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HAGIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE FATIMA MESSAGE

Summary: This paper presents a theological analysis of the content of the Fatima message, carried out according to hagiological assumptions. The analysis of Fatima sources, taking into account the aspect of hagiological research, made it possible to claim that holiness granted by Divine grace grows in a human being at the stage of his or her earthly life. Human history should develop the salvific course through cooperation between the human being and God upon the principle of dialogical relations. In the dialogue of salvation, God gives His grace to a human being, which is necessary to create a culture favouring the development of humanity, i.e. humanizing. Dialogical activity means acting in accordance with the theological hierarchy of values. The effects of dialogical cooperation are perceived in humanism favouring the improvement of humanity in the human person, humanity modelled on the humanity of Jesus Christ. The Marian aspect in the hagiological perspective is seen as a guideline showing the right direction of required historico-salvific changes.

Keywords: Fatima, Marian apparitions, visionaries, interdisciplinary research, historico-salvific theology.

A hagiological¹ perspective of the Fatima message consists in looking into the content of the prophecy delivered by visionaries and decoding its ideas from the perspective of research focused on sources originating from a range of academic disciplines that contains the motif of saints – persons who went down in the history of Christianity as heroes of the faith. Hagiology integrates results of research and studies carried out in history, history of art, musicology, cultural studies, theology and other disciplines. Conclusions resulting from the analysis of meta-data obtained in several stages of previous interdisciplinary discussion led to the emergence of research principles targeted towards reaching the hagiological research objective. Those principles were used in this paper to analyse the source data

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¹ See. I. Werbiński, *Hagiologia i inne dyscypliny naukowe*, „Studia Nauk Teologicznych PAN” vol. 1, 2006, p. 151–166.

belonging to the discipline of theology and concerning the subject matter of the Marian apparitions in Fatima. The study presents subsequent stages for the analysis of the message, preceded with an outline of the hagiological research concept.

The concept of hagiological research

Hagiological research starts with the question about a sainthood and saint – a specific person who went down in the historical memory as affecting the religious spirituality of various generations of Christians, as well as researchers and artists also leaving their trace in culture. A holy human being – identified with specific environment, place and time – also evoked the need to deepen the subject matter of holiness. Who is a holy person? What does “being” a saint consist in? What does it mean and what sense does it have? Answers to these questions emerge within theology through reflection over the doctrine of the communion of saints. In view of the hagiological approach, this takes into account the analysis of the content provided in written sources outside theology, i.e. in traces of the religious sensitivity found in culture. The attention of the researcher, focused on the forms expressing devotion and faith, nowadays and in the history (past and present), in the nearer and further perspective (regional and universal), with regard to selected saints celebrated in the Church, made it possible to formulate conclusions about the possibility and the need of the historico-salvific insight into the issue of the sense of life and human existence. From the theological point of view, the sense of human existence is determined by the category of holiness (*hagiologic* – derived from *hagios* – in Greek *holy*), therefore the historico-salvific² insight into the sense of human life would be referred to in this paper as a hagiological insight.³

For the last seven years, working as an interdisciplinary, and even multidisciplinary group of researchers forming an informal team, we have focused on the figures of the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. Anthony, St. Nicolas, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Catherine, and St. Hyacinth.⁴ Theological conclusions developed with regard to the subject matter concerned are as follows:

² The historico-salvific context of theological research indicates the correlation of the content of the Divine revelation recorded in Bible and the Tradition with the experience of the faith related to different indications of the human life.

³ K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, *Wstęp*, in: *Święci w wierze, tradycji, literaturze i sztuce. Inspiracje do badań hagiologicznych*, ed. K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, Olsztyn 2017, p. 7–8.

⁴ There are collective editions: *Matka Boża w wierze, kulcie, teologii i sztuce. Perspektywa regionalna i uniwersalna*, ed. J. Jezierski, K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, Olsztyn 2011; *Św. Józef w wierze, kulcie, teologii i sztuce. Perspektywa regionalna i uniwersalna*, ed. J. Jezierski, K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, P. Rabczyński, Olsztyn 2012; *Święty Antoni z Padwy w wierze, kulcie, teologii i sztuce. Perspektywa regionalna*

1. The status of saint is for Christians a desirable finale of earthly life. It results from the heroism of faith and love. It signifies the closeness of God and the resulting joy, which is defined by the notion of the status of heaven reached after the death, i.e. the state of salvation. Heavenly community is the community of saints in God, i.e. saved.

