Alexander Men’s view of human search for God in the world religions in the light of the Catholic magisterial teaching

Introduction

Alexander Vladimirovich Men (Rus. Александр Владимирович Мень) (1935–1990) was one of the most productive pastors in the Russian Orthodox Church of the 20th century. The range of his pastoral work includes written material (books, articles, letters, interviews), public lectures, sermons, private talks in small groups of Christians, and recorded private conversations with different individuals. Only books and public lectures are fully available to research in either published or Internet version. The remaining part of his pastoral legacy is accessible only in part, since not all of it was transcribed from audiotapes, and some of it was not even taped. Alexander Men’s concept of the religious developments of humanity in the systematic way is presented in two main sources – his six-volume history of religions V poiskax Puti, Istini i Zhizni (In Search of the Way, the Truth and the Life), and the series of eight lectures called Mirovaya duxovnaya kultura (Spiritual Culture of the World). The series of lectures were publicly given in Moscow during the last two and a half years of his life. The main themes of the lectures coincide with the themes of the six-volume work. Naturally, they present the material in a much abbreviated and simplified form. In general, Fr Alexander’s legacy contains sufficient material to see a coherent and detailed picture of his vision of the world religions.
Fr Men in his history of religions gives ample attention to humankind’s search for God. He sees it as essentially belonging to the human nature: “*Man always strives after God.* Normal state of man – to be in one or another degree related to the Highest, to the Ideal. Even when this ideal is distorted, impoverish in the consciousness of man. Even when it is turned altogether into something profane. And yet the period of Stalinism, Maoism (Rus. маоцзедуизм) and other ‘isms’ showed, that a man, who was forcibly deprived of God, still strives after pseudo-God. He substitutes idolatry for the true faith, and nevertheless the instinct of striving after God remains”\(^1\). Alexander Men carefully traces how this aspiration towards God and the ultimate matters expressed itself in different world religions, how it increased or decreased under various influences.

According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, the human person could be described as “a religious being”\(^2\), because, as history continuously witnesses, he in one way or another always searches for God. On the other hand, this search is never just a human aspiration, for God “never ceases to call every man to seek him”\(^3\). Consequently, the search for God is a result of cooperation of both God and man – it is man’s response to God’s invitation. Desire and search for God is closely related to the question of salvation of non-Catholics. One of the fundamental statements in this respect was made by Vatican II constitution *Lumen gentium*: “Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless *seek God with a sincere heart*, and moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation”\(^4\). Declaration *Dignitatis humanae* views the search for God as a part of the proper attitude towards the truth: “Especially in those things that concern God and his Church, all persons are required to seek the truth, and when they come to know it, to embrace it and hold fast to it”\(^5\). Similarly, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explicitly indicates that the obedience to the truth is closely related to achieving salvation: “Those who obey the promptings of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation”\(^6\). In general, the Catholic doctrine emphasises

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\(^3\) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, New Hope 1994, sect. 30.

\(^4\) *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church “Lumen gentium”*, Boston 1964, sect. 16, emphasis added.

\(^5\) *Declaration on religious freedom “Dignitatis humanae”*, Washington 1965, sect. 1.

the importance of the authentic search for God as part of man’s obligation to seek the truth.

This article will concentrate on how Alexander Men viewed man’s search for God as it is seen in different world religions. Its purpose is to evaluate if Men’s understanding of this search is in line with the position articulated in the conciliar and post-conciliar magisterial documents of the Catholic Church.

Alexander Men’s notion of the search for God as the basis of religion

The Catechism of the Catholic Church indicates, that the phenomenon of religion itself is an expression of human search for God: “In many ways, throughout history down to the present day, men have given expression to their quest for God in their religious beliefs and behaviour: in their prayers, sacrifices, rituals, meditations, and so forth”. “All religions bear witness to men’s essential search for God”. Search for God is at the centre of Men’s vision of the history of religions. The phenomenon of religion itself is viewed by him as an expression of this search, for he defines religion in general as an attempt to restore the broken relationship with God: “Religion, that is a restoration of a connection between man and God, starts in the history of mankind after the Fall. … There is no need to link what is united; a link occurs as a result of an attempt to overcome a rupture”.

