

Mercier and Zimmermann on the Relationship between Philosophy and Theology*

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Summary

In this paper, a comparison is made between Mercier's and Zimmermann's views on the relationship between theology and philosophy, in order to determine whether Mercier influenced Zimmermann in this regard. Several issues are relevant in this context: first, whether theology should be a positive or a negative norm of philosophy, second, what should be the domain of the normative impact of theology on philosophy, and third, whether that impact is, from a logical point of view, merely allowable or necessary. The research resulted in the following findings: first, both Mercier and Zimmermann hold the opinion that theology should be a negative norm of philosophy, second, contrary to Mercier, Zimmermann holds that theology should not only be a negative

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but also a positive norm of philosophy, third, while Mercier believes that the normative impact of theology on philosophy should be strictly restricted only to the results of philosophical research, Zimmermann sees no problem in extending the impact to cover not only the results but also the very process of philosophical research, and fourth, both Mercier and Zimmermann consider the impact to be logically necessary, rather than merely allowable, but the necessity is founded, according to Mercier, on revealed truths being mediately evident and absolutely certain, whereas Zimmermann considers it founded on revealed truths being guaranteed and morally certain. The conclusion reads that Mercier left no significant mark on Zimmermann's views on the relationship between theology and philosophy.

Keywords: Désiré Joseph Mercier, Stjepan Zimmermann, the relationship between philosophy and theology, faith, historical knowledge, apologetics

Introduction

Mercier and Louvain neo-scholasticism¹ enjoyed considerable distinction among Croatian neo-scholastics.² Especially Mercier left his mark on one of the most distinguished Croatian neo-scholastic philosophers, Stjepan Zimmermann.³ Mercier's influence on Zimmermann is particularly clear in

¹ Cardinal Désiré-Joseph Mercier (1851–1926) was the early leader of Louvain neo-scholasticism. In 1894, he founded the Superior Institute of Philosophy at Leuven and the journal *Revue Néoscholastique*. Louvain neo-scholasticism was notable for its openness to modern science. On Mercier and on Louvain neo-scholasticism see John G. Vance, "Science and Philosophy at Louvain", *The Dublin Review* 153 (July and October 1913) 306, 307, pp. 27–52; Peter Coffey, "Philosophy and the Sciences at Louvain", *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Fourth Series, Vol. 17 (May 1905), pp. 385–408 and 485–516; Joseph Louis Perrier, *The Revival of Scholastic Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1909), pp. 217–223; David A. Boileau, *Cardinal Mercier: A Memoir* (Louvain: Peeters, 1996); Henryk Misiak and Virginia M. Staudt, *Catholics in Psychology. A Historical Survey* (New York: Mc-Graw Hill Book Company, 1954), pp. 34–66.

² See Fran Barac, *O modernoj katoličkoj apologetici* (Požega, 1907), pp. 71, 95, 107; Stjepan Zimmermann, *Filozofija i religija. Filozofijske istine o Bogu i o čovjeku: razumni temelji vjere* (Zagreb: Zbor duhovne mladeži zagrebačke, 1936), pp. 123, 266; Stjepan Zimmermann, *Putem života. Autoergografija* (Zagreb: Velebit, 1945), p. 60; Karlo Balić, "Sv. Toma Akvinski i drugi naučitelji", *Bogoslovska smotra* 25 (1937) 1, p. 54; Karlo Balić, *Sv. Toma Akvinski i drugi naučitelji* (Zagreb, 1938), p. 8; Karlo Grimm, "U spomen kardinala Deziderija Merciera", *Bogoslovska smotra* 14 (1926) 2, pp. 191–197.

³ Stjepan Zimmermann (1884–1963) was a professor of philosophy at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Zagreb. He was influenced mostly by Désiré-Joseph Mercier and Joseph Geyser (who was a distinguished German neo-scholastic philosopher). In Croatian, the literature on Zimmermann is extensive. Let us here mention the following three books: Ivan Čehok, *Filozofija Stjepana Zimmermanna* (Zagreb: Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 1993); Josip Oslić and Željko Pavić

the articulation of the problem of knowledge, which is, both in Mercier and in Zimmermann, characterised by the following three distinguishing marks: first, the structural distinction between the problem of subjectivism and the problem of idealism,⁴ second, the structural distinction between the problem of scepticism, as the preliminary problem of epistemology, and the two central epistemological problems, the problem of subjectivism and the problem of idealism, and, third, the idea that the final object of epistemology is to solve the problem of metaphysics.⁵

It is our intention in this paper to establish whether Mercier influenced Zimmermann's considerations on the relationship between philosophy and theology and thus to contribute to a better understanding of Mercier's impact on Croatian neo-scholasticism.

As for the relation between philosophy and theology, the most prominent topic is, both in Mercier and in Zimmermann, the problem of whether theology should be taken as a norm for what is true in philosophy. It is our intention in this paper, first, to draw attention to the possibility of taking theology as a logi-

(eds.), *Život i djelo Stjepana Zimmermanna* (Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 2002); Ivan Tadić, *Filozofska misao Stjepana Zimmermanna. Izabrani vidovi s bibliografijom* (Split: Crkva u svijetu, 2010). Recently, the following paper was published in German: Ivan Macut, "Metaphysik in der Lehre des kroatischen Philosophen Stjepan Zimmermann", *Carthaginensia* 39 (2023) 76, pp. 537–556. A significant part of this paper discusses the problem close to the one discussed in: Ljudevit Hanžek and Dario Škarica, "Zimmermann o historijskom svjedočanstvu", *Prilozi za istraživanje hrvatske filozofske baštine* 37/1–2(73–74) (2011), pp. 51–73.

⁴ Both Mercier and Zimmermann champion objectivism (as opposed to subjectivism) and realism (as opposed to idealism). They also hold the two problems (the problem of subjectivism and the problem of idealism) to be the two main problems of epistemology.

⁵ The problem of metaphysics concerns, both in Mercier and in Zimmermann, the question of whether metaphysics can be a science. On Mercier's articulation of the problem of knowledge see D[ésiré Joseph] Mercier, *Critériologie Générale ou Théorie générale de la certitude* (Louvain – Paris: Institut supérieur de Philosophie – Félix Alcan, 1918), pp. 42–48; [Désiré Joseph Mercier et al.] *Traité élémentaire de philosophie à l'usage des classes édité par des Professeurs de l'Institut supérieur de Philosophie de l'Université de Louvain* (Louvain: Institut supérieur de Philosophie, 1921), pp. 418–419; [Désiré Joseph] Mercier and professors of the Higher Institute of Philosophy, Louvain, *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy*, Vol. 1, Second Edition (Revised) (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1917), pp. 345, 351–352. On Zimmermann's articulation of the problem of knowledge see e. g. the structure of his main epistemological books: Stjepan Zimmermann, *Opća noetika. Kritika subjektivističkih i idealističkih nazora o vrijednosti ljudske spoznaje* (Zagreb: Zbor duhovne mladeži zagrebačke, 1918); Stjepan Zimmermann, *Opća noetika. Teorija spoznaje i kritika njezine vrijednosti* (Beograd: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca, 1926); Stjepan Zimmermann, *Temelji filozofije. Historijsko-kritička orijentacija* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1934); Stjepan Zimmermann, *Nauka o spoznaji* (Zagreb: Nakladni odjel Hrvatske državne tiskare, 1942).

cally allowable norm of philosophical truths and, second, to establish whether Mercier and Zimmermann hold normative impact of theology on philosophy to be logically necessary or merely allowable.