2. Holiness is God's grace, a gift. Only God is saint, and the human being acquires features of holiness only by clinging to God and following God's will.

3. Holiness grows in a human being through various life experiences, therefore there can be many "paths" to holiness. The Church, whose basic task (somehow, statutory) is to disseminate the grace of salvation, organizes the space of culture promoting this growth.

4. Theology, serving the Church, covers the methodical reflection over God's Revelation present in creation, history, human experience of grace and evidence left in culture proving an experience of meeting with God. As far as the hagiological research is concerned, it explains the status of holiness and formulates justification for encouraging attempts of improvement in holiness. It covers the meeting point between two categories concerning the dynamics of the human life: history and salvation. History concerns events occurring in earthly life, interpreted and created by the human being. Salvation is God's act directed towards human person who lives in historical conditions, aimed at fulfilment of the creation (*ex nihilo*) by leading humankind to heaven, i.e. into the eschatic dimension of life – beyond his earthly existence. In view of the above, the properties of the historico-salvific theology are revealed in the hagiological theology.

An axiological and historico-salvific aspect of the prophecy in the Fatima message

The Fatima message is revealed through three secrets.⁵ The first secret shows the image of hell, the second calls for devotion to Our Lady, and the third

i uniwersalna, ed. K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, Olsztyn 2013; *Św. Mikołaj Biskup Myry w wierze, pobożności, teologii i sztuce – dawniej i dziś. Perspektywa uniwersalna i regionalna*, ed. K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, Olsztyn 2014; *Św. Maria Magdalena w wierze, pobożności, teologii i sztuce – dawniej i dziś. Perspektywa uniwersalna i regionalna*, ed. J. Jezierski, K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, P. Rabczyński, Olsztyn 2015; *Święta Katarzyna w wierze, pobożności, teologii i sztuce – dawniej i dziś. Perspektywa uniwersalna i regionalna*, ed. J. Jezierski, K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, P. Rabczyński, Olsztyn 2016; *Święty Jacek Odrowąż w wierze, pobożności, teologii i sztuce – dawniej i dziś. Perspektywa uniwersalna i regionalna*, ed. K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, Olsztyn 2017.

⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The message of Fatima*, in: *The Holy See* [online], access: 2017-12-15, <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html>; Kongregacja Nauki Wiary, *Orędzie fatimskie*, „L'Osservatore Romano” 2000, no. 9, p. 40–51.

announces the need of thorough penance. The content of those secrets in their written form was theologically examined.⁶ Nothing was found in them that would contradict the Gospel or Christian morality. Numerous theological studies concerning the three secrets were published, and the sanctuary cult developed on a global scale around the place of the apparitions. The Fatima message is associated with a prophecy, i.e. a teaching originating from God, providing guidelines concerning the 'today's' behaviour with an intention of good *for* 'tomorrow'. The good, referred to in the prophetic message, has a salvific sense because it harks back to the human life according to the Divine law.⁷ Better future / good *for* 'tomorrow' – depends on the axiological content in the culture, communities, social and political systems, families and institutions (including religious ones).

An axiological verification consists in the agapetological and veritative evaluation of the effect of operation and co-operations of entities shaping the space of life and behaviour of the generation of people living in a particular period of history. This belongs to the area of historico-salvific research, where the priority is the efficiency in supporting each human being living in their eternal life in their path to heaven, i.e. in improving the holiness in people who are still in their earthly stage of life. The Fatima prophecy warns us against consequences of rejecting God in forming the social policy, which could be destructive for humanity, emphasizing the need for implementing the values referring to the category of truth and good into social life. The imperative of reformation it contains is identified with the need to re-evaluate priorities in behaviour of societies and nations. Thus, the content of the Fatima revelation classifies as an axiological evaluation, entering the subject-matter scope of the historico-salvific research. The axiological verification of the Fatima prophecy reveals the theological historico-salvific principle, indicating that the present generation is responsible for preparing the space of culture in which the history can develop, providing the space for salvation in the subjective aspect.

