**Argumentation Schemes in Media Coverage of Religious Topics**

**Media Coverage of the Removal of Archbishop Róbert Bezák from the Management of Trnava Archdiocese**

Terézia Rončáková

Faculty of Arts and Letters, Catholic University in Ružomberok, Slovakia, roncakova@ku.sk

**Abstract**

The paper focuses on the media coverage of religious topics and compares the coverage of these topics by secular and religious media. The media coverage is evaluated in terms of the classical rhetorical categories – the *topoi* – so as to arrive at the argumentation foundations of individual media messages. Based thereupon, the author draws conclusions as to how secular and religious media cover these topics, and points to the philosophical, personal background and value-driven assumptions of specific media environments and individuals who shape them.

The author examines the recent story of the Slovak Archbishop Róbert Bezák's dismissal from the management of the Archdiocese of Trnava. The paper examines the coverage of this story from its very beginning in June 2012 until today. The story had an unprecedented impact on the Slovak society and was heavily covered even by secular media, and therefore represents an optimal material for this type of research.

The research was conducted using the quantitative and qualitative content analysis method with a focus on examining the *topoi*. This ancient concept is currently experiencing a rebirth and is regarded by modern researchers as a very fruitful and efficient way to explore the intersection of the religious and media communication sphere.

**Keywords**

Media, religion, topoi, argumentation, Bezák

# Introduction

The academic debate on the intersection of media and religious communication has been around for more than three decades. Scholars and media analysts from both within and outside the academic sphere have so far provided a number of interesting findings and insights into the subject. One of them was the examination of argumentation foundations – i.e. the bases or roots of the persuasive arguments of communicators, or, stated differently, the underlying assumptions used by communicators to articulate their arguments. These foundations represent a common ground which the communicators believe they share with their audience.

From time to time, a church-related event catches the eye of the public and media and such events offer an exciting material for examining the subject.

In Slovakia, the removal of Archbishop Róbert Bezák in July 2012 was definitely one of such events. Ordained a priest back in 2009 at the age of 49, Bezák, a member of the Redemptorist order, has led the office of provincial for 12 years. He was regarded as a great preacher. In the diocese of Trnava, he replaced the infamous Archbishop Ján Sokol who resigned due to the age limitation of 75 years. Previously, Sokol had faced charges of misappropriation and mismanagement of the archdiocese, and had been criticized for his positive attitudes to the fascist wartime Slovak State. On the other hand, the then newly appointed Archbishop Bezák was regarded as a reformer, and his later removal caused disenchantment among the public with various groups organizing events for his support. All the above events were extensively covered by media, with unknown sources disclosing sensitive information such as personal correspondence of R. Bezák with the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops (including, among other documents, the notorious 11 questions of the congregation and Archbishop's answers to questions about his visiting public gyms, public showers, wearing jeans, meeting people with dubious background, implied homosexuality, etc.). In 2012, shortly before Christmas, in a series of television interviews, Bezák described his difficult situation, solitude, disappointment, his rejection by the bishop's conference (no one contacted him any more). He also pointed to several financial and other issues in the archdiocese, which he had to address while in office facing a strong opposition on the part of his colleagues. Bezák's appearance on television was later famously referred to as the 'media storm'. Moreover, the Vatican ordered Bezák to refrain from communicating with the media and Slovak bishops were eager to prevent him from providing public pastoral care. The church refused to disclose the reasons behind the removal – something which provided room for media speculations – ranging from

dubious financial flows in the archdiocese, money laundering (related to Vatileaks), to a different mindset (and age) of Bezák compared to other bishops.

In view of the conservative nature of Slovak religious scene, this was an unprecedented series of events, and led to some fundamental reflections on the nature of church community, forms of new evangelization, church financing, personal qualities of the members of hierarchy, and the situation of the Slovak church in general. This is why the author regards this particular case as optimal for the purpose of examining media communication about the Catholic Church and Christianity in general.

The question of the research was formulated as follows: What underlying argumentation foundations were used by secular and church media when transmitting their messages? This question was developed into the following sub-questions: What kind of (in)congruity can be observed in these two groups of argumentation schemes? Is there any room for effective communication of the church and the media, or, more specifically, is there any room for communication of the church through the media?