1 Philosophy and Theology

Mercier's and Zimmermann's views on the relationship between philosophy and theology generally coincide. Both Mercier and Zimmermann reject the doctrine of two mutually independent truths, the philosophical one and the theological one, which could even contradict each other,⁶ and additionally consider theology a norm of philosophy. Nevertheless, within this common framework, Mercier and Zimmermann developed different views on how theology should be taken as a norm for philosophy (whether only as its negative norm or also as its positive norm) and on what should be the domain of this normative impact of theology on philosophy (i. e. whether it affects only the results of philosophical research or also that research itself).

1.1 Mercier

The frame within which Mercier develops his views on the relationship between philosophy and theology comprises, basically, the distinction between natural and supernatural knowledge, the conviction that philosophy is autonomous (i. e. free from any authority), the principle of contradiction (according to which, truths do not contradict one another) and the persuasion that revealed truths are indisputable, provided only that they are properly understood.

⁶ Double-truth theory was usually attributed to Averroes and his Latin followers, especially to Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia, but the attribution seems to be controversial. See Luca Bianchi, "From Pope Urban VIII to Bishop Étienne Tempier: the Strange History of the 'Doctrine of Double Truth'", *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 64/1 (2017), pp. 9–26; John F. Wippel, "The Parisian Condemnations of 1270 and 1277", in: *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, edited by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Timothy N. Noone (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), pp. 65–73; Richard C. Taylor, "Averroes", in: *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, edited by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Timothy N. Noone (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), pp. 182–195; B. Carlos Bazán, "Boethius of Dacia", in: *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, edited by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Timothy N. Noone (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), pp. 227–232; B. Carlos Bazán, "Siger of Brabant", in: *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, edited by Jorge J. E. Gracia, Timothy N. Noone (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), pp. 632–640; Richard C. Taylor, "'Truth Does Not Contradict Truth'. Averroes and the Unity of Truth", *Topoi* 19 (2000), pp. 3–16.

1.1.1 Natural and Supernatural Knowledge

Mercier discriminates between natural and supernatural knowledge. Natural knowledge is acquired by reason. Supernatural knowledge rests on revelation. Sciences and philosophy are woven from natural knowledge. Theology is founded on supernatural knowledge, i. e. on revealed truths. Consequently, Mercier separates theology from other sciences: theology is of supernatural, Divine origin, while natural sciences are of natural origin.⁷

Important as it may be, this difference between theology and other sciences cannot render philosophical (nor scientific) truths really at odds with theological truths. Otherwise, a Christian could not be a scientist (a philosopher, a physicist, a biologist etc.)⁸

1.1.2 Philosophy and Authority

Mercier considers philosophy an autonomous science, free from any authority, including the authority of the Church.⁹ Philosophy is founded on its own principles, which are evidently true; it relies on its own methods, which are certainly valid; and it infers, from those principles, by means of those methods, inferences that are undoubtedly true.

To corroborate this conviction (that philosophy is independent of the Church's doctrinal authority), Mercier draws attention to the fact that philosophy flourished long before the emergence of Christianity.¹⁰

In this vein, Mercier also rejects traditionalism, i. e. the teaching elaborated by De Bonald and La Mennais, according to which our reason ought to refrain from its own principles and methods and to base its knowledge on principles and reasons taken exclusively from what is revealed.¹¹

⁷ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 36; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 21. Thus, from the terminological point of view, it is, in this paper, most appropriate for philosophy, mathematics, and empirical sciences to be called natural sciences, as opposed to theology as the only supernatural science.

⁸ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 36; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 21.

⁹ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 36–37; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 21–22. Mercier holds the same to be true of any other natural science.

¹⁰ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 36–37; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 21–22. To this argument Mercier adds the following remark (which tells much about his view on the relationship between philosophy and Christianity): the aim of Christianity is not to abolish philosophy, but to supplement our natural knowledge with what can only be known on the basis of revelation. Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 36–37; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 21–22.

¹¹ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 36–37; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 21–22. On Mercier's rejection of traditionalism see also Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 431–433; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 363–365.

1.1.3 The Principle of Contradiction

Mercier considers any contradiction between natural sciences and revealed truths impossible.¹² For, the God who has revealed the truths of Faith is the same one who has illuminated human minds with the light of reason and, of course, no contradiction is possible within Him.¹³ Besides, from the purely logical point of view, truths do not contradict one another.¹⁴

At the same time, Mercier claims that revealed truths are indisputably true. The Church knows that it has received those truths from God Himself and that, consequently, they simply cannot be wrong.¹⁵

In other words, according to Mercier, natural reason cannot contradict the Divine mind and, because of that, natural sciences (philosophy, mathematics, and empirical sciences), being founded on natural reason, cannot contradict theology (which is founded on Divine revelation).

In accordance with this, any scientific assertion, hypothesis or theory that contradicts revealed truths, can only be an error, which ought to be corrected, though not according to revealed truths, but independently of them, i. e. exclusively within the scope of natural reason. Revealed truths should not guide natural sciences in their research. Rather, they should only be their negative criterion, which renders it possible for us to detect a certain type of errors (namely, those that contradict revealed truths). In this regard, natural sciences ought not neglect theology, for it clearly contributes to their development by detecting errors that otherwise, without it, could not possibly be detected (by natural reason alone).¹⁶ In other words, the autonomy of natural sciences does not justify them to ignore revealed truths and theology.¹⁷

The Church does not teach a philosophy of its own. It also teaches no scientific theory. It only teaches a theology, which is based on revealed, supernatural truths, and not on natural knowledge, acquired independently of what is revealed. Philosophers and scientists ought not be guided in their research (including the revision of wrong assertions, hypotheses, theories, and views) by the teaching of the Church. Rather, they ought to be free from that teaching. On the other hand, this freedom, the autonomy of natural sciences, does not

¹² Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 34–36; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 24–25.

¹³ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 36; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 25.

¹⁴ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 36; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 25.

¹⁵ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 34, 37; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 22–24.

¹⁶ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 37; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 22–23.

¹⁷ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 34, 37; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 22–24.

render them free to neglect those errors that can only be detected by means of theological knowledge. Ignoring errors is not an acceptable practice in science.¹⁸

Most certainly, any scientific assertion, hypothesis, or theory, that contradicts revealed truths, hinges either on an incautious observation or on a hasty conclusion. Methodologically flawless scientific research can only yield knowledge compatible with what is revealed, i. e. knowledge that can only contradict a wrongly defined truth of Faith (say, within a separate opinion of a theologian).¹⁹ Hence, a prudent scientist would suspend his assent to a scientific assertion, hypothesis, or theory that seems to be incompatible with what is revealed, up until the problem is solved, either by establishing that the assertion, hypothesis, or theory rests on an incautious observation or on a hasty conclusion or by establishing that the respective truth of Faith has been wrongly defined.²⁰

1.2 Zimmermann

The frame within which Zimmermann defines his views on the relationship between philosophy and theology embraces primarily the distinction between natural and supernatural religion, the principle of the autonomy of philosophy (Christian philosophy being included), the principle of contradiction, and the persuasion that revealed truths are indisputable.