As Fr Men notes, the capacity to partially know God and desire for a relationship with Him survived in humanity after the Fall, and expressed itself through multiplicity of religions. “The greatness and beauty of history of human search for the God they lost consists in the fact that man always felt dissatisfaction, and never (consciously or not) forgot the ‘country of Paradise’ which he had left”. This dissatisfaction resulted in the unceasing search for God. Alexander Men shows how in all the variety of the world religions, this quest for God is inevitably present, even though it is mixed and sometimes almost expelled by religious elements, coming from human striving after lesser goods. In the religions of the world Men discerns both positive aspirations towards God and negative tenden-

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7 Catechism of the Catholic Church, sect. 28.
8 Ibidem, sect. 2566.
10 Ibidem, p. 20.
cies of revolt against Him: “On the one hand, degradation and eclipse of Truth is found, but on the other hand – there is also the way of rising”\textsuperscript{11}. Side by side with the authentic search for God and authentic religious insights, Fr Alexander indicates the threatening presence of human sinfulness, which had a variety of religious expressions. In the centre of this religious degradation, he sees magic as a sinful attempt to control both material and spiritual worlds with the aim of autonomous self-assertion\textsuperscript{12}. A world-view based on the belief in the supremacy of magic is called by Men \textit{magism}\textsuperscript{13}. Men sees magism as an opposition of religion or even as its parasite\textsuperscript{14}. This started exactly with the Fall of man: “The desire to be like God” separated man from the Source of Life and made him a slave of demons and elements. This produced polytheism, and also nurtured magic, or the magical world view. \textit{Magism} perceived working some unchanging laws and forces in the Universe, dominion over which presumably promised welfare to man. … Authentic religious thirst, however, was alien to \textit{magism}\textsuperscript{15}. Fr Men views the whole history of religions as an unceasing struggle between this attitude of revolt against God and an authentic search for God\textsuperscript{16}, as God calls man to Himself. According to Men, elements of this striving, as well as temptations to seek magical control, are present in all religions. The struggle between these two constitutes an essential feature in Alexander Men’s vision of the world religions. In general, Alexander Men’s notion of the search for God as the basis of religion is in line with the Catholic position on this issue.

Alexander Men’s concept of religious leader’s role in the search for God

In his writings, Alexander Men gives ample attention to individual religious leaders – both to their personalities and their activities. Men views individual religious leaders as actively influencing religious developments, while

\textsuperscript{11} Ibidem, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{13} Idem, \textit{Trudni put k dialogu}, Moskva 2001, p. 135–136. Men invests the word “magism” with specific meaning, namely, in his works it is a term to denote a particular world view. This is signified in the present paper by italicisation of the word.
the masses of the population play a more passive role: “Any age reveals that, as a rule, the 'masses' either constitute a conservative milieu that preserves the old beliefs, or become a combustible material that flares up from the fire that is brought close. Every creative impulse towards the new perspectives and ideas always issues from personalities. [It is because] they accumulate in themselves the experience of the ages and the aspirations of whole generations”\textsuperscript{17}.

Comparatively few individual religious leaders from before the beginning of the last millennium B.C. are described in Men’s history of religions. The main reason for this can be the scarcity of historical evidence, so that a historian of religions can discern only the most general processes. Besides, there can also be another reason, which comes from Men’s concept of the history of religions as an expression of man’s struggle against \textit{magism}. In this struggle Men sees magical tendencies as opposing both individual creativity and individuality in general: “It is the development of personhood that enables mankind’s progress. Unfortunately, for many millennia the coming of ‘the fullness of times’ was hindered by \textit{magism} … [It] paralysed man’s creative energies and his religious genius, for it is only in the awareness of personal responsibility and spiritual freedom that man finds his supreme calling”\textsuperscript{18}. According to Men, \textit{magism} dominated religious life until the beginning of the last millennium B.C.\textsuperscript{19}, and this might be one of the reasons why we know only few religious leaders before that time. Men says that individuals always played an active role, but, unfortunately, “the poets, sculptors and painters of the ancient world … were too much attached to tradition, and did not dare to oppose it”\textsuperscript{20}. While stressing the active role of individual personalities, Men acknowledges the interdependence that existed between them and their milieu: “an individual genius impregnates … the formless elements of tradition and [he also] creates something new. It is certainly hard to imagine theology, philosophy or art outside … the popular consciousness, which feeds them as soil does the roots of plants. On the other hand, without the organising power of individual reasoning, these elements are doomed to remain barren”\textsuperscript{21}.

