, if not real, then imagined.”¹¹⁶ In this hopeless situation he looks for support in prayer, although even with this he does not always manage: “Only in prayer – if someone still knows how to pray, can one find peace, even if not for long.”¹¹⁷ However, he never loses his spirit nor hope: “Nevertheless we must live and work – if not for ourselves, for others.”¹¹⁸ Toward the end of his stay in Brześć,

various experiences that happened to him than being ruled by some guiding principle from on high” (J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 2). In reality, these words confirm the fact that he continues to walk the path of humility marked out by the Word of God (cf. Phil 2:5–11).

¹¹⁴ Letter 24, to Ludwika Młocka, Brześć, May 16, 1862.

¹¹⁵ Letter 34, to Ludwika Młocka, Brześć, February 16, 1863.

¹¹⁶ Letter 35, to Ludwika Młocka, Brześć, March 5/17, 1863.

¹¹⁷ Letter 34, to Ludwika Młocka, Brześć, February 16, 1863.

¹¹⁸ Letter 35, to Ludwika Młocka, Brześć, March 5/17, 1863.

he is again interested in the possibility of purchasing some rental property, but not with marriage in mind, but rather to take advantage of the country air and quiet life, to regain somewhat his frail health.¹¹⁹

After obtaining his release from the Russian army and his arrival at Vilnius in the role of high-school teacher of geometry and at the same time director of the Department of War in the Executive Department of Lithuania, not much in his relations with people changed in his life. He constantly experiences the same sadness and darkness. He learns of further losses of people close to him, among whom are Celina Gruszecka, who was to be his wife. He comments on this fact very briefly: “not much happiness, only grief. Poor Masia up to now still cannot be consoled in her grief after the death of her sister.” He writes these words to Ludwika Młocka. They are actually a continuation of what he shared with her not too long ago. In this same letter he informs us however that

“the only change that has come about in me – after staying away for 10 years, I returned to the Church; I went to Confession and it went very well for me; I boast before the Lord, for I regard this as a turning point in my religious views, as an important step in my interior life.”¹²⁰

This took place on August 15, 1863, on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the missionary church in Vilnius, where the confessor was Fr. Konstanty Eymont, the last missionary in Lithuania. In his *Memoirs* Józef noted: “What God was pleased to carry out during the moments spent at the feet of the confessor [...], only someone who has experienced similar moments can describe.”¹²¹ And further, mentioning that Fr. Felicjan Antoniewicz, professor at the major seminary in Vilnius, was his confessor and spiritual director, he draws attention to the fruits of the interior transformation which took place after his return to the heart of the Church: “Confession every week, frequent Holy Communion renewed my spirit and kept me sober. The Church of the Benedictine sisters [...] became a refuge for me. I was glad to hurry there each day for the morning Mass.”¹²²

A second essential novelty in Kalinowski's life was the decision to enter the Capuchin Order. It is significant that in this case also, the first person to be informed was Ludwika Młocka. It was she who, despite her lack of complete understanding, was probably nearest to the working of God's word in his heart. However, as he did formerly in other important questions of the spiritual life, above all in the question

¹¹⁹ Cf. Letter 36, to Wiktor Kalinowski, Brześć, March 17, 1863. He wrote on this same topic a year and a half earlier: cf. Letter 18, to Masia and Wiktor Kalinowski, Ciechocinek, August 16, 1861.

¹²⁰ Letter 38, to Ludwika Młocka, Vilnius, September 6, 1863.

¹²¹ J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 81.

¹²² *Ibid.*

of marriage, which was “forbidden to him,” does not tell her of it openly, but as if the matter concerned a third person:

“They are asking me in Vilnius to learn about the rules of the Capuchin friars, whose cloister is in Warsaw. Details about the rules are necessary for entrance into the novitiate, about the length of the novitiate and the rule of life, and the monastery rules. What type of qualification is needed on admittance. Also needed is the address of the Provincial of this Order.”¹²³

In his *Memoirs* he confirms the accuracy of his plans at that time. “I put my thoughts together, when times became more calm, and God gave me the freedom to give myself over to Him in the Capuchin Order in Warsaw.”¹²⁴