1.2.1 Natural and Supernatural Religion

Essentially, Zimmermann's distinction between natural and supernatural religion may be described as follows. Natural religion rests exclusively on what can be known about God independently of revelation, i. e. by reason alone. In contrast, supernatural religion rests on revelation. This does not render supernatural religion irrational. For, revealed truths do not contradict reason. They are only inaccessible to it when it is unaided by revelation. Even when aided by revelation, our reason cannot fully penetrate revealed truths. Much of what is revealed remains rather unclear to us.²¹

¹⁸ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 34, 37; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 22–24.

¹⁹ The only authentic interpretation of a revealed truth is the one given by the authority of the Church (the Church's Magisterium). The opinions of individual theologians are only correct insofar as they cohere with the teaching of the Church. Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 34; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 23.

²⁰ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 34–37; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 22–25.

²¹ Stjepan Zimmermann, *Filozofija i religija. Filozofijske istine o Bogu i o čovjeku. Razumni temelji vjere* (Zagreb: Zbor duhovne mladeži zagrebačke, 1936), pp. 28–29; Stjepan Zimmermann,

1.2.2 *The Autonomy of Philosophy*

According to Zimmermann, philosophy is not subordinate to theology. Rather, it is independent of it. Philosophy does not take its principles from theology, but rests on its own principles and sources of knowledge, i. e. on human (natural) experience and reason, as opposed to theology, which rests on supernaturally revealed truths. These are two fundamentally different sources of knowledge: on the one hand, when it comes to theology, revelation (supernatural, Divine), on the other hand, when it comes to philosophy, human experience and natural light of reason. Additionally, philosophy concerns natural truths, accessible to human experience and reason, while theology concerns supernatural truths, which are beyond the reach of human experience and reason.²²

In short, by being fundamentally different from theology, both in respect of its subject matter and in respect of the sources of its knowledge, philosophy simply cannot be subordinate to theology, but rather independent of it, an autonomous and separate science.

1.2.3 *Christian Philosophy*

Zimmermann dubs any philosophy that agrees with the teaching of the Church a Christian or a Catholic philosophy.²³

According to Zimmermann, any Christian philosophy is autonomous with respect to theology, showing no difference at all in that respect from any other philosophy. It is founded, just like any other philosophy, on its own principles and methods, drawn from natural reason, independently of any revelation.²⁴

1.2.4 *Theology as a Norm of Philosophy*

According to Zimmermann, a Christian philosopher should, by logical necessity, take theology as a norm of philosophy. For, as a Christian, he knows that the doctrine of Faith is undoubtedly true (by being testified to by God Himself, whose authority is indisputable) and, accordingly, though fully committed to

Filozofija i religija. Filozofijske istine o Bogu i o čovjeku. Razumni temelj vjere, vol. 2 (Zagreb: Zbor duhovne mladeži zagrebačke, 1937), pp. 16–23, 27–31, 217–221, 250–252; Stjepan Zimmermann, *Religija i život* (Zagreb: JAZU, 1938), pp. 379–410; Stjepan Zimmermann, *Smisao života* (Zagreb: HAZU, 1944), pp. 194–197, 199–200; Stjepan Zimmermann, *Znanje i vjera* (Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2020) (edited by Ivan Macut), pp. 123–124, 130–131, 666–667.

²² Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 7–8.

²³ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 7–8.

²⁴ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., p. 8.

solving philosophical problems exclusively by means of reason, without any appeal to revealed truths, he simply cannot assent to a proposition that contradicts the doctrine of Faith – such a proposition can only be held by him to be false. A Christian philosopher would be at odds with himself (as a Christian) if he held a proposition that contradicts the Christian doctrine of Faith.²⁵

In other words, according to Zimmermann, no matter how much it is held by Christians to be autonomous (and independent of theology), philosophy may not be held (by them) to be completely separate from theology. Rather, theological truths (along with natural light of reason) should be considered (by Christians) to be norms for philosophical assertions (be they true or false), an orienting criterion of the philosophical pursuit of truth.²⁶ In contrast to that, according to Zimmermann, not only do non-Christians consider philosophy independent of theology, but they also legitimately consider it entirely separate from theology. From a non-Christian point of view, theology is neither a norm of philosophy nor an orienting criterion of any philosophical enterprise whatsoever.²⁷

Zimmermann considers theology an external norm of philosophical views, beliefs, and systems (an external criterion of whether they are true or false). According to Zimmermann, by being a norm of philosophical views, beliefs, and systems, theology affects neither the subject-matter of philosophy nor its principles nor its methods. Rather, it leaves philosophy to be entirely guided from within by its inner norm (the natural light of reason). Theology influences philosophy exclusively from without, as an external norm of it, i. e. the authority of Divine revelation, which brings to light truths inaccessible to the natural light of reason and philosophy (founded on it).²⁸

Furthermore, Zimmermann considers theology a negative norm of philosophical views, beliefs, and systems, a negative criterion of their truth, in that it does not permit them to contradict revealed truths.²⁹

Since philosophical views, beliefs, and systems are results of philosophical research, it should be concluded that Zimmermann holds theology to be an external and negative norm of whether the results of philosophical research are true or false.

However, Zimmermann does not only consider theology a negative norm of the results of philosophical research but also a positive norm of that very research. According to him, theology should not be taken only as a negative

²⁵ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., p. 8.

²⁶ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., p. 8.

²⁷ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., p. 8.

²⁸ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., p. 8.

²⁹ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 8–9.

norm of what is reached by philosophical research, a norm deprived of any justifiable normative impact on the research process itself, but it should be taken also as a possible positive norm that affects the very research process of reaching philosophical truths. Thus, philosophical research does not have to be entirely separate from theology. Rather, a Christian philosopher may feel free to take revealed truths into consideration even before any relevant philosophical truth has been reached and to let them inform, orient, and shape the research process. His philosophical pursuit of truth does not have to be purified from all positive influence of theology. The only thing forbidden is to try to justify the results of the pursuit (i. e. the respective philosophical views, beliefs, and systems) by appeal to the teaching of the Church.³⁰

In short, when it comes to the logic of discovery, the normative impact of theology on philosophy may be positive, while when it comes to the logic of justification, the impact can only be negative.

Zimmermann considers the following possible objection to his understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology: does taking theology as a norm of philosophy narrow the freedom of philosophical research and, consequently, the range of acceptable, permissible results of that research? Here, Zimmermann does not only mean philosophy, but also any other science independent of revelation. In a broader sense, thus, the problem is: does taking theology as a norm of natural sciences reduce the freedom of scientific research and, consequently, the scope of acceptable, permissible results of that research?³¹

In his answer to this possible objection, Zimmermann sets out from the fact that the ultimate goal of any science (including philosophy) is not freedom, but truth (and knowledge).³² And truth, by logical necessity (according to the principle of contradiction), excludes as false all those propositions that contradict it. In other words, every truth (true proposition), if it is truly true, is by logical necessity also the norm (the criterion) of the truth of all other propositions, rendering those that contradict it false and leaving those that do not contradict it (at least potentially) true. Accordingly, revealed truths (if they are truly true) are by logical necessity not only truths (propositions that correspond to the relevant reality) but also norms of the truth of all other propositions (whether scientific or non-scientific; whether philosophical or non-philosophical).³³

The question is, therefore, only whether revealed truths are truly true. The path that might lead us to the solution of this problem is defined by both Mercier and Zimmermann within their respective considerations on faith.