Alexander Men in his works on the world religions describes a broad spectrum of religious leaders – from major founders and reformers of world religions

\textsuperscript{19} Idem, \textit{V poiskax Puti, Istini i Zhizni}, vol. 6, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{20} Idem, \textit{Sin Chelovecheskiy}, p. 351.
(such as Buddha and Zoroaster), to persons who made much smaller impact on religious developments (e.g., the Egyptian priests of the third millennium B.C., and guru Patanjali of the second century B.C.). Beside individual religious leaders, Men also describes some groups that performed religious leadership in their societies. To them the phrase “corporate religious leaders” will be attached for the purpose of analysis in this paper. Such groups include, for example, the shamans of prehistoric religions, and the Aryan rishis during the second millennium B.C. According to Father Men, corporate religious leaders often display stronger tendency towards magism than individual ones. As it has already been shown, this is because Men understands magism as antagonistic to the person’s independence from his or her milieu. Consequently, the corporate religious leaders that managed to break from the grip of magism tended to become individual religious leaders, while those under its stronger influence remained among the corporate ones.

Men often views the corporate religious leaders as freer from magism than the general population. Such situation, for example, is found among the Egyptian priests of the third millennium B.C.: “Although their service to gods was often intertwined with magic, they very early began to tend towards a purer cult … Egyptian priests reflected on the mysteries of the world and did not feel content with the primitive paganism of the masses”\(^{22}\). However, Men points out that the corporate religious leaders often chose elitist distance from the masses and did not help them to overcome magism. For example, “Egyptian priests and Indian Brahmins [locked themselves away in] proud castes”\(^{23}\). In some less frequent cases, the corporate religious leaders are portrayed as supporters of magism. For example, the role of the Egyptian pharaohs during 4\(^{th}\)–2\(^{nd}\) millennia B.C. is viewed by Men mostly as an expression of magism’s tendency to deify rulers: “The Pharaoh concentrated in his hands authority over the whole Universe, over the elements and the people … This came as a logical conclusion of the journey started by humankind when it gave in to the temptation ‘to be like gods’ … This distortion of religious consciousness led to the deification … of a sorcerer”\(^{24}\).

However, a mixed situation is much more frequent: the corporate religious leaders may strengthen the magical tendencies in some areas and oppose them in others. A vivid example is the prehistoric shamans. For Men, they represent both


\(^{23}\) Ibidem, p. 418. Men mentions similar problem in regard to other groups of the non-biblical religious leaders as well.

the self-centeredness of magism and some higher aspirations, too. On the one hand, “the whole of shamanistic mysticism is trying to insist that the spiritual world has to be mastered by man and forced to serve him”\textsuperscript{25}. On the other hand, side by side with this predominant tendency Men detects some aspects in shamanism that have contributed towards positive religious developments: “Shamanism resisted the decrease of man’s spiritual powers and trained his ‘interior vision’”\textsuperscript{26}. In summary, Men views religious leaders as actively influencing religious developments of humanity. According to him, this influence had great variety of forms and could not be described as unambiguously positive or negative.

Prayer as an expression of human striving after God

The search for God and the desire for God are essentially related to prayer, which is one of their expressions. This relationship between prayer and the desire for God is highlighted by the \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}: “Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him”\textsuperscript{27}. Prayer is part of man’s fundamental relationship with God: “From the very circumstance of his origin man is already invited to converse with God”\textsuperscript{28}.

Fr Men devoted considerable attention to the prayer aspect in the world religions. According to him, prayer often was an expression of man’s authentic search for God. For example, the Sumerian-Akkadian period in Mesopotamia is viewed by Fr Alexander as a situation of prevailing magism. There, according to him, it was through personal spiritual life that man managed to break through blocks of magism and to strive for a relationship with God: “Through this personal religiousness man was finding the way out of the kingdom of demons and laws, sorcerers and kings, destruction and death, absurdity and despair”\textsuperscript{29}. In one of the texts of Sumerian period Men discerns “awakening desire for God, living prayer, different from the magic of spells. These prayers

\textsuperscript{25} Ibidem, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibidem, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}, sect. 2560.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World “Gaudium et Spes”}, Washington 1965, sect. 19.
in increasing frequency appear in the Akkadian period. No matter how was called God towards whom man stretched his hands … this was the true God”