## Theoretical framework

When examining the argumentation foundations or schemes of (media) messages, one of the ancient instruments of the classical theory of rhetoric seems specifically suitable for this purpose. Therefore, the so-called *loci* in Latin, i.e. places, or *topoi* in Greek, were used in this research. In Italian the term *luoghi comuni* is used (common places)[1], and can be translated as shared ideas, or shared assumptions.

[1] Or, alternatively, *luoghi argomentativi tipici* (typical argumentation places), to avoid the confusing clash with the negative connotation of the term *luogho comune*.

In reference to Cicero's *Orator* and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, N. González Gaitano defines topoi as "types of arguments used in each argumentation, which – in rather technical sense – work as questions, which facilitate the search for arguments and counter-arguments" (2008: 12). The translation of the term *topoi* as 'common places' is derived from Cicero's account[1] of *topoi* as 'intuitive places of the mind,' i.e. generally accepted knowledge, which allows the members of a certain social community to understand each other (1998: 46). *Topoi* allow the formation of enthymemes, known in rhetoric as incomplete syllogisms, i.e. syllogisms with unstated assumptions or conclusion (Cantoni & Di Blas, 2006: 193). In this process, it is the *topoi* "which enable the laying of the foundations of values in its hierarchy", and thus, "these are the pre-assumptions, which often remain hidden, and which form the underlying basis of most of our decisions" (González Gaitano, 2008: 12). N. González Gaitano states that in public discourse, it is the commonly shared 'roots' of the society that can be regarded as *topoi*. In that sense, one may distinguish natural *topoi* (anthropological) from cultural *topoi*.

*Topoi* have always been the basis of any public discourse not only in the times of Aristotle, but also today – with one distinction: the today's public discourse is facilitated and mediated by social communication means and all that is inherently connected with the phenomenon of media (commercial interest, specific use of language, professional routine, economic and political pressures). However, even today, the Aristotle's guidance as to argumentation and persuasion is still relevant: "For argument based on knowledge implies instruction, and there are people whom one cannot instruct. Here, then, we must use, as our modes of persuasion and argument, notions possessed by everybody, as we observed in the Topics when dealing with the way to handle a popular audience." (1994: 1335 a).

Thus, *topoi* can be conceived as argumentation schemes. „Some of them are based on logical-semantical properties and are necessarily true; other are only plausible" (Walton et al., 2008: 307). As suggested by D. Walton, C. Reed and F. Macagno, the classical heritage on topics

was forgotten and ignored for centuries, and only with modern argumentation studies have these works been inquired into again and applied to the new discipline.

The first application of the ancient rhetoric method in modern media research can be found in M. Silk (1995) and his research of appeal and coverage of religious topics in media. His content analysis has led him to the following two conclusions:

1. the hypothesis of secularity of media was not proved;
2. socially-formed moral categories exist and they are respected also by journalists.

Thus, Silk rejects the common assumption that media have a secular bias. He also questions the way some scholars frame the discussion on media coverage of religious topics. According to Silk, it is time to move away from the metaphors of conflict, which have so far defined the public discourse on religious messages. Silk asserts we need more apt categories – capable of shifting the media coverage of religious topics closer to the context of the American history and culture.

Silk found such categories in the classical theory of rhetoric. He believed journalists make their decisions based on what he called the 'conventionalized story types', and concluded that for religious topics, the story types express certain moral attitudes, or *topoi,* rooted in the religious tradition of the West.

He specified seven of such *topoi*:

1. praise of good works;
2. support of tolerance;
3. contempt for hypocrisy;
4. warnings about false prophecy;
5. inclusion of all worthy religious others;

6. respect of faith in things unseen; and
7. concern about spiritual decline.

N. González Gaitano was the first to integrate the *topoi* and *frames* methodology in a specific case study (2009) (the *frames* methodology pertains to sociological research tradition, and no scholar attempted to combine these two traditions before Gaitano). As for *topoi*, N. González Gaitano questions Silk's *topoi* as employed in media discourse on religion and he describes Silk's explanations – or at least part of them – as being "more than questionable" (2010: 36). Gaitano acknowledges Silk's primacy as for the first use of the old Greek rhetoric method to analyze current media discourse, but at the same time finds his approach unsystematic.