A historico-salvific perspective of the Fatima message is significant for hagiological studies. It points to the links between the sacred and the profane of the space of culture based on the Christological ethos, in which the point is to sanctify the human being as the effect of the salvific dynamics given to the human history by Jesus Christ. From the hagiological point of view, the Fatima prophecy indicates the responsibility of the current generation for preparing the space of culture and its improvement, to support each human being in their sanctification and to favour sanctification of people from the future generation.

⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Komentarz teologiczny*, „L'Osservatore Romano” 2000, no. 9, p. 47–51.

⁷ L. Scheffczyk, *Obietnica pokoju. Rozważania teologiczne wokół orędzia fatimskiego*, translation into Polish: L. Biczysk, Pallottinum 1995, p. 57–58.

Hell as the opposition to the state of sanctity

The Fatima message cautions us against the infernal doom as a danger for people living at present and in the future. God cares about protecting every person against disappearing in the “hellish abyss” – where hell is identified with the state of total personal disaster and failure,⁸ being a consequence of evil committed by the human being, against heaven – i.e. it contradicts sanctity – and a rejection of the offer of the salvation.⁹

Pursuant to the Biblical concept of the earthly order, God designed the human being for the state of sanctity and wants every human being to become saint.¹⁰ The expected holiness means relation with the Creator. The human being was called to the existence *ex nihilo*, without his or her share in the process. The process of becoming a saint means the growing of holiness in the humankind, consisting in getting close to God after the act of creation.¹¹ It is not tantamount to the passive existence. It is a life process of a person as a free and conscious being – i.e. it includes the dynamics of a being existing among other beings. In order not to die, human person must be active in this process in the historico-salvific aspect, i.e. remain in the relation with God (dialogue of salvation) and the relation with the creation (fulfilment of the vocation).¹² God gives human being a multitude of various graces, which support the human being in the historico-salvific activity, with His merciful love as the motive. Hell shows that without using those graces, humankind creates his own history outside the salvific course.¹³ The experience of history and historical observations indicating the social processes let us conclude that human life organized without reference to God leads to nothing, does not guide the human being towards the aim to which he has been destined (the Biblical revelation describes this aim as an irreversible state of bliss, guaranteed only in heaven, i.e. in God, in His presence).

The hagiological content of the Fatima message in the aspect concerning hell points out to the need to form the “ethos of holiness” in the life of Christians

⁸ According to the biblical sources and the Tradition, the hell is a state of extreme torments but the heaven is a state of great happiness. See: P. Lombard, *Cztery księgi sentencji*, vol. 2, translation in Polish: J. Wojtkowski, Olsztyn 2015, p. 547 and 580 [Book IV: distinction XLIV, chapter 3 (253) and distinction L, chapter 3 (286)].

⁹ B. Ferdek, *Teologia objawienia z Fatimy według Leo Scheffczyka*, „Studia Salvatoriana Polonica” vol. 10, 2016, p. 36–37; J. Królikowski, *Znaczenie eklezjologiczne zawierzenia Matce Bożej dokonanego przez św. Jana Pawła II w Fatimie w 1982 roku*, „Studia Salvatoriana Polonica” vol. 10, 2016, p. 75.

¹⁰ See: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), New York – London – Toronto – Sydney – Auckland 1994, n. 2013.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, n. 2014.

¹² K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, *Teologia dialogu*, Olsztyn 2016, p. 117.

¹³ K.A. Parzych-Blakiewicz, *Teologia historiozbawcza w dogmatyce polskiej XX wieku*, Olsztyn 2010, p. 169.

as an antidote against the destruction resulting from the anti-historico-salvific course. According to the prophecy the Fatima message contains, the hagiological verification of the current state of history does not come out well. The prophecy warns us against the threat of the fires of hell ravaging mankind. The hagiological perspective of the message reveals the aim of the prophecy, which consists in guiding humanity towards the historico-salvific course of history, leading to heaven.