We should mention that both pieces of information – about his confession and vocation – are very brief, dry, as if completely wrapped in the darkness which loomed over Kalinowski at that time, over the city where he lived, over the fatherland, deprived of its right to exist, and over the Church, into which he managed to find himself only because it was guided by the Light which was invisible to these powers of darkness. At the same time, they point us to the extraordinarily deep and rich content which creates a separate, spiritually rich chapter in Kalinowski’s life. This chapter, regardless of the difficulties of interpretation, should be thoroughly researched from every angle. After all, if “the chief task of theology” is “the understanding of the *kenosis* of God, which is truly a great mystery for the human intellect,” (FR 93), it seems that in fulfilling this task, we can look for aid above all from the existence of the saints, especially those whom the grace of God’s vocation took over slowly, patiently, over many years, wishing to show by their example, as in a slow-motion film, its divine power, which expresses itself in respect for human freedom. The light emanating from this mystery is very necessary for the Church in Europe, above which the dark clouds of secularism are becoming more and more dense. The existence and life of Józef Kalinowski brings hope to all.

CONCLUSION

During the journey which we have taken together with Józef Kalinowski from childhood up to his 28th year of life, rich in events intertwined with each other on various levels, which he himself described in a timely manner in the *Letters* addressed to his loved ones, and later in his *Memoirs* edited in his later years, we placed our chief emphasis on tracing the signs, even the slightest ones, which might

¹²³ Letter 40, to Ludwika Młocka, December 27, 1863 / January 8, 1864.

¹²⁴ J. KALINOWSKI (RAFAŁ OD ŚW. JÓZEFA), *Wspomnienia*, p. 81.

testify to an extraordinary grace of God in his mind and heart – the grace of a particular vocation, the grace of a vocation to the religious life, to the priesthood. Our interest was centered on grasping a moment, unique in its kind, in which the invisible God (cf. John 1:18, 1 Tim 6:16) became in some manner visible, audible, and even perceptible for Józef Kalinowski, enlightened him by its mysterious light, and directed his call to him by name and let Himself be felt in such a way that he – just as the Apostles once did – decided to abandon all his plans and visions up to that time, and follow Him, giving his whole life over to Him. By emphasizing the light and shadows of the existence of Józef Kalinowski, we wished – in the same manner as Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi) in his famous painting *The Vocation of St. Matthew*, which is located in the Contarelli Chapel of the Church of St. Louis, King of France in Rome – to paint the scene of the vocation of our hero, of the shattering destruction of darkness, which in the end revealed something which usually remains hidden from purely rational cognition, namely – the working of grace. In this journey together, which was not so much a journey in time and space as much as a journey to Kalinowski's inner life, and together with him in looking for its meaning, it nevertheless was our concern to reach that moment in his life and to that place in his heart, from which in a new way he began to interpret, understand, and clarify his own existence.

In the first part, therefore, an analysis was made of some factors, which usually have a great influence on forming an awareness of one's personal vocation. Attention was drawn to his natural predispositions, to the influence of his family and immediate environment, to the influence of churchmen, as well as the social climate which our young hero imbibed up to the 16th year of his life, when he still lived in his family home. From the analysis we have undertaken, we can conclude that all of these factors were extraordinarily beneficial, and grasping the issue objectively, could indeed contribute positively to the development of the grace of vocation and the attainment of greater awareness of it. Even more, from one text speaking of Kalinowski's eventual vocation, we learn that he himself in a later period of his life, based on "some data," felt that he should enter the seminary. Sociological and psychological premises discovered in this way do not, however, allow us to draw hasty conclusions of this kind. In reality, nothing indicates that the grace of God's vocation already at that time paved the way to his humanity, that is, to that place from where, in a human way, consciously and freely, he could respond to this call. There is much to indicate, however, that not perceiving this eternal grace – which after all must have been present in him "from his mother's womb" (cf. Is 49: 1–5; Jer 1:5, Gal 1:15) – caused in him a lack of self-understanding after he left his family home, and as a consequence, his maturing existence fell victim to breaking into "incompatible pieces". As a result of that lack of understanding, his personality underwent discord, and he himself committed a series of blunders, whose fatal effects he would bear through his whole life.