As Gaitano notes, his aim is to „to search for the *topoi*, *loci* or common places that provide the foundation of the public discourse about religion, and specifically about the Catholic Church. These common places are generally explicit in editorials and assumed in narrative texts. They make up the "taken for granted" premises that allow for the common understanding of the meaning of any particular discourse, regardless of if it leads the audience to agree or disagree with the writer's or speaker's views (whether assumed or explicit)." (2009: 5).

Gaitano analyzed the news texts released shortly before Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the United States (14. 9. – 31. 12. 2007), as well as after the visit (1. 5. – 17. 7.), and arrived at 23 *topoi* categories:

1. "Fundamentalism" is inherent to religion: it leads to social conflicts, it goes against social moral standards of society, opposes science and moral progress, some of his tenets are unbearable and even unhealthy
2. Religious decline is endemic.
3. The Catholic Church is an earthly power (mostly in favor of the powerful)

4. The Catholic Church lacks democracy in its governing
5. Priests nevertheless aren't normal people
6. The clergy is frequently immoral
7. Hypocrisy is the worst corruption of true religion (moral scandal, sex abuse scandal, business in the temple) ("woe to you Pharisees")
8. Accountability for wrongdoing extends to clergy
9. Conflicts between religion and politics are inevitable ("Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's")
10. Nearness to people (true religion, real pastors are close to the people)
11. Religion is natural for man (public presence of religion, religious rituals, etc)
12. Religion is a source of cultural patrimony
13. Religion is functional for society (helps to solve social problems, causes social integration, is not a classist organization, religious commitment enhances public duties, cultivate youth, etc.)
14. Preferential option for the poor, the outcast of society
15. Prophetic role of religion (denouncing oppression or human right abuses)
16. True religion is opposed to racism or ethnic enmities ("love your enemies")
17. Faith makes a difference in life (brightness of particular lives, whether laymen or priest or religious: "shine forth", "nobody puts a lamp under…")
18. Religious awakening keeps happening (conversions, special religious commitments)
19. Religion is reasonable (reasons can be offered to support its tenets: apologetics)
20. Church is a sign of contradiction ("scandal of the Cross", "beatitudes" as opposed to a worldly mindset)
21. The Pope has an special moral authority
22. Anonymous generosity ("do not let your right hand know what your left gives")

23. Churchmen are generally candid in business affairs: “be candid as doves and prudent as serpents”.

Two of the *topoi* were particularly frequent:

- 55%: religion is natural in social life (the public presence of religion is taken for granted, it is not something to be argued),
- 29%: religion is useful in social life (religion has an impact on social wellbeing, whether by promoting social actions or, indirectly, through the improvement of its followers as citizens).

These were the remaining *topoi*:

- 17%: hypocrisy;
- 16%: faith transforms lives; and
- 13%: immoral clergy.

Within the Slovak context, an extensive research on *topoi* of church media texts was conducted using a variety of different topics (Rončáková, 2012). This research suggested the following six pairs of categories present in secular and religious discourse:

Secular media largely used the following argumentation schemes:

1. Values evolve (what is pleasant and allowed, what is good, etc.).
2. The church is outdated, she does not reflect people’s needs, limits freedom (she is rent-seeking and greedy).

3. Calls on the church to be perfect and a truly moral authority or model (defender of morality, should not be hypocritical, she should be close to people, communicative, sensitive, open, self-critical and humble).
4. Religion (spirituality) is necessary; provides uplift, encouragement, inspiration.
5. Desire for authentic values (love, happiness, virtues: magnanimity, solidarity, diligence).
6. Man and the value of man (value of freedom, equality, dignity of man, justice).

The following *topoi* could be identified in the church media:

1. Natural (or God's) law: without such a law, everything fails.
2. God and the church know and want the good of man.
3. Man needs God, the church, encouragement and comfort (God loves us and saved us).
4. Key values (love, happiness, human dignity; virtues as conditions to attain those values: mercy, humility, unity, solidarity, truthfulness, faithfulness, respect for others, purity...).
5. Man and the value of man (integrity of person: his dignity, grandeur, freedom).
6. Bias against the church.

The aforementioned research concluded that the (absence of) faith was the decisive factor here: what is shared based on faith and trust cannot be effectively applied in an environment of absent faith or distrust.