³⁰ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 8–9.

³¹ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 9–10, 317–318.

³² In this context, we use the term *truth* in the sense of a true proposition.

³³ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 9–10, 317–318.

1.3 Summary

Both Mercier and Zimmermann consider theology a norm of philosophy. Mercier considers it to be an exclusively negative norm of philosophy that affects only the results of philosophical research, without having any impact on the research itself. Zimmermann, however, considers it to be not only a negative norm of the results of philosophical research but also a positive norm to influence the research process itself.

However, taking theology as a norm of philosophy could be justified meta-theoretically, as logically allowable, on an equal footing with other (alternative and competing) meta-theoretical norms, but it could also be justified in the absolute sense of the word, unconditionally, i. e. as a logically necessary norm of philosophy.³⁴

So, the question is whether taking theology as a norm of philosophy is justified by Mercier and by Zimmermann as logically necessary or merely as logically allowable.

The answer to that question can be found respectively in Mercier's and in Zimmermann's justification of faith in revealed truths (on which theology is founded). If, namely, revealed truths are certainly true, then taking theology as a norm of philosophy is logically necessary. If, however, revealed truths are not certainly true (nor certainly false), then taking theology as a norm of philosophy is logically allowable, rather than necessary.

2 Faith

Mercier's and Zimmermann's considerations on Faith move within the same conceptual framework.³⁵ What renders those considerations mutually different is mainly Mercier's and Zimmermann's respective approach to the problem of the justification of Faith.

³⁴ On the concept of metatheory (or paradigm) see: Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970). Though philosophical in origin, the concept of metatheory is ever more widely used by various scientists as well – see e. g.: Bernard Baars, *The Cognitive Revolution in Psychology* (New York – London: The Guilford Press, 1986); Carl R. Woese, “A New Biology for a New Century”, *Microbiology and Molecular Biology Reviews* 68 (2004), pp. 173–186.

³⁵ This framework comprises mainly the concepts of evidence, authority, assent, and certitude, and is shared among other neo-scholastics as well – see e. g. Christoph Willems, *Institutiones philosophicae*, Vol. 1 (Trier: Officina ad S. Paulinum, 1915), pp. 129–151, 214–234, 234–253; Eduardo Hugon, *Logica* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1927), pp. 249–263, 322–328, 340–356; Josef Donat, *Critica* (Heilderberg: F. H. Kerle Verlag, 1945), pp. 51–88, 215–230.

2.1 Mercier

The conceptual background of Mercier's considerations on Faith consists primarily in the concepts of proposition, judgement, assent and dissent. In the context of those considerations, it is most appropriate to define those terms as follows. First, a proposition is a thought that concerns a truth and is, accordingly, either true or false: a true proposition corresponds to the truth in question, while a false proposition does not correspond to it.³⁶ Second, judgement is the attitude of holding a proposition to be true or of holding it to be false. Third, assent is the act of holding a proposition true. Fourth, dissent is the act of holding a proposition false.

2.1.1 Evidence

According to Mercier, assent to a proposition can be objectively motivated by the truth itself, but also independently of it, by the authority (credibility, trustworthiness) of the witness.³⁷

Assent is objectively motivated by the truth itself if and only if the truth is evident to the subject, either immediately or mediately.

According to Mercier, what is immediately evident are the first (fundamental) logical principles.³⁸ The fundamental logical principles are propositions characterized by the following three distinguishing features: first, they are unprovable, second, they are self-evidently true, so there is no need to prove them, and, third, they are the fundamentals of anything else knowable (all other knowledge is derived either from them or according to them).³⁹ Fundamental logical principles are either formative or normative (regulatory). Formative fundamental logical principles of a science are its axioms (unprovable and self-evident), premises from which all proof within that science starts.⁴⁰ The normative fundamental logical principles of all knowledge (whether scientific or non-scientific) are not premises (axioms), but laws (norms) of all thought

³⁶ In this context, we do not use the term *truth* in the sense of a true proposition, but in the sense of reality, providing it is objective, i. e. an object of possible knowledge. On Mercier's concept of truth see Mercier, *Critériologie Générale*, pp. 16–31; Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 412–415. Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 346–349.

³⁷ Objective motives for assent (to a proposition) are those independent of the subject's wishes, feelings, moods, etc. Subjective motives for assent are, for example, self-deceiving wishes or fears that prevent one from making a sound and measured judgement, etc. Objective motives for assent are called reasons by Mercier. See Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 399.

³⁸ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 456; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 385.

³⁹ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 457–459; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 386–388.

⁴⁰ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 457–458; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 386–387.

(understanding): the law of identity, the law of contradiction and the law of excluded middle.⁴¹

In addition to these principles, according to Mercier, what is immediately evident are experiences (as undeniable facts of consciousness), i.e. experiences of individual thoughts, acts of will, and memory-reproductions.⁴²

Mediately evident truths, according to Mercier, are all those truths that are derived from immediately evident experiences or formative fundamental logical principles, according to immediately evident normative fundamental logical principles, be it within the framework of experimental sciences (concerning truths of the real order), either by induction, or by deduction, or be it within the framework of rational sciences (concerning truths of ideal order), by deduction.⁴³ Mediately evident truths are, therefore, conclusions (some inductive, some deductive), and not premises, nor principles.⁴⁴

2.1.2 Authority

Assent is objectively motivated by the authority (credibility) of the witness if and only if the truth in question is not evident to the recipient of the testimony, neither immediately nor mediately, but is only testified to him, provided that the credibility of the witness is evident to him.⁴⁵

According to Mercier, the authority of a witness consists in his knowledge of the truth in question and in his sincerity.⁴⁶ A witness who does not know much about what he is testifying to is of dubious credibility, unreliable, in contrast to a witness who is well versed in the matter in question. A witness prone to false testimony is an unreliable witness, as opposed to a witness who is honest, not inclined to lie.

According to Mercier, the authority of a witness is never self-evident, but must be determined by external signs.⁴⁷ As recipients of testimony, we do not have immediate (introspective) insight into either the knowledge or the sincerity of the witness. We cannot directly know whether he knows the truth in question or is only pretending to know it. We cannot directly know what his intentions

⁴¹ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 457–459; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 386–387.

⁴² Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 459–461; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 388–390.

⁴³ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 456, 462–470; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 385, 391–398.

⁴⁴ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 462; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 391.

⁴⁵ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 471; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 399. On the one hand, we call testimony the very act of testifying, a statement, by which the witness asserts or denies something to the recipient of the testimony. On the other hand, we also call testimony the content of that assertion or denial, a proposition, the thought expressed by that statement, be it true or false.

⁴⁶ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 472; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 400.

⁴⁷ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 472; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 400.

are, to tell us the truth or to lie to us. Thus, we can only establish the authority of the witness through external signs, which point to it.

Since God is omniscient and perfectly good (and therefore perfectly honest), his authority is objectively indisputable.⁴⁸ There is no situation in which God would be inclined to testify falsely, nor a situation in which he would not know the truth.

Since man is neither omniscient nor perfectly honest, his authority is objectively disputable.⁴⁹ There are numerous situations in which humans tend to lie and those in which they do not know the truth in question.