According to Fr Alexander, the desire for God in human heart overcame barriers of magical world view, and man managed to address the true God, even though He was given names of pagan deities. This insight could be compared to the assertion of John Paul II, that “every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart”

This statement was made in reference to the interreligious meeting in Assisi, where representatives of different world religions were convoked by the Pope to pray together for peace. John Paul II affirms that the authentic prayer can be present also among non-Christians. From the Catholic perspective, the effort to truly address God in prayer is inspired by God Himself, for it is He who “never ceases to draw man to himself”

On the other hand, Fr Men does not consider every prayer to be authentic, since not every prayer is addressed to the true God: “Naturally, a heathen who worships the spirit of his ancestor somewhere in the Central Africa does not worship our God, not at all”

In some cases a prayer can by partially authentic, as Men explains in the case of Aryan sages: “Praying to Varuna Aryan rishi emotionally perceived him as the true God, but rationally comprehended Varuna just as … a son of Eternity, subordinate to Rita”

In summary, Father Alexander Men’s view of prayer as an expression of human striving after God is in line with the Catholic position on this issue.

Magism as an opposition to the search for God

Besides pointing out the elements of goodness and truth in the world religions, Catholic magisterium expressly indicated presence of “evil associations” in them. According to Alexander Men, desire for God, as it was expressed in the history of religions, often had to overcome numerous obstacles. For example,
Men’s account of the ecstatic rituals of the prehistoric religion illustrate his notion of the struggle between magism and the authentic search for God. Religious rituals together with the related ecstatic and mystical experiences were some of the ways through which the prehistoric people attempted to restore the relationship with the supernatural world. Fr Men evaluates them mainly negatively as an expression of magism's desire to control supernatural world. However, Men maintains that the positive human aspirations can be recognised also in this “attempt to seize the stronghold of the spirit as if by assault”\(^{37}\). The ecstatic state was being reached by means of various artificial techniques, for example, rhythmical dances. In these rituals Alexander Men discerns striving after spiritual life, which in itself is evaluated by him positively: “In essence, this was an attempt to attain spiritual freedom and power in a mechanical way. But in these convulsive attempts, however, there is a moving element – a power of tireless thirst for the higher, which prevented man from sinking into a gloomy half-animal state”\(^{38}\).

According to Men, one of the few positive features in shamanistic religions was the cultivation of the openness towards the spiritual world, which made it possible the communication with it. This openness, according to him, was characteristic of gifted individuals of various religions, including, to some degree, also the biblical prophets: “All the prophets, charismatics, and initiators of spiritually-creative innovations \(\text{psychologically, subjectively}\) belonged to this stream of religious life, which starts with the ecstasists of the Stone Age [i.e., shamans]. What for centuries was cultivated in the mysticism of India, and found its completion in Orphism and Neo-Platonism, has its roots in this highest spiritual aspect of shamanism. Semitic prophecy as the natural soil in which the biblical prophetism grew, also takes its roots here”\(^{39}\). Men asserts that on the \(\text{subjective}\) level of man's attitude towards the spiritual sphere there is an important similarity between various world religions, including biblical prophesy. This similarity is not on the level of the \(\text{contents}\) of what is perceived through a spiritual experience. Men explicitly distinguishes between the objective contents of revelation, and the subjective disposition of a person receiving it: “Subjective religious receptivity and giftedness should be distinguished from authentic Revelation. Subjective nature of a person is only a receiving

\(^{38}\) Ibidem. \\
\(^{39}\) Ibidem, p. 65, emphasis added.
soil, on which impact may be made not only by positive spiritual powers”\textsuperscript{40}. The expression “authentic Revelation” which refers to the Biblical revelation, and the indication that it is possible to receive a revelation “not only by positive spiritual powers” show that Fr Men does not consider biblical Revelation to be of the same value as spiritual experiences in other religions. It is on the level of subjective attitude of a person relating to the spiritual sphere that Men sees significant similarities between various religious experiences. The similarity consists in the “[s]ubjective nature of a person”, “[s]ubjective religious receptivity and giftedness”. That is confirmed by Men’s discussion of man’s capacity to receive a supernatural revelation in the volume \textit{The sources of religion}. There he identifies this kind of receptivity as an attribute of human psyche: “among the variety of psychic types there must be people with different mystical receptivity and different degree of intensity of spiritual intuition”\textsuperscript{41}.