## Methodology

This research is based on a content analysis of media inputs from all Slovak nation-wide secular media including specialty and regional press. The *Katolícke noviny* (Catholic

newspaper) weekly was used as a benchmark, since in Slovakia, it takes on the characteristics of an official press body of the Catholic Church.

Media were analyzed for a period of one year from the beginning of the story in June 2012 until the first anniversary of the Archbishop's removal (2 July 2013). Thus, the number of analyzed texts has reached 976 and 15 in secular media and *Katolícke noviny*, respectively. The sample of secular media included 41 print media, radio broadcasts, television news and news websites, thereof 18 media accounted for at least 1% of the total number of analyzed texts:

**Table 1**

| | **Name** | **Description** | **Number of texts** | **Share (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Nový Čas | Tabloid | 139 | 14 |
| 2. | SME | Respected daily | 137 | 14 |
| 3. | Pravda | Respected daily | 103 | 11 |
| 4. | Plus 1 deň | Tabloid | 78 | 8 |
| 5. | Aktuality.sk | Respected news website | 64 | 7 |
| 6. | Hospodárske noviny | Respected daily with economic focus | 58 | 6 |
| 7. | 24hod.sk | Respected website | 56 | 6 |
| 8. | Markíza | Commercial television | 45 | 5 |
| 9. | TA3 | Commercial news television | 45 | 5 |
| 10. | Trnavské noviny | Regional weekly in Trnava | 33 | 3 |
| 11. | Slovenský rozhlas | Public radio broadcast | 29 | 3 |
| 12. | Slovenská televízia | Public television broadcast | 27 | 3 |
| 13. | Týždeň | Respected politics and society weekly | 21 | 2 |
| 14. | Plus 7 dní | Tabloid politics and society weekly | 17 | 2 |
| 15. | Šport | Sports news weekly | 15 | 2 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16. | Televízia Joj | Commercial television | 14 | 1 |
| 17. | Košický Korzár | Regional daily in Košice | 14 | 1 |
| 18. | Topky.sk | Tabloid news website | 14 | 1 |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Daily newspaper and news websites |
| | Television |
| | Radio |
| | Weekly newspaper |
| | Regional newspaper |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Tabloid media |
| | Respected media |

Each text was analyzed to identify all underlying argumentation schemes. As suggested by N. González Gaitano, "Ascertaining the particular *topos* in play requires more inductive process and generalization, and the result can be discussed on the basis of the "marks" rendered by the author in the text: style, hints, words chosen, metaphors, etc." (2009: 15). The identified *topoi* were then grouped into categories using the qualitative analysis.[2]

## Argumentation schemes in secular media

The argumentation schemes in secular media were divided into 14 groups:

**Table 2**

| | **Category name** | **Number of texts** | **Share (%)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Justice | 343 | 35% |
| 2. | Openness | 336 | 34% |
| 3. | Transparency | 257 | 26% |
| 4. | Solidarity | 233 | 24% |
| 5. | Personality | 155 | 16% |

[2] The collected material also allows an in-depth qualitative analysis (date, genre, charge – positive, negative or neutral – as well as topical categories were recorded and encoded using the statistical software SPSS), however such an analysis would be outside the scope of this study.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6. | Malevolence | 63 | 6% |
| 7. | Right to information | 57 | 6% |
| 8. | False witness | 55 | 6% |
| 9. | Intrigues | 48 | 5% |
| 10. | Conflict | 30 | 3% |
| 11. | Truth | 24 | 2% |
| 12. | Feelings | 23 | 2% |
| 13. | Lies | 17 | 2% |
| 14. | Other | 60 | 6% |

**Justice**

The argumentation foundations grouped under the term "injustice" were employed by authors convinced that R. Bezák was a victim of iniquity. A considerable part of these authors called for redress, exoneration, vindication. Some of these arguments tended to include feelings of sympathy for a humiliated person, solitude, pain and misfortune of one's fellow. The authors condemned the denial of the person's right to self-defense, unfair treatment, betrayal, plot, libel, attack on good reputation, etc. It could be also described as disagreement with destruction of a person's life or career.