In the second part, devoted to his Petersburg – Brześć period, an attempt was made to perceive the rays of interior light and their beneficent influence on the ordering of his own existence by Kalinowski. This was not an easy task for us, since this period, most likely the darkest in his life, was generally marked by a great struggle on the level of thought and great existential loss. Even more difficult for him at that time was distinguishing between the natural light, coming from his natural virtues and good upbringing, which he received in his family home and immediate environment, and the light which came from above, the supernatural light, precisely called grace. We must remember, however, that at this time the young Józef did not seek the grace of the sacraments, and even more did not open himself to the grace of vocation. He did not cut himself off from the life of the Church completely, however. He also held fast to the light of truth, which was always strongly present in him. The thought of a deep, nihilistic falsification of his own existence did not come into play. Gradually, from afar, he rebuilt by his correspondence his spiritual bonds with his loved ones and together with them sought for himself a way of escaping the trap in which he allowed himself to be caught. He sought the meaning of life together with them in the world of values. He made the first significant choices which helped him to give a better direction to his life. At the same time, he more and more manifested longings for another world and a wider perspective. They formed a sort of spring, which did not allow him to cling to the present or seek ultimate happiness on earth, but instead made possible the integration of his broken personality and the defining of his own identity, and as a consequence created the opportunity for him to discover his vocation in life. All of this worked on the basis of a concrete love of neighbor, which linked him with heaven and opened him to God's call.

In the third and final section, we let Józef Kalinowski take us into those realms of human experience, which are reserved only for the few. Accompanying him on his journey, observing his behavior, listening to his individual words, and even the beating of his heart made it possible for us to trace from within the long history of his struggles with an essential existential question, namely with marriage, which from early youth was the object of his great desires. This also allowed us to observe that his final resignation was not at first his personal will, but was "cast upon" him in the shape of a formal "decree" from the side of God. Kalinowski accepted this command in complete resignation, still not knowing the will of God, as regards his further fortunes. However, he did not confide this situation, which lasted from June, 1861 to August, 1863, to anyone. This caused an obvious misunderstanding from the point of view of his family and those he trusted most, who – guided by a purely human perspective, viewed him only in marriage. A consequence of this breakup with his family was an even greater set of worries and an almost unbearable loneliness. However, this in no way broke him, nor did it tempt him to further avoidance of people, of the kind which he carried out in his early youth, at the time

of his stay in Hory Horki or later in Petersburg, where once he engaged himself in building up relations again, and another time allowed himself to go in for frivolity and irony. His perspective, after all, was now completely different. He could find strength in faith and refer to Christ, to the power of His Cross. Kalinowski, deeply immersed in this Christian event and gazing on Christ offering Himself completely to the cause of man, could no longer escape from people nor be satisfied with superficial relations. The Word of truth, which came to him from that central event of faith urged him after all from within and demanded from him precisely that turning towards people and deepening relations with them: it awaited the translation of the self into the language of interpersonal relations; and even more – carrying out this translation in the most faithful way possible, by offering not only ageless thoughts, but also feelings and desires, and so not with coldness or indifference, externally, as mortal things are expressed, but by maintaining a living personal relation with that Word. The *Letters* of Kalinowski irrefutably testify that he received the word of God's call in an extraordinarily tender way. He was not yet ready to share what was happening within him as his understanding of God's call had not yet sufficiently matured. He first brought into the daylight the truth about his vocation on the threshold of the years 1863 and 1864, already after his confession and reconciliation with the Church. However, he did not do so directly. He gave only an insignificant signal to Ludwika Młocka, a person who by her sincere and unyielding insistence on his marriage entered into the deepest personal relation with him, and thanks to this showed herself to be the best prepared for carrying out further conversations on this topic, which was so difficult for him. For complete information, however, she would still have to wait for a long time, and along with her other people close to him would also have to wait. On the other hand, we know with certainty that Kalinowski – in those dark days for the fatherland of the January uprising – was already aware of the grace of the particular vocation which God had granted him. We also know that this grace, expressing itself openly in his relations with God and with people, gave him also a special perspective making possible a clarification and fulfillment of his own existence. And we know, in the end, that our knowledge in this regard is greater than that of all of the other people who were interested in his fortunes – greater than even Kalinowski himself! This is after all knowledge which comes not from a rationalistic-abstract cognition of an object, but participation in the truth of the salvific event.