The beginning of Brahmanism in India at the beginning of the last millennium B.C. provides a notable illustration of Men’s attitude towards authentic striving for God. Fr Men stresses radical search for the ultimate meaning as one of the particular features of this Indian religion. Among many elements that were similar in the religious life of India and other countries, Fr Men notes a significant difference, which distinguished India from the rest and made it the “land of seekers of God”: “Despite the likeness of India to other countries, there emerge in it features of originality, which will make it the land of seekers for God. In woods that surround cities and villages, crowds of strange inhabitants can be seen: they are nearly naked, their bodies are covered only by long mops of tangled hair. These meagre-faced new inhabitants of the jungle could be taken for forest ghosts, coming from queer tropical thickets. … These people are not satisfied with their former life any more: a striving for something else which is higher, but not yet fully comprehended, has been awaken in them. They are seekers of truth, those who have not found the answer to their questions in the customs and religion of the surrounding society”\textsuperscript{42}.

One of the reasons for this movement of Indian ascetics \textit{muni} was, according to Fr Men, growth of \textit{magism} and superstition in the predominant religion in their surroundings. Men maintains that muni peacefully protested against this

\textsuperscript{40} Ibidem, p. 610, endnote, sect. 130.


degradation by renouncing temporal goods and spending their lives in eremitic communities in jungles. He shows great respect for the inner attitude of muni, which made them the true seekers for God, helped them to overcome many hindrances of magism, and to achieve important spiritual insights. This position of muni was expressed in the sacred writings of the Upanishads, which represent, Men says, “spiritual history’s one of the great turning points [which consists in the] reappraisal of the former values”\textsuperscript{43}. Fr Alexander likens Upanishads in their attempt to find the ultimate source of all being to humankind in its seeking for the final meaning of the world and man: “The pages of Upanishads shimmer with countless questions that generate further asking. It sometimes sounds like the voice of humanity itself – inquiring and searching. The whole world is a puzzle”\textsuperscript{44}. Fr Men’s description of this attempt to find the ultimate meaning could serve as a good illustration of the teaching of the Catholic Church about man’s innate desire for God: “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God … Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for”\textsuperscript{45}.

This desire for God has expressed itself in Brahmanism by an authentic and powerful search for God. Muni and their disciples, according to Fr Men, made enormous efforts and sacrifices in their attempt to achieve their goal. The renunciation of earthly possessions, long years of discipleship, special meditations and spiritual exercises described and praised by Men, can be compared with the high requirements for such search as they are listed in the \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}: “this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, ‘an upright heart’, as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God”\textsuperscript{46}. Most of these elements are, in one or another form present in Alexander Men’s portrayal of the practices of muni and their disciples. In a similar way Men describes religious quests in India in the middle of the second millennium B.C.: “Difficult is the way of human spirit into the icy realms of Silence. Great valour, indestructible will, desire for truth directed him there”\textsuperscript{47}.

In answering a question regarding his attitude towards “oriental mystics and their teaching”, Men made a statement which well summarises an important part of his approach towards world religions in general: “In each aspiration to

\textsuperscript{43} Ibidem, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibidem, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}, sect. 27.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibidem, sect. 30.
perceive that what is the most important for us – the highest meaning of being, there is always enclosed a spark of truth; and because of that I treat with respect, awe, or, at least, with tolerance all these phenomena, teachings, doctrines, and practices”. Humankind’s striving after ultimate meaning is at the foundation of Men’s positive attitude. His approach is very close to the one expressed by Vatican II: “The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and teachings, which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men”. Similar position was expressed by John Paul II several decades later: “The Church’s relationship with other religions is dictated by a twofold respect: ‘Respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man’”.

Deliberate avoidance of the search for God in the world religions

However, the world religions are witnesses not only of human striving after God, but also of the opposite tendency of attempting to eliminate this striving from the human heart. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in the subsection on man’s desire for God states, that “this ‘intimate and vital bond of man to God’ (GS 19,1) can be forgotten, overlooked, or even explicitly rejected by man. Such attitudes can have different causes: revolt against evil in the world; religious ignorance or indifference; the cares and riches of this world; the scandal of bad example on the part of believers; currents of thought hostile to religion; finally, that attitude of sinful man which makes him hide from God out of fear and flee his call”.