**Openness**

The argumentation foundation of "openness" consisted of two argumentation lines: firstly, it includes an assumption that it is right to be accessible, understandable and attractive, and, secondly, it is wrong to be withdrawn, isolated and uncommunicative. However, both views unanimously called for more openness. Positively biased assertions were related to the person of R. Bezák, negative views, on the other hand, were targeted at other bishops or the church as a whole. Nearness to people, kindness, normality, empathy, inner truthfulness, humility and humaneness, were praised as 'good'. On the other hand, plots of the powerful, forced or blind obedience, authoritarian conduct without natural authority, absence of love, harshness (toward R. Bezák and those with different views in general), rigidity, hypocrisy, deceitfulness,

coldness, formalism – these qualities were warned against and labeled as ‘evil’. It should be noted that rather often the authors wrote about a ‘Teflon’ church, i.e. about her deafness and blindness to any stimuli from outside, where criticism ricochets off a non-reactive, non-stick surface. Other authors also pointed to the fear of the church – fear to be more open, but also fear from R. Bezák himself and his evangelization style.

**Transparency**

The key argument of this category can be described as follows: “Lack of financial transparency is dubious”. This argument pointed to a well-rooted belief of Western societies that anything hidden or confidential cannot be all right. The media outputs subject to analysis were full of disdain for such practice in the church. One of the associated arguments was an assumption that stealing is wrong (it is wrong not to pay taxes, profiteering is immoral, etc.), or that money-laundering is wrong. The church was also described as unwilling or unfit to effectively and reasonably manage her affairs. Some authors blamed the church for serving Mammon and denounced her acquisitiveness. One text summarized the arguments under the term ‘spirit of Judas’ dangerously present in Christ’s community.

**Solidarity**

The argumentation foundation of ‘solidarity’ also points to two different directions of thought: approval of solidarity and criticism of its absence. Solidarity of the faithful toward the dismissed Archbishop was presented as good. The authors pointed to the fact that it is plausible to show sympathy, kindness to those who are treated unfairly, and it is a good thing to take interest in his situation, story or fate. On the other hand, keeping silent was presented as a weakness, an act of injustice, lack of collegiality, treachery, absence of love.

**Personality**

Arguments were summarized under the heading ‘personality’ where it was clear that the authors decided to cover the topic due to the significance of the given person. This is a typical news value, i.e. an element which makes certain topic attractive for journalists. This could be a person with a relatively high social status unfit to manage his or her office, or interesting for different reasons. Such texts are not based on an authentic effort to extend one’s knowledge of facts or to evaluate the reality, but on a superficial interest in the lives of prominent figures. In this research, this type of texts also covered personalities other than R. Bezák, especially those who at certain points played some role in this story: Slovak bishops (13 texts, 8%), nuncio (6 texts, 4%), or Ján Čarnogurský Sr., a well-known lawyer and former dissident (5 texts, 3%). Overall, there were 24 (15 %) instances of texts covering persons other than Bezák.

**Malevolence**

Texts based on argumentation foundation titled ‘malevolence’ denounced stupidity and malignant nature of those who tried to injure R. Bezák. They pointed to their narrow-mindedness, wickedness, and blamed them for leading the whole matter into this embarrassing situation unworthy of the church community. This argument was mainly related to the ‘11 questions’ (correspondence of R. Bezák with the Vatican’s Congregation for Bishops).

**Right to information**

The texts assigned to this category were based on a kind of defiance of the confidentiality of others. The texts included connotations of rejection of such limitation of freedom. Within the context of this kind of beliefs, it was taken as granted that the reasons for removal should be disclosed and anything hidden clarified. The authors were outraged by the limitation of freedom of speech (instruction of R. Bezák to remain silent). They argued that the public has

the right to be informed about anything financed from taxes: anything paid by the government should be publicly disclosed.

**False witness**

Although the arguments assigned to other categories also included reservations to the church (especially in terms of openness and transparency), this category was populated by texts, which appealed to immorality within the church from a different perspective. Their common denominator was the scandal of evil within the church and call for redress. This type of arguments contained a desire for restoration of credibility and authority of the church. This position was characterized by outrage over the desire for power, envy, lies, corruption, lack of self-criticism. The church was regarded as internally sick, burnt out and corrupted thing. The tendency to place unity above the truth in particular caused much disagreement.