Finally, according to Mercier, the authority of a witness does not render the truth in question evident, but merely guarantees that the testimony to it is true.⁵⁰

2.1.3 *The Motive of Assent*

According to Mercier, therefore, two objective motives (reasons) for assent to a proposition are possible: first, evidence (of the truth) and, second, credibility (of the witness). Evidence illuminates the mind of the subject with the truth itself, immediately or mediately. Credibility guarantees the truth of the testimony, without enlightening the mind of the subject (the recipient) with the truth itself, either immediately or mediately.⁵¹

If neither the truth itself nor the credibility of the witness is evident to the subject, then his (possible) assent to the proposition can only be subjectively motivated by some kind of blind inclination, emotion, prejudice, etc., without any objective motives (reasons).

Objectively motivated assent to a proposition is not blind, but reasonable, based on knowledge (i. e. on the evident truth itself or on the evident credibility of the witness). In contrast, subjectively motivated assent to a proposition is not reasonable, but blind, devoid of any knowledge, i. e. of any evidence on which it would be based, any reason by which it would be justified.

2.1.4 *Certitude*

In accordance with the above, Mercier concludes that the certainty of assent to a proposition can be objectively based on the truth being either evident or guaranteed (by the evident credibility of the witness).⁵²

⁴⁸ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 472; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 400.

⁴⁹ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 471, 472; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 399–400.

⁵⁰ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 471–475; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 399–403.

⁵¹ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 471; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 399.

⁵² Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 455; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 385.

Here, as we have already pointed out, Mercier considers humans to be witnesses of disputable credibility, and so, from the perspective of a reasonable recipient of testimony, the truth of a human testimony can only be more or less probable, not absolutely certain. At best, human testimony is most likely true (practically certain).⁵³

In contrast to that, God is a witness of indisputable authority, omniscient and perfectly sincere, and so his testimony simply cannot be untrue. In other words, the truth of God's testimony is absolutely certain.⁵⁴

The only problem is how to determine that it is really God himself who is testifying.

2.1.5 Faith

Mercier defines faith as assent (to a proposition) motivated by the authority of a witness, i. e. as assent to a proposition the truth of which is non-evident to the subject (believer), but only testified to him. When it comes to faith, the motive for assent is the credibility of the witness.⁵⁵

Mercier endorses the Catholic teaching that faith in God's word is both certain and free. The act of Faith is free because revelation does not render supernatural truths evident, but only testified to. Revelation is testimony, rather than evidence. Our mind, however, does not necessarily assent to testimony. It is only evidence that renders assent to a proposition necessary. Authority does not have that power. In other words, when it comes to Faith, assent is always an act of both the believer's will and reason.⁵⁶

2.1.6 Historical Knowledge

According to Mercier, truths that are not evident, but only testified to, may be objects of faith or objects of historical knowledge.⁵⁷ The difference between faith and historical knowledge is that, when it comes to faith, our assent to the proposition in question (the testimony) is motivated solely by the authority of the witness, while in the case of historical knowledge our assent is motivated by the truth (of the proposition) being mediately evident, so there is no need at all to establish whether the witness is trustworthy.⁵⁸

⁵³ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 471–472; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 399–400.

⁵⁴ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 472; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 400.

⁵⁵ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 472; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 400.

⁵⁶ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 473; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 401.

⁵⁷ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 471; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 399.

⁵⁸ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 471–472; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 399–400.

Consequently, the certitude of historical knowledge is, according to Mercier, absolute, while faith in what is testified to by a human is at best most likely true, i.e. practically (but not absolutely) certain.⁵⁹

Mercier gives the following example of historical knowledge. Those who have never been to the Congo, but only know about it on the basis of testimonies, can nevertheless be absolutely certain that it exists, without even knowing whether the witnesses in question are credible or not, simply because numerous facts and circumstances, without exception, point to the existence of the Congo – the regular departure of ships (with their passengers and cargo) to the Congo and their regular return from it, numerous letters, books, etc. So many coincidences of so many facts and circumstances can only be explained by the existence of the Congo. It is not possible to draw any other conclusion from all of this than that all these testimonies are certainly true, and that the Congo certainly exists. This (historical) certainty is the certainty of knowledge, not of faith. It is motivated by the mediately evident truth of the testimonies that the Congo exists, and not by the authority of the witnesses (which remains unestablished, due to the lack of any need for establishing it).⁶⁰

Let us notice that, from the logical point of view, Mercier relates historical certitude to the inference to the only possible explanation, while in methodological regard, he relates it to the method of reduction to absurdity (*reductio ad absurdum*).⁶¹ Namely, if all relevant facts and circumstances point evidently to the existence of the Congo, and so there is no other assumption capable of explaining them, then the inference that the Congo really exists is actually the inference to the only possible explanation of those facts and circumstances, i. e. the inference free of any possible explanatory alternative. The only alternative to that inference is the one that explains nothing – namely, the inference that these are all in reality mere coincidences, however much they may be explained by the assumption of the existence of the Congo. However, an alternative that explains nothing at all, as opposed to one that explains everything, cannot seriously be taken as an alternative. For, we always strive for an explanation and do not accept the assumption of mere coincidence until we realize that there is definitely no explanation possible. To explain something and then give up the explanation in favour of asserting that it is just a coincidence would be truly absurd. An explanation renders the hypothesis of mere coincidence senseless.

Let us notice that in this context the term *absurd* is not used in its logical sense as an internal contradiction, but in the sense of a methodological absurdity.

⁵⁹ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 471; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 399.

⁶⁰ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 471–472; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 399–400.

⁶¹ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 471–472; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 399–400.

Logically, it is quite possible that all events in the world are but mere events, unrelated to each other, which we explain by something that does not really exist, i. e. by a mere construct. However, from a methodological point of view, this (logical) possibility is absurd – simply because we strongly prefer explanation to sheer coincidence and presuppose the world to be (causally) comprehensible, rather than incomprehensible (unexplainable).

2.1.7 *The Revealer*

Contrary to the assertion that it is not possible for us to determine whether revealed truths were really revealed by God himself, and contrary to the assertion that the truth of Christian revelation cannot be evident to us (but only believed by us), Mercier holds it possible for us to determine that revealed truths were revealed by God himself, and so rendering the truth of Christian revelation evident. It is possible to determine this, according to Mercier, either by the method of reduction to absurdity, which results in historical certitude (historical knowledge), or by appealing to the providence of God, which simply cannot allow a gap between our reason and truth in such important matters.⁶²

On the one hand, according to Mercier, one ought to discover facts and circumstances that can only be explained under the assumption that revealed truths were really revealed by God himself. Such a discovery proves the denial of that assumption to be (methodologically) absurd and so renders the assumption mediately evident and absolutely certain, without any need for establishing the trustworthiness of the witnesses who testified in support of it. On the other hand, according to Mercier, it is possible to prove the truth of that assumption (that the revealer is God himself) by means of the argument from Providence: God would never provide us with reason that renders false propositions justified.⁶³

Mercier, however, does not engage in either of these two types of arguments. His remarks on possible ways of proving the assertion that the revealer is truly God Himself are therefore best understood as mere suggestions.

But if it is established, by either of those two ways (i. e. by the method of reduction to absurdity or by appealing to the providence of God), that the revealer is really God himself, then it is thereby established that the revealer is indisputably credible and that, accordingly, the revealed truths are absolutely

⁶² Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, pp. 472–473; Mercier, *A Manual*, pp. 400–401.