God's gift of the fullness of graces

The Fatima prophecy points out God's gift, Mary Immaculate – as the spiritual Mother (J 19) and a person full of grace (*kecharitomene*, see Lk 1) – and explains how this gift should be used. The motherhood of Mary makes her blessing and the mediation of graces from God to people salvifically efficient. The fullness of grace is understood as a sign of unlimited God's generosity addressed to humankind and all of creation.¹⁴ Therefore, religious practices that develop Christian spiritually include various forms of Marian devotion, with the rosary prayer coming to the fore.¹⁵ The Fatima message elevates the service addressed to the Immaculate (the Immaculate as the name of the God's Mother). The popularization of the immaculistic (derived from *Immaculate Conception*) aspect of religious practices among Christians favours formation of the Christian hope for receiving the fullness of graces resulting from the act of salvation.¹⁶ Therefore, it sensitizes one to the gift of sanctity, with sanctity understood as the state of existence available to the human being in interpersonal relations occurring in the teandric community (Ecclesia, i.e. the Church, being such a community).¹⁷

A theological interpretation of the truth about the Immaculate Conception indicates that Mary Immaculate is the icon of the divine act sanctifying the entire creation, where God's act reaches its fullness in giving and in generosity, up to giving Himself to the creation. A hagiological perspective created in the aspect concerning the Immaculate as the icon of God's generosity indicates that growing of holiness in the human being takes place only in dialogical relations

¹⁴ See: W. Przygoda, *Maryja jako Matka miłosierdzia – teologia i duszpasterstwo*, „Studia Salvatoriana Polonica” vol. 10, 2016, p. 130–132.

¹⁵ See: John Paul II, *Apostolic letter „Rosarium Virginis Mariae”* (16 X 2002), in: *The Holy See* [online], access: 2016-10-16, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20021016_rosarium-virginis-mariae.html>.

¹⁶ See: J. Królikowski, *Znaczenie eklezjologiczne zawierzenia Matce Bożej...*, p. 80.

¹⁷ See: Z.J. Kijas, *Chrystus w poznaniu mistycznym i we wspólnocie świętych w teologii św. Pawła*, in: *Teologia – Ekumenizm – Kultura*, ed. K. Konecki, Z. Pawlak, K. Rulka, Włocławek 2006, p. 374–385.

between human person and God. The Fatima message emphasizes here the charitable base of this dialogue, *de facto* – the dialogue of salvation.

Sanctifying humanization of the world

Human history is running in two courses: salvific (the one that develops in streams of divine grace, i.e. holiness) and non-salvific or anti-salvific (the one that develops on the basis of ideologies and anti-humanist totalitarian systems).¹⁸ The message contains a warning against the anti-salvific course that is disastrous for the human being.

The message shows communism as a threat to the world. History has proven that this system, based on an atheist worldview, quickly led to dehumanization of human life and humanity.¹⁹ The observation of the process of implementing an anti-theological hierarchy of values, one can develop an idea about the practice destructive for the humankind of creating and validating various forms of reduced humanism, most frequently eliminating God from the human space of life and operations. Such humanisms are fundamental to atheistic ideologies and systems. The Fatima message shows that the anti-theological systems and ideologies are also anti-humanistic. The hagiological interpretation of this message in the Fatima prophecy leads to the conclusion that sanctification of the human person – therefore the state of heaven as the happiness that cannot be lost – takes place in historical conditions, at the earthly stage of life.

The hagiological perspective of the Fatima message reveals the salvific sense of everyday life of the human being, every deed, word, prayer or event. In other words, the testimony – martyrism – is presented here as the most efficient carrier of divine grace in culture and tradition. Human testimony is what makes the profane history the sacred history, i.e. becomes sanctifying. Human sanctity is the status of being filled with divine grace. Therefore, saints are people who seem to clear the human historical and cultural space for God's grace. To conclude, it can be claimed that the responsibility for organizing conditions for individual persons' growing in sanctity is on the believers themselves, as the ones called for individual evangelisation tasks. In view of the above, a question emerges as to the correlation between the hagiological conclusions and the ecclesiological subject of research.