**Intrigue**

The arguments grouped under the heading ‘intrigue’ were based on an assumption that the removal of R. Bezák was a nasty move or a hit below the belt, or, a fraud. Moreover, such a conspiracy resulting from lies, corruption and envy was regarded as especially bad within the church environment.

**Conflict**

Just like the argument based on „personality“, the argument based on ‘conflict‘, is also one of the traditional news values. Based on superficial and rigid evaluation of the reality, the story was presented as a conflict between good and evil, in this case, R. Bezák against J. Sokol, or the other Slovak bishops, or, in some cases, even the Pope. These texts emphasized the fact that Slovak bishops disliked R. Bezák and did not accept him from the very beginning.

**Truth**

The authors referring to the ‘truth‘ have often discussed the value of truth as such. The truth is something to be pursued, and the truth is worth more than unity; the truth makes us free, without the truth we lose our credibility, secrecies are dubious. The truth was often depicted in juxtaposition to fear: the truth is good, fear from the truth is bad.  And again, similar to other kind of arguments, it was a common understanding that the presence of the truth is of particular importance in the church.

**Feelings**

Feelings were at the basis of texts shortly after the removal and copied the emotions of the protesting believers: shock, sadness, pain, disillusion, confusion, disappointment, discouragement, offense. There were also some accounts of transcendent evil, which has acted in this world. Less transcendently-oriented authors expressed feelings of absurdity (compared to *Catch XXII*).

**Lies**

The scandal of lying was often associated with the arguments on transparency and injustice (specifically libel). It was based on a simple assumption that lying is wrong – especially within the church.

**Other**

Other arguments most notably included ‘expulsion’ (9 texts). These texts founded their argument on an assumption that those with above-average qualities are usually knocked down by the rest. The bearers of such qualities are rejected, prophets are beaten or killed, visionaries are ostracized, etc. These texts pointed to the fact that (even) the church likes to oust the critical minority and through a kind of self-defensive reflex tends to expel the unwanted element.

## Argumentation schemes in *Katolícke noviny* weekly

The analysis of *Katolícke noviny* brought about 15 texts for the year divided into six categories of argumentation schemes:

**Table 3**

| | Category | Number of texts | Share (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Obedience | 10 | 67% |
| 2. | Lack of understanding | 6 | 40% |
| 3. | Lies | 4 | 27% |
| 4. | Crisis | 3 | 20% |
| 5. | Unity | 3 | 20% |
| 6. | Right to information | 2 | 13% |

**Obedience**

Definitely the most widely used category of arguments included two basic argumentation lines: authority and trust. The former was based on obedience derived from the authority of the Pope. The authors did not feel necessary to clarify or develop this idea and limited themselves to a statement that this was a decision of the Holy Father or a matter of papal secrecy. The latter type of obedience was based on trust toward the Pope and bishops: they are kind, they do everything they can for our good even if we sometimes do not understand them and we trust them. The proponents of this position called for humility, self-reflection, willingness to accept the opinion of the authority (Holy Father). Authors regarded the whole story as closed, and any attempts to develop it further were regarded as a demonstration of defiance or pride.

**Lack of understanding**

The argumentation of texts within this category was based on a feeling of rejection and loneliness of bishops in their correct attitudes, as opposed to the lack of understanding on the part of the public opinion, media or society. The authors worked with assumptions that the public opinion is wrong, media tend to manipulate facts, critics do not know the exact state of affairs, (e.g. they regard Archbishop Zvolenský as a careerist, but anyone who knows him personally must be convinced that the opposite is true). The tabloid press was specifically criticized and regarded as an element which stands against the truth and justice. The dumb masses were presented as intolerant or even as a mindless herd. Engagement of this kind of people in the case of R. Bezák was regarded as evidence that there is something wrong with their position.

**Lies**

This argumentation scheme was based on a simple assumption that lying is bad. It was argued that R. Bezák and media lie.

**Crisis**

The argument of crisis expressed an assumption that every crisis is at the same time a challenge and opportunity for growth. An evil can turn into good provided that it is accepted in humility, faith and trust: for the Almighty knows what He does and things have a deeper meaning, which only He knows about. This argument was employed in neutral texts (all other texts were negative about R. Bezák).