In our own times, a close relative of Józef Kalinowski, Małgorzata Czerwińska, expressed this in an excellent way:

“Standing in the face of the chronological collection of letters of a person, whose life story is a closed chapter we always stand in a privileged position as if an “all-knowing witness.” We already know how to answer without difficulty the many question marks which were raised by the writer in the next moments

of his life [...] I always read these sentences with trembling, for I see in them as on stubborn and patient hands the call of God. And I see, further, the answer given to God: at first timid and uncertain, then gradually more trusting and firm, until arriving at an unconditional, joyful YES! It may be that Józef went on a path in darkness and fog, but I saw it already in the full light of ultimate fulfillment. I saw Love and Grace, walking with him step by step, awaiting only the consent to embrace him by their power and guide him by the hand. I saw the wonderful plan of God, carried out day by day, faithfully and to the end. And I understood that with my blind, human eyes, I am observing God in action.”¹²⁵

Translated from Polish by Michael Gibson

STRESZCZENIE

ALBERT STANISŁAW WACH OCD

Łaska powołania i objaśnianie egzystencji Studium na podstawie młodzieńczych list św. Rafała Kalinowskiego

Artykuł stanowi próbę przedarcia się przez gąszcz historycznych i egzystencjalnych wydarzeń związanych z okresem pierwszych dwudziestu ośmiu lat życia Józefa Kalinowskiego (św. Rafała) i dotarcia do teologicznego „miejsca” jego spotkania z łaską powołania szczegółowego (życie zakonne, kapłaństwo). Jest jednocześnie usiłowaniem znalezienia odpowiedzi na pytanie stawiane przez naszego Bohatera o własną egzystencję i jej znaczenie. Podstawą źródłową analizy są jego osobiste *Listy i Wspomnienia*. Celem artykułu, który ma też charakter duszpastersko-powołaniowy, jest pokazanie na konkretnym przykładzie związku i wzajemnego oddziaływania pomiędzy łaską powołania a rozumieniem samego siebie.

Część pierwsza obejmuje okres do 16. roku życia. Są to lata dojrzewania w środowiskach rodzinnym i kościelnym, które wywierają pozytywny wpływ na kształtowanie jego osobowości, a nawet może przyczyniają się do rozwoju ukrytej łaski jego osobistego powołania. Sam Kalinowski, wspominając w późnym okresie życia ten czas i „niektóre dane”, zakłada jej istnienie w młodości. Łaska ta, z nieznanym

¹²⁵ M. CZERWIŃSKA, *Czytając listy Świętego*, in: *Święty Rafał Kalinowski. Księga Pamiątkowa 1835–1907–1991*, ed. C. Gil, S.T. Praškiewicz, Kraków 1993, p. 155.

dla nas powodów (niewystarczająca jej świadomość?, wątpliwości?), nie zostaje jednak przez niego podjęta, co powoduje wiele zamętu w jego życiu i doprowadza do rozchwiania i połamania na „nieskładne części” jego młodej egzystencji.

Część druga poświęcona jest okresowi studiów w Petersburgu oraz wchodzeniu w dorosłość i samodzielność (Brześć). Jest to bodaj najciemniejszy okres jego życia, naznaczony dużym zagubieniem egzystencjalnym, w którym dokonało się osłabienie więzi z Kościołem i oddalenie od sakramentów. Wciąż przyświeca mu jednak wyniesione z domu światło prawdy. Ono chroni go przed pokusą nihilistycznego zafałszowania swej egzystencji. Wielką pomocą jest też odbudowanie więzi z rodziną. Otwarte dzielenie z najukochańszymi osobami wspólnych wartości i najgłębszych tęsknot serca ułatwia mu dokonywanie codziennych wyborów, odkrycie celu życia, a nawet uruchamia swego rodzaju sprężynę, która równoważy stosunek do doczesności i jednocześnie pociąga ku wieczności.

Część trzecia wprowadza czytelnika w świat najbardziej wewnętrznych przeżyć Kalinowskiego. Jego historia osobista i losy Ojczyzny – skądinąd bardzo dramatyczne dzieje powstania styczniowego – stanowią tu jedynie tło. Głównym protagonistą tego etapu życia Kalinowskiego jest bowiem w tym wypadku Słowo Boże, które wdziera się do jego serca i doprowadza cały dramat do punktu kulminacyjnego. Przede wszystkim „zakazuje” mu Ono małżeństwa, którego zawsze pragnął. Powstała w ten sposób pustka serca zostaje wypełniona wyraźną obecnością misterium Chrystusa. Niezrozumiały natomiast dla otoczenia stan społecznego zawieszenia w próżni, który trudno mu tymczasem innym wytłumaczyć, powoduje wiele perypetii w jego międzyludzkich relacjach. Przystąpienie do sakramentu pokuty i całkowite otwarcie się na Boga i ludzi umożliwiają mu ostatecznie usłyszenie decydującego głosu Bożego wezwania. Ono z kolei rozjaśnia całą jego dalszą egzystencję, także relacje z ludźmi.