¹⁸ See: *Oświadczenie Jego Eminencji kard. Angelo Sodano sekretarza stanu Jego Świątobliwości* (Fatima, 13 V 2000), „L'Osservatore Romano” 2000, no. 9, p. 46.

¹⁹ See: Z. Kunicki, *Mocne nadzieje i płonne obietnice. Wokół krytyki iluzji politycznych*, in: *Zbawienie w nadziei. Wokół encykliki „Spe salvi” Benedykta XVI*, ed. K. Parzych-Blakiewicz, Olsztyn 2010, p. 26.

The hagiological perspective of the Fatima message allows us to observe that the message received from Our Lady puts an emphasis on the value of grace as indispensable for humanizing the world. The process of humanization based on values present in Jesus Christ's teachings, His person and deeds – i.e. implicitly recommended in the Fatima message – means guiding further generations towards reaching the perfection of the humanity, appropriate for the heavenly state. What matters in this process is the humanity formatted according to the paradigm of the “heavenly” human person, i.e. the saint, modelled upon the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ.

A hagiological imperative for history

A vision of misfortunes and suffering, delivered by the visionaries and the calling for penance, helps to diagnose the condition of humanity of the present generation in the historico-salvific sense. According to the judgment presented in the Fatima message – the situation is bad, since anti-humanistic systems have formed throughout the history, the results of which can be felt in the period of the Fatima events, and there is a treat of their negative impact on further generations. Healing this situation, according to the Fatima prophecy, requires the atonement – which is understood as radical repentance, i.e. turning towards God and acknowledging His power.

The priority of God in the hierarchy of values guiding human being in his behaviour consists in acting in accordance with the Truth – i.e. adequately to the reality and principles governing the dynamics of this reality. A theological point of view permits us to look at all of reality from the highest level, i.e. the Absolute. Generally, this perspective can be expressed in the statement that God is the ruler of the world and of the entire creation, as the Creator. It is on Him that the existence of the creation depends as well as the development quality of its beings. Human behaviour devoid of reference to God as the highest source of values (truth, good and beauty) results in that the creation becomes stunted in its structure of being.²⁰ This is the regularity disclosed by the Fatima vision of hell. The punishment did not result here from the God's wrath directed towards humankind, but from the wrong use of earthly goods by human being, which consequ-

²⁰ Consequences in the philosophical interpretation of the human person as the creatures lead to the qualitative vision of the human person, indicative of the dependence the human person in its existence on the activity in the axiological dimension – see: K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, in: *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, Lublin 1994, ed. 3, p. passim; J.W. Gałkowski, *Sumienie a transcendencja*, „Roczniki Filozoficzne” vol. 28, f. 2, 1982, p. 144; K. Parzych, *Na progu teologii dialogu. Dar według studium „Osoba i czyn” Karola Wojtyły*, in: *Filozofia dialogu*, vol. 1, *Drogi i formy dialogu*, ed. J. Baniak, Poznań 2003, p. 169.

ently separates him from the Highest Source and leads to degradation identified with the state of hell. The wrong use of earthly goods means acting against the Truth concerning the structure of the entire reality that has been created – i.e. acting erroneously, falsely – and therefore, it brings damage. Damage suffered as a result of disregarding the Truth leads to abandoning historico-salvific relations by the human being, and this results in reducing the quality of humanity, thus weakening the sanctity in the human person.

The penance for which the Angel calls in the Fatima message, according to theological interpretations, means abandoning the anti-salvific current in human history and returning to God, which means acknowledgment of the Truth and showing respect to the precedence of God's will in human choices. This penance concerns the entire Church as one entity, i.e. the community of people acting together for restoring the historico-salvific order.