**Unity**

The argumentation scheme of unity emphasized the value of peace, cohesion, brotherly love and reconciliation. Division within the church was presented as bad and unity with the church as key and superior to any personal interest or injustice. (This implied that questioning the

fairness and correctness of the decision on the removal of R. Bezák was regarded as a divisive action and a demonstration of distrust toward the church.)

**Right to information**

This type of arguments was based on an underlying assumption that a right to all information does not exist; conversely, keeping some of the information secret. is good. Men have a right to confidentiality of a specific piece of information, privacy and protection of one's good reputation. Thus, the calls for transparency in that context were rendered unjustifiable.

## Comparison

The comparison of individual argumentation schemes used in secular and church environment resulted in an almost zero intersection. The argumentation in these two environments is fundamentally different as they transmit their messages as if on different wave lengths.

A clear intersection was identified only in two cases: both lists include the notion of 'lies' and the 'right to information'. As to the former, both sides agree that lying is wrong, the only difference is which party is regarded as the one which lies – the hierarchy or R. Bezák. As for the right to information, the two views are clearly contradictory: one party assumes that in principle, transparency is a good thing, the other party does not. However, it should be noted that both of these arguments are rather insignificant.

Perhaps a more interesting intersection can be found at a deeper level of thought. Indeed, a more profound reflection of the identified schemes reveals certain affinities at the root of their arguments:

justice, solidarity  crisis

openness, transparency ⟷ lack of understanding, unity

From among the most frequently used arguments, ‘obedience’ was the one that remained completely isolated.

**Table 4**

| | **about R. Bezák** | **about the church** |
|---|---|---|
| **Secular media** | Justice | Openness |
| | Solidarity | Transparency |
| **Catholic weekly** | Crisis | Lack of understanding |
| | Obedience | Unity |

Arguments targeted at the person of the dismissed Archbishop imply that the secular environment regarded him as a victim of injustice, which deserved an expression of solidarity and support. In the church environment, no such calls were identified, however, one might see a hint in the argument of ‘crisis’. A crisis is something difficult, demanding, painful, so may somehow acknowledge that R. Bezák also found himself in such a situation. The official Catholic weekly, however, leaves no room for speculation as to whether the punishment of the person was justifiable, or whether Bezák‘s human dignity remained intact. These considerations were only regarded as secondary because regardless of justice and dignity, there was a chance of ‘winning’. It was therefore important to stand the test, i.e. to accept the situation as God’s will and give up on one’s own concepts, claims or desires. These rather sophisticated arguments and hardly transferable constructs were supported biblically through the quote ‘whoever loses his life will find it’.

The argument of obedience remained completely isolated compared to other arguments aimed at the person of R. Bezák. It seems that the secular environment did not accept obedience as an argument at all. We have only found the argument in a negligible number of texts (within the category of ‘other’), moreover, in that particular case, the argument was mentioned in a different context, as part of a quoted text of a church declaration, and not as an original

journalistic input. Within the Church media, however, the appeal to respect and trust toward the authority can be identified as the most effective and most persuasive argument.

With respect to the church, or in this case the church hierarchy, the arguments of openness and transparency stand in opposition to the arguments of lack of understanding and unity. The secular sphere very clearly demands from the church a sense of lucidity, accessibility and nearness to people; the religious sphere, on the other hand, presents feelings of expulsion and the need of internal coherence and mutual support. But still, despite these contradictions, a parallel can be found: the world sees the representatives of the church as isolated and the representatives of the church themselves feel exactly so.

In that context, one may also point to a less striking secular argument of 'truth', since it explicitly pertains to unity. Secular media claim that the church gives more emphasis on unity and makes it superior to the truth – something which the secular media view as something very negative and harmful. The argumentation on the part of the church media fails to address this contradiction.

It is interesting that these arguments – although they pertain to the church – at the same time refer to R. Bezák. Whereas the church is depicted as closed and lacking transparency, Archbishop Bezák is regarded as open and transparent. This contradiction reveals a significant finding: R. Bezák is regarded by the secular environment within the intersection of the requirements placed on the church from inside and from outside, and his name remains in the secular language as a symbol of 'new patch on an old sack'. Here, one could also deduce the reason for his expulsion from the 'body' of the Slovak church.