These negative tendencies are given ample attention in Men’s history of the world religions. His position on this matter is clearly seen, for example, in his portrayal of two great Chinese teachers – Lao Tzu and Confucius, whom Men sets in opposition to each other. Lao Tzu, Men says, maintained that the

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48 Idem, *Otetz Alexandr Men otvechaet na voprosi slushateley*, p. 269. The question was: “What do you think of oriental mystics and their teaching?”


50 John Paul II, op. cit., sect. 29.

51 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, sect. 29.
answers to the ultimate questions can be found in the spiritual reality of Tao. Confucius, on the other hand, is pictured as hoping to find the meaning of human life in the temporal order. Fr Alexander highly approves the position of Lao Tzu, and severely criticises that of Confucius. Confucius, according to him, avoided metaphysical questions as irrelevant to achieving his most important goal – temporal well-being of society. The reason for this avoidance is viewed by Fr Men as the most negative element in his whole teaching.

Men compares Confucius’s position to that of Buddha, who, as Men says, also avoided metaphysical questions, but for a different reason: “Buddha … also passed over in silence many metaphysical questions. But if he did so in the name of the main purpose of man – the pursuit of salvation, then Confucius shun metaphysics in the name of everyday aims and purposes”52. Thus Confucius, according to Fr Men, stifled the inherent human desire for God. Men claims his position to be a part of “the temptation common to all mankind”53, which is an attempt to find answers to the ultimate questions in the temporal order.

Conclusion

In this article, Alexander Men’s view of human search for God in the world religions has been analysed. The purpose of the research is to evaluate if Men’s position is in line with the teaching articulated in the conciliar and post-conciliar magisterium of the Catholic Church. For this purpose, research was made into five areas.

First, Alexander Men’s notion of the search for God as the basis of religion was analysed. The research showed that Men views religion in general as an expression of man’s search for God. In particular, Men defines religion as an attempt to restore the broken relationship with God. At the same time, he sets religion in opposition to magism, which for him is an attempt to control the spiritual sphere. Second, research has been made into Men’s view of religious leader’s role in the search for God. The analysis shows that Men attributes great significance to personalities in religious processes. In most cases, he sees religious leaders as making positive influence in mankind’s search for God. In some cases, however, Men views religious leaders as promoters of magism. In the third area, Men’s view of prayer as an expression of striving for God has been

53 Ibidem, p. 58.
analysed. The research shows that for Men prayer is one of main expressions of man’s authentic search for God. The fourth and fifth chapters have been devoted to negative tendencies in respect to the search for God: magism as a kind of natural inclination of the fallen man to control spiritual sphere and, finally, deliberately chosen avoidance of this search.

The analysis shows that Men’s understanding of human search for God in all five areas researched is in line with the Catholic position as it is expressed in the conciliar and post-conciliar magisterial documents of the Church.

References

Abstract
Alexander Men’s view of human search for God in the world religions in the light of the Catholic magisterial teaching

Father Alexander Men is one of the best known 20th-century Russian Orthodox authors in the West. Significant part of his writings and lecturing is devoted to the world religions. The present paper analyses Men’s views on humanity’s searches for God as they are expressed in the world religions. Catholic conciliar and post-conciliar magisterial teaching is taken as reference point for the analysis. Alexander Men gives ample attention to these searches in his writings. According to him, desire for God and search for Him is the basis of religion itself. Men stresses role of individual persons, for he sees historical processes as shaped first of all by personalities. Desire and search for God expresses itself in various ways, of which prayer is seen by Men as especially important. At the same time, he indicates that this desire for God might be gradually stifled or even consciously rejected by human free choices. The analysis permits to conclude that Men’s position is in line with the Catholic magisterial teaching on these issues.

Key words: Alexander Men, search for God, world religions, religious leaders, prayer

Abstrakt
Poglądy Aleksandra Mienia na poszukiwanie Bogą przez człowieka w religiach światowych w świetle nauczania Magisterium Kościoła

Ksiądz Aleksander Mień należy do najbardziej znanych na Zachodzie rosyj- skich autorów prawosławnych XX stulecia. Znacząca część jego prac i kazań jest

Słowa kluczowe: Aleksander Mień, poszukiwanie Boga, religie światowe, przywódcy religijni, modlitwa