The hagiological interpretation of the Fatima message in the aspect of calling for penance leads to the conclusion about the need to combine efforts leading to a change in the commonly accepted hierarchy of values that does not bring successful results as regards the historico-salvific aspect. It is about complete reorganization of the hierarchy of priorities, consisting in restoring the first place for God and moral principles resulting from the Divine Revelation. Moral order, with its theological structure, corresponds to the natural order, which combines the beginning and the aim of human life. In other words, it is meaningful, since it leads human life in the Truth to be fulfilled in the Good. The adoption of the theological hierarchy of values means implementation of God's law into human life, the law which organizes human reality and history according to priorities that are indispensable for humankind and all of creation to reach the eschatic aim. The hierarchy of values that does not include God, without the priorities pointing at Him, leads to historico-salvific losses, therefore it is false, erroneous and illusory. The penance, to which the Fatima message calls, is related to the need to modify the mentality towards the holiness-oriented approach, regardless of the accompanying sufferings, caused by historical conditions created in the anti-historico-salvific current.

Sanctity in the community

The visionaries talk about the suffering caused by persecutions against clergy representatives of various levels, and therefore the Church is seen at the same time as a community and an institution that takes a huge effort to convert the entire history to the salvific course. The person of Immaculate Mary, as the spiritual mother, offered to humanity by her own son, Jesus Christ, participates

in the process of involving the humanity into consequences of wrong deeds and rejection of God. Along with her, the ecclesial community of people involved into the act of “amending” human history by restoring the salvific trend, is composed of the Church authorities led by the Pope and Church members of all levels.

The Fatima message seems to convey a significant idea which refers to joining forces of all Church members in the process of restoring the salvific course in human history. The hagiological perspective of the Fatima message reveals this aspect, which exposes the sense of the community of saints – this community should be created, developed and cultivated, since only a united strength of saints can bring the historico-salvific results.

Conclusions

The hagiological perspective has been developed on the basis of theological conclusions emerging from an interdisciplinary discussion, in which specialists present saint-related aspects, discovered in the examined sources. The application of this perspective to theological sources covering the content of Marian apparitions in Fatima made it possible to read the Fatima prophecy in the historico-salvific dimension.

The hagiological perspective of the Fatima message results from the moral evaluation of the generation of visionaries, showing that humanity is moving away from the course of history leading towards the heaven, i.e. deviates from the path towards the aim of the final destiny of each human being. The blame for such a situation should be placed on ideologies and social systems created on the basis of the anti-theological hierarchy of values. These systems dehumanize mankind to such an extent that history and culture formed upon them do not help people to reach the heaven, and even drag present and future generations towards hell. Repairing the consequences of historico-salvific errors of previous generations requires involvement of the entire ecclesial community, internally differentiated in terms of institutional tasks they fulfil, and internally unified with bonds of God’s love. This involvement consists in penance and reformation, which requires spiritual and existential effort towards becoming a saint and improving sanctity in oneself. The community of people doing penance and reformed is led by Immaculate Mary, as the spiritual mother and leader of all saints. The community of all saints, together with the members of the Church creating a current stage of history, conditions human history towards development of a salvific course, indispensable for the creation to reach its ultimate aim assigned to it by the Creator.

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Hagiologiczna perspektywa orędzia fatimskiego

Streszczenie: W artykule przedstawiono teologiczną treść orędzia fatimskiego w oparciu o założenia hagiologiczne. Analiza źródeł fatimskich, uwzględniająca aspekt badań hagiologicznych, pozwoliła stwierdzić, że świętość jest celem życia ludzkiego w historii, zaś dojrzeewa ona w osobie ludzkiej na etapie życia doczesnego. Historia ludzka powinna rozwijać nurt zbawczy przez współpracę człowieka z Bogiem na zasadzie relacji dialogicznych. W dialogu zbawienia Bóg obdarza

człowieka łaską niezbędną do tworzenia kultury sprzyjającej rozwojowi człowieczeństwa – czyli humanizującej. Aktywność dialogiczna człowieka oznacza postępowanie zgodne z teologalną hierarchią wartości. Efekty dialogicznej współpracy są dostrzegalne w humanizmie sprzyjającym doskonaleniu w osobie ludzkiej człowieczeństwa wzorowanego na człowieczeństwie Jezusa Chrystusa. Aspekt maryjny, w perspektywie hagiologicznej jawi się jako wskazówka określająca właściwy kierunek koniecznych zmian historiozbawczych.

Słowa kluczowe: Fatima, objawienia maryjne, wizjonerzy, badania interdyscyplinarne, teologia historiozbawcza.