⁶³ The Argument from Providence was not originally Mercier's argument, but, on the contrary, many authors resorted to it at that time – see e. g. Adolphe Tanqueray, *De Vera Religione, de Ecclesia, et de Fontibus Revelationis* (New York – Cincinnati – Chicago: Benziger fratres, 1914), pp. 236, 356, 520; Willems, *Institutiones philosophicae*, p. 215.

certain,⁶⁴ whereby, by logical necessity (according to the principle of contradiction), these absolutely certain, irrefutable propositions, revealed by God himself, are rendered a norm of the truth of all other propositions (be they philosophical or non-philosophical, scientific or non-scientific), a norm that renders untrue all those propositions that contradict it, and true (at least potentially true) all those that do not contradict it. In other words, if it is established that the revealer is God himself, then taking theology (and revealed truths) as a norm for philosophy is fully justified not only as allowable but also as logically necessary.

Thus, by holding revealed truths to be absolutely certain, Mercier inevitably considers theology (founded on those truths) to be a negative norm of the natural sciences (philosophy included) not merely in the metatheoretical sense (as one amongst many possible and logically allowable metatheories of the sciences), but quite the opposite, in the absolute, unconditional sense (as a logically necessary norm of all scientific assertions, views, hypotheses, theories etc.).

2.2 Zimmermann

So, Mercier proposes to solve the problem of the justification of Faith either by the method of reduction to absurdity and the inference to the only possible explanation or by the argument from Providence. However, in his considerations on this problem, Zimmermann relies mainly on standard apologetic solutions and ignores Mercier's first proposal (the reduction to absurdity and the inference to the only possible explanation). As for the argument from Providence, Zimmermann rarely resorts to it. Nevertheless, the conceptual framework of Zimmermann's apologetic considerations largely coincides with the conceptual framework of Mercier's considerations on the justification of Faith.

2.2.1 Certitude

Zimmermann defines certitude by contrasting it to opinion and doubt.

Subjectively, doubt is a kind of dissent (an attitude by which the subject holds that a proposition may be true, but may also be false), as opposed to opinion and certitude, which are kinds of assent. An opinion is an assent (to a proposition) accompanied by some suspicion that it may not be true. Certitude is assent (to a proposition) devoid of any suspicion as to its truth.⁶⁵

Objectively, a doubt is justified (rational) if and only if the reasons in favour of the proposition and those against it are equally serious (including cases in

⁶⁴ Mercier, *Traité élémentaire*, p. 472; Mercier, *A Manual*, p. 400.

⁶⁵ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 33–34; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., pp. 45–46; Zimmermann, *Temelji filozofije*, pp. 58–59; Zimmermann, *Nauka o spoznaji*, pp. 1, 21.

which there are no reasons, either for or against the proposition). An opinion is justified if and only if the reasons in favour of the proposition are not only sufficiently serious, but also sufficiently more serious than the reasons against it. Finally, certitude is justified if and only if not only the reasons in favour of the proposition are sufficiently serious, but, in addition, there are simply no reasons against it.⁶⁶

Thus, in the case of justified doubt, the truth of the proposition is objectively uncertain, while in the case of justified opinion, it is objectively more or less probable. Finally, in the case of justified certainty, the truth is objectively certain, rendering any suspicion irrational.⁶⁷

The following three standard neo-scholastic classifications of certitude are included in Zimmermann's considerations on Faith.

First, Zimmermann differentiates between unconditional (absolute) and conditional (hypothetical) certitude. A proposition is unconditionally certain if and only if its contradictory proposition is unconditionally excluded as untrue. A proposition is conditionally certain if and only if its contradictory proposition is excluded only under certain conditions, not unconditionally.⁶⁸

Second, Zimmermann distinguishes between metaphysical, physical, and moral certitude. A proposition is metaphysically certain if and only if its contradictory proposition contradicts metaphysical principles (say, the principle of causality) and so is unconditionally (absolutely) excluded as untrue. For example, the proposition that the whole is greater than a part of it is metaphysically certain. A proposition is physically certain if and only if its contradictory proposition contradicts the laws of physics and so is conditionally excluded as untrue, i. e. under the condition that it concerns some physical reality. For instance, the proposition that a stone falls without support under it is physically certain. Finally, a proposition is morally certain if and only if its contradictory proposition contradicts human nature and so is conditionally excluded as untrue, i. e. on the condition that it concerns a human being. For example, the proposition that a human will not tell a lie to his own detriment is morally certain. A proposition contradictory to a physically or morally certain proposition is metaphysically quite possible.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 33–34; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., pp. 45–46; Zimmermann, *Temelji filozofije*, pp. 58–59; Zimmermann, *Nauka o spoznaji*, pp. 1, 21–22.

⁶⁷ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 33–34; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., pp. 45–46.

⁶⁸ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., p. 34; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., p. 46.

⁶⁹ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 34–36; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., pp. 46–48; Zimmermann, *Temelji filozofije*, p. 58; Zimmermann, *Nauka o spoznaji*, p. 21.

Accordingly, Zimmermann points out that metaphysical certitude is absolute (unconditional), while physical and moral certitude are hypothetical (conditional).⁷⁰

Third, Zimmermann also distinguishes between spontaneous (natural) and scientific (reflective) certitude. Spontaneous certitude is not based on an examination of the truth of the proposition in question and does not rest on the reasons in favour of the proposition, and consequently it is not objectively justified, while scientific certitude results from an examination of the truth of the proposition, i. e. it is based on research that has established both that there are sufficiently serious reasons in favour of the proposition and that there are no reasons against it. Accordingly, scientific certitude is objectively justified, as opposed to spontaneous certitude, which is not justified at all.⁷¹

2.2.2 Testimony

Zimmermann opposes faith to objectively certain knowledge. Objectively certain knowledge results from the truth being evident, while faith rests on testimony, i. e. on the truth being testified to. Faith is motivated by the authority of the witness.⁷² Authority consists in knowledge and sincerity.⁷³

Zimmermann distinguishes between historical and doctrinal testimony. The object of a historical testimony is an event. The object of a doctrinal testimony is a teaching.⁷⁴

According to Zimmermann, historical testimony results in scientific (philosophical) certitude if and only if the authority of the witness is established (otherwise, certitude would be spontaneous, rather than scientific), provided that the authority is irrefutably established, beyond any suspicion (otherwise, the assent could not be objectively certain). The irrefutably established authority of the witness renders distrust unreasonable, unjustified. If the authority of the witness is established as morally certain, faith is morally certain. And, if the authority of the witness is established as unconditionally, absolutely certain, faith is also unconditionally, absolutely certain.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., p. 35; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., p. 47.

⁷¹ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 36–37; Zimmermann, *Nauka o spoznaji*, p. 22.

⁷² Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., p. 314; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., p. 410.

⁷³ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 314–315; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., p. 410.

⁷⁴ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 314–315; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., p. 410.

⁷⁵ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 315–317; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., pp. 410–412.