## Discussion

The comparison of our findings against the conclusions of M. Silk, N. González Gaitano as well as our own previous research leads us to three basic findings:

1. this case does not have an ideological charge;
2. it is not related to religion, but rather to the church as an institution;
3. the church argumentation abandoned the *topos* of the value of man.

Therefore, the overall argumentation has a substantially more worldly nature: it does not lead to ideological disputes and the *topoi* on evolution of values and natural (God's) law is missing. (Rončáková, 2012: 472-473). Conversely, the argument of financial transparency is emphasized, and this was also observed by N. González Gaitano. However, where Gaitaino observes the assumption that "Churchmen are generally candid in business affairs" (2009: 21), this story shows a completely different picture.

At the same time, in this story, the object of argumentation was not religious faith as such (natural, useful, having impact on lives and activities), but rather the representatives of the church, hierarchy (bishops, Pope, the Vatican). The attention of media focused mainly on witness of the church as presented by the relevant parties. All previously mentioned researches have, to a certain extent, identified the *topos* of hypocrisy, and this case also confirms the outrage of the world over hypocrisy within the church, which N. González Gaitano affirms by stating that "hypocrisy is the worst corruption of true religion". In this research, one can also identify Gaitano's *topos* of (calling for) nearness to people and Silk's *topoi* of concern about spiritual decline and praise for good works. A new *topos* specific to this context, is the call for openness of the church (lucidity, humaneness, 'normality').

Arguments used by the church weekly in this story have zero intersection with M. Silk and almost zero intersection with N. González Gaitano, with some touching points in the *topoi* of

specific moral authority of the Pope and the church as a sign of contradiction. The religious *topoi* match with those from our earlier research except for two points: they do not pertain to natural (God's) law (already justified above), nor do they pertain to man and his value. The latter finding is even more interesting, because the *topos* of value and dignity of human person was excluded from the church argumentation in a situation where the worldly discourse perceived the unjust treatment of an innocent man as one of the key issues at play. The church environment decided to ignore this aspect completely.[3]

## Conclusion

Following the above remarks, the last research question still remains unanswered. Is there any room for congruity of the church and media argumentation schemes? In the previous research it was concluded that the decisive turning point and inevitable cause of lack of understanding between the religious and secular world is the (absence of) faith. This situation was compared to a transmission of messages on two different wave lengths: those without faith simply do not 'receive' messages transmitted on the wave lengths of faith. However, in the subject matter of the current research, personal faith proved to be irrelevant, except for a rather marginal argument that God would reward a humble sufferer and turns everything to good.

Conversely, the discourse took place outside the religious sphere and humanity turned out to be the key aspect. Personal witness of the relevant parties was perceived through the lens of accessibility, amiability, lucidity, kindness, human goodness, selflessness, and magnanimity. Archbishop R. Bezák was perceived as a bearer of these qualities and those who expelled him

[3] For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that the necessity to maintain confidentiality of the reasons for removal was defended by the church media using the argument of respect to good reputation of the injured party. Thus, it could be concluded that the argument of the value of man was, in fact, partially mentioned, however, in a completely different context than in the secular media: the question of guilt or justice was not explored, but guilt was taken as granted: "we cannot disclose the reasons because they are so (bad) that they would do (even more) harm to the accused".

from their community were regarded as the opposite. The previous research concluded that "even the negative attitudes to the church and her message can be interpreted positively, and thus arrived at common *topos* in order to build communication thereupon – since any criticism of something negative is at the same time a call for the positive." (Rončáková, 2011: 95). This conclusion from the previous research may be affirmed. The story of R. Bezák provided room for loud criticism of what the church should not be – but it also acknowledged what the church should be. This study does not address the question whether such criticism of injustice, inhumanness, harshness, withdrawnness, corruption, etc is legitimate in the particular case of the removal of Archbishop Bezák. The aim of this study was to discover and articulate the relevant argumentation schemes. On the side of the church, we have identified almost a completely different set of argumentation foundations. This implies that the communicating parties did not attempt to overcome the existing mutual misunderstanding. The above study is intended for those interested in approaching the other side and presents an analysis of the argumentation schemes so as to provide a basis for such an undertaking.

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