2.2.3 Revelation

Zimmermann understands revelation as testimony by which God himself testifies to some supernatural truths.⁷⁶ In the same context, supernatural Faith is defined by Zimmermann as a firm, certain assent of reason to the content of revelation, an assent founded on the authority of God.⁷⁷

Objectively, the authority of God is the warrant of the truth of revelation.⁷⁸ However, the problem is whether it is possible to determine that the revealer is God himself.⁷⁹ If it is not possible to determine it, then our Faith cannot be objectively certain, i. e. fully justified (rational). And, if it is possible (to establish for certain that the revealer is God himself), then we can be certain that the content of revelation is true and that, accordingly, our Faith, our certain assent to that content, is entirely justified (rational).⁸⁰

The discipline concerned with the problem of whether revealed truths are really revealed by God himself is called apologetics.⁸¹

2.2.4 Apologetics

As it is pointed out by Zimmermann, the main problem of apologetics is whether revealed truths are truly truths, i. e. whether they were really revealed by God.⁸²

Since the truths were revealed by Christ, the main problem of apologetics, as it is stated by Zimmermann, turns out to be the problem of whether Christ (the revealer) is really God himself. If the answer is in the affirmative, then the truths, though beyond the reach of our natural reason, are to be assented to with full certainty, for their truth is warranted by the indisputable (Divine) authority of the revealer (Jesus Christ). So, in spite of the fact that they are not evident to us, they should be assented to by us, for their truth is warranted to us by the

⁷⁶ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., p. 317; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., pp. 413–414.

⁷⁷ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., p. 317; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., pp. 413–414.

⁷⁸ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 317–318; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., pp. 413–414.

⁷⁹ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 317–318; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., pp. 413–414.

⁸⁰ Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 1st Ed., pp. 317–318; Zimmermann, *Opća noetika*, 2nd Ed., pp. 413–414.

⁸¹ Zimmermann, *Filozofija i religija*, Vol. 2, pp. 19–22, 31–32, 35–36, 252, 278–279, 299–300.

⁸² Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, pp. 349–351, 354, 359, 362–363.

indisputable authority of God. However, if the answer is that Jesus Christ (the revealer) is not God himself, then not only are the truths not evident to us, but also their truth is not warranted to us, and so, as a result, we cannot be justified in assenting to them, at least not with full certainty. Rather, we should, at the very least, maintain a certain suspicion that they might not be true.

According to Zimmermann, the Divine nature of Christ is proven by his miracles, especially by his miracles of raising the dead to life (Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain). For, by definition, a miracle is every event that has no natural cause, but is of supernatural origin. Christ's miracles – such as raising Lazarus from the dead, healing the blind man of Bethsaida, curing lepers, etc. – do not only testify to his supernatural power (of breaking the laws of nature), but also to his goodness. Particularly, his miracles of raising dead people to life prove his Divine omnipotence and goodness, for the ruler of life and death, free to break the laws of nature for our good, can only be God himself. This supernatural goodness of Jesus Christ, confirmed by his miracles, is undoubtedly Divine.⁸³

However, the miracles of Christ are historical events not witnessed by us. Today, i. e. ever since Christ ascended to heaven, the Divine nature of him cannot be directly established by some new miracle performed by him and directly witnessed by us. Hence, we should rely on the preserved testimonies to Christ's miracles. Those are the testimonies contained in the Gospels and in the four great epistles of St. Paul (to Galatians, to Corinthians, the first and the second, and to Romans). Now, it is possible to rely on a testimony either in a critical (scientific) or in an uncritical (unscientific) manner. Apologetics requires scientific (critical) approach to the relevant testimonies, meaning that the trustworthiness of the witnesses (Evangelists and St. Paul) should be thoroughly examined, as it is usually done in any historical (critical, scientific) research. If their trustworthiness is established by such an examination, their testimonies will be shown to be true, which will justify us in believing that the miracles testified to in the testimonies really happened, as Christ's deeds, and that, consequently, Christ is truly God himself, which renders the truths revealed by him undoubtedly true. And, accordingly, any alternative to these positions will be justifiably considered scientifically unacceptable.⁸⁴

One essential part of Zimmermann's apologetic research is historical in its character. Namely, in his argumentation in favour of the thesis that Christ (the revealer) is truly God himself, Zimmermann first dates the Gospels and the

⁸³ Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, pp. 359–363.

⁸⁴ Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, pp. 350.

four great epistles of St. Paul to the second half of the first century (by dating the first quotations from them, the peculiarities of the language in which they were written, coins mentioned in them etc.) and then infers from that dating that the authors of the Gospels and the epistles were indeed either direct witnesses of the miracles described in them (apostles Matthew and John) or their immediate disciples (Mark, a disciple of Peter, and Paul, a disciple of the first Christians since his conversion in 36 AD, and Luke, a disciple of Paul), which actually means that there is no serious reason to suspect their familiarity with the events they wrote about (including, of course, the miracles of Christ).⁸⁵

Regarding their sincerity, Zimmermann endorses the testability argument and the peril argument. Namely, Evangelists and St. Paul testified to Christ's miracles in public, rather than in a narrow circle of their followers. So, their testimonies were easily testable, i. e. a huge number of people would have testified to the contrary if Evangelists' and St. Paul's testimonies had been untrue (i. e. if no miracle had happened in the circumstances described). Most certainly, Evangelists and St. Paul would not have lied about such an easily testable (and falsifiable) matter, especially since they knew for certain that, by testifying to the miracles of Christ and, consequently, to his Divinity, they would expose themselves to peril (i. e. to abuse, torture, persecution, death by stoning or crucifixion etc.). According to Zimmermann, it is entirely foreign to human nature to expose oneself to such perils just for the sake of a lie so easily refutable. Therefore, concludes Zimmermann, Evangelists and St. Paul testified the way they did because they knew that it was Christ who performed the miracles. Their testimonies were sincere.⁸⁶

In other words, since Zimmermann is satisfied that those arguments provide quite a sufficient proof of Evangelists' and St. Paul's sincerity as well as of their familiarity with the events in question, he concludes that they are credible witnesses of Christ's miracles and that, accordingly, their testimonies are true (i. e. that Christ really performed the miracles described in the Gospels and in the four great epistles of St. Paul).

All this is considered by Zimmermann to be determined by historical method, i. e. by scientific, critical research into relevant historical sources.⁸⁷

Let us notice that, according to Zimmermann, an alternative to these conclusions is neither logically impossible, self-contradictory, nor metaphysically impossible, but only historically (scientifically) unjustified – for history does

⁸⁵ Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, pp. 351, 355–356.

⁸⁶ Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, pp. 351, 356–359.

⁸⁷ Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, pp. 350–351.

not concern itself with possibilities (whether logical or metaphysical), but with facts – and facts confirm the reality of Christ's miracles.⁸⁸

Let us also notice that Zimmermann's proofs of trustworthiness of Evangelists and St. Paul (as witnesses of Christ's miracles) rest on a proposition considered by Zimmermann to be morally certain (namely, on the proposition that people do not lie to their own detriment, especially when the lie is easily testable, and the detriment is fatal). In other words, according to Zimmermann, Faith founded on those proofs is morally certain,⁸⁹ and scientifically justified (due to the certitude). Thus, the certitude that renders Faith scientifically justified is not unconditional (absolute) certitude, but conditional (moral) certitude, which does not render an alternative to Faith logically inconceivable or metaphysically impossible, but only scientifically (historically) unacceptable.

The other essential part of Zimmermann's apologetic research is philosophical (metaphysical) in character rather than historical. The fact having been determined, by historical research, that Christ really performed the miracles attributed to him, it becomes possible for Zimmermann to deduce from it the Divinity of Christ – for, by definition, miracles break the laws of nature and to break the laws of nature by natural force would be self-contradictory, logically inconceivable, and metaphysically impossible, where from it follows that the one who breaks the laws of nature (Jesus Christ) does not only have natural forces at his disposal, but also supernatural powers, especially if Christ's miracles of raising the dead to life are taken into account, marked by the peculiarity of violating the natural law of life and death, which can be violated only by God, who is the only ruler of life and death, where from it follows that, by breaking that law, Christ clearly demonstrates his Divinity.⁹⁰

Now, God is a trustworthy witness (revealer). His testimony (revelation) simply cannot be untrue, since it is absolutely impossible for an omniscient and perfectly honest witness to tell a lie. In other words, if Christ really performed the miracles attributed to him, then it is absolutely (unconditionally) certain that he is God himself and that his testimony (revelation) is true. And the fact that Christ really performed the miracles is established, by historical research described above, as conditionally (morally) certain.⁹¹

Let us notice that it is metaphysical (absolute, unconditional), rather than moral, certitude that characterizes arguments in this part of Zimmermann's

⁸⁸ Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, pp. 357–358.

⁸⁹ Zimmermann, *Smisao života*, p. 200.

⁹⁰ Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, pp. 359–363.

⁹¹ Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, p. 351.

apologetic research. Nevertheless, Zimmermann's apologetic research as a whole results only in conditional (moral) certitude, because it rests on the fact that Christ performed the miracles, and the fact is only confirmed as morally, conditionally certain.

In short, Zimmermann's apologetic research, partly historical and partly philosophical (metaphysical) in character, results in findings that, according to Zimmermann's understanding of certitude and scientific justification, enjoy full scientific justification, despite the fact that they are only conditionally (morally) certain, in exactly the same way as physical findings also enjoy full scientific justification, despite the fact that they are only conditionally (physically) certain.

2.2.5 The Argument from Providence

In Zimmermann's apologetic considerations, an argument is sometimes used which is rather similar to Mercier's argument from Providence: namely, if objectively certain and scientifically justified knowledge could nonetheless be untrue (despite its objective certainty and scientific justifiedness), then it would mean that we are fundamentally deceived by God himself in that he supplied us with a 'reason' that does not lead to truth (knowledge), but to untruth (and error).⁹² As if God were a Cartesian *genius malignus*.

However, it should be noted that the argument from Providence is not the essential part of Zimmermann's apologetic approach, but only a supplement to his apologetic argumentation essentially based on historical and metaphysical confirmation of the revealer's (Christ's) indisputable (Divine) trustworthiness.

2.2.6 Faith

According to Zimmermann, Faith is rooted both in reason and in the will. Namely, Faith does not only concern the truth, but also the good. Revealed truths are not immediately evident and so they do not render it impossible for us to dissent from them. Their certainty is mediate in character, it is founded on reasons, and not on immediate evidence. This renders us free to withhold our assent to them. In other words, certain as it may be, Faith is always free.⁹³

⁹² Stjepan Zimmermann, *Od materijalizma k religiji* (Zagreb: MOSK, 1935), pp. 56–57. Zimmermann, *Filozofija i religija*, Vol. 2, p. 261; Zimmermann, *Religija i život*, pp. 350, 359–360, 362; Zimmermann, *Znanje i vjera*, p. 148.

⁹³ Zimmermann, *Filozofija i religija*, Vol. 2, pp. 260–261; Zimmermann, *Smisao života*, pp. 199–201. Zimmermann, *Znanje i vjera*, pp. 144–150.

2.3 *Summary*

According to Mercier, the thesis that revealed truths were revealed by God himself should be proved by research into those facts and circumstances that render it mediately evident and absolutely certain, without any need for establishing the trustworthiness of the witnesses. Contrary to that, Zimmermann believes that the thesis should be proved by establishing the trustworthiness of the witnesses (Evangelists and St. Paul), which renders it neither mediately evident nor absolutely certain, but only guaranteed to be true and morally certain.

According to Mercier, facts and circumstances should be discovered that can only be explained under the presupposition that revealed truths were revealed by God, so as to render the contradictory presupposition methodologically absurd. Contrary to that, in his apologetic argumentation, Zimmermann mentions neither explanation nor absurdity, but considers that his arguments render the contradictory presupposition scientifically unjustified, rather than absurd.

Hence, Mercier and Zimmermann advocate two significantly different approaches to the apologetic problem, which renders the hypothesis of Mercier's influence on Zimmermann's apologetic considerations rather unconvincing.

As for Faith, both Mercier and Zimmermann consider it both certain and free. According to Mercier, revealed truths are not evident to us. It is only their being true that is (mediately) evident and absolutely certain to us. Since they are not evident to us, we are free not to assent to them, despite being absolutely certain that they are true. According to Zimmermann, revealed truths are not immediately evident to us, but only mediately certain, on the basis of scientifically established facts, which renders Faith certain (and scientifically justified) as well as free.

Conclusion

Both Mercier and Zimmermann consider revealed truths indisputable, i. e. certainly true. Since, in accordance with the principle of contradiction, propositions that are certainly true are logically necessary norms of the truth of all other propositions, it follows that both Mercier and Zimmermann hold theology (founded on revealed truths) to be a logically necessary norm of philosophy (and any other science).

However, Mercier considers theology to be exclusively a negative norm for the results of philosophical investigations, while Zimmermann considers it not only a negative norm of the results but also a positive norm of philosophical investigations themselves.

Additionally, Mercier does not engage in research into whether revealed truths are certainly true, but only proposes the way it should be determined, while Zimmermann engages in such research, but in a way essentially different from Mercier's proposal.

Accordingly, it should be concluded that Mercier left no significant mark on Zimmermann's considerations on the relationship between philosophy and theology.

Mercier i Zimmermann o odnosu između filozofije i teologije

Sažetak

U ovom je radu Mercierovo shvaćanje odnosa između teologije i filozofije uspoređeno s Zimmermannovim. Svrha je te usporedbe utvrditi je li Mercier utjecao na Zimmermannove nazore o tom odnosu. Nekoliko je pitanja pritom relevantno: prvo, treba li teologija biti pozitivna ili negativna norma filozofije, drugo, što bi trebalo biti područje normativnog utjecaja teologije na filozofiju i, treće, je li taj utjecaj s logičkog gledišta samo dopustiv ili je i nužan. Istraživanje je rezultiralo sljedećim uvidima: prvo, i Mercier i Zimmermann drže da bi teologija trebala biti negativna norma filozofije, drugo, nasuprot Mercieru, Zimmermann drži da bi teologija trebala biti ne samo negativna nego i pozitivna norma filozofije, treće, dok Mercier vjeruje da utjecaj teologije na filozofiju treba biti striktno ograničen samo na rezultate filozofskih istraživanja, Zimmermann ne vidi problem u proširenju tog utjecaja i na sam proces filozofijskog istraživanja, a ne samo na njegove rezultate, i, četvrto, i Mercier i Zimmermann drže utjecaj teologije na filozofiju logički nužnim, a ne samo dopustivim, ali se prema Mercieru ta nužnost temelji na posrednoj očitosti i apsolutnoj sigurnosti objavljenih istina, dok je Zimmermann drži utemeljenom na zajamčenoj istinitosti i moralnoj sigurnosti objavljenih istina. Autori zaključuju da Mercier nije znatnije utjecao na Zimmermannove nazore o odnosu između teologije i filozofije.

Ključne riječi: Désiré Joseph Mercier, Stjepan Zimmermann, odnos između teologije i filozofije, vjera, historijsko znanje, apologetika

