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**Christianitas (Christendom)**  
**The historical European Phenomenon**  
**and Christianity**

The concept and what has been done to date



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## Christianitas (Christendom). The European Phenomenon and Christianity

The book's concept and the progress of work. The text hereunder is the print version of my subpage: Christianitas on <https://jacek.kwasniewski.org.pl>

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## What are Christianitas and the European Phenomenon?

Christianitas (*Latin*) or Christendom – the way Medieval Europeans named Europe. Christianity was the main and the common characteristic of our cultural identity since ca. the 9th century.

The European Phenomenon - this term is used in the historical studies to describe the civilizational flourishing of Europe, which began in the 11th and 12th century. Over the next few hundred years, we had outdone other civilizations both economically, technologically and in science, though earlier they were much more developed than us. I carry out a project on the role of Christianity in the creation of this phenomenon. Three areas have been selected in the study: science, technology and the Western market economy. They do not exhaust the scope of the European Phenomenon, yet without them, we would not have reached the position of the global leader. Together, they make us unique when confronting the Others.

### Book concept – introduction

#### **Basic idea**

Modern European science, technology and economy began to emerge in the Middle Ages. My book describes the role the Church and Christianity played in this process. At times their influence was supportive (e.g. participation in the construction of economic legal and institutional European infrastructure), in other areas important (e.g. development of modern technology) or vital (e.g. the creation of universities and science in general). No other impulse has ever influenced the rise of the European Phenomenon just as deeply and in so many dimensions. The Church and Christianity were sometimes a direct co-creator and sometimes a catalyst dynamizing historical changes and giving it direction. The Church and doctrine also served as a filter that sifted external impulses (intellectual, religious, philosophical, technological and other), rejecting some and accepting others. This is the sense of the claim that Christianity and the Church were very important, perhaps even the most important factors, creating modern European civilization.

The most important factor is the one, which once having found the appropriate cultural and social environment, makes the most of the existing cultural material. It creates a structure according to its plan and confers on social and cultural environment where it exists, high development dynamics. It lends society ambitions, dreams and optimism which will set the direction of growth for the next millennia - and with their vision of the world will fascinate other cultures.

#### **Method of Presentation**

The book has an open structure and the non-linear presentation of arguments. It presents issues from various points of view and consists of many, more or less, autonomous parts.

## Briefly on the role of Church and Christianity in setting up early modern technology and science

As an example; a few words on religious determinants which paved the way to modern technology and science.

### **Technology**

In the field of technology, the Middle Ages was an extremely creative era. The prevailing view in the literature is that Christianity and the Church played a significant role in technological stimulation in Europe. In my opinion - the leading role, because unlike other analyses, my assessment takes a very wide range of interactions into account (see my article: The Influence of the Church and Christianity on Technical Progress in Medieval Europe - [here](#)).

The Church's contribution was: its participation in the creation of innovation and technology development (substantial role of Benedictine and Cistercian convents); the creation of technological demand, financially supported by the Church (e.g. investments in sacral constructions and civil engineering); human capital formation and the system of knowledge circulation (e.g. vocational education, systematic exchange of information, pilgrimages); the creation of institutional foundations of the market economy (e.g. self-governing bottom-up corporations and the system of modern law, normative pacification and introduction of written documentation). The Church's contribution additionally consisted in ideological integration of Europe, thanks to which the continent, though politically divided, became culturally uniform. All of this helped to create a pro-innovative climate which in turn formed the conditions for the assimilation of foreign patterns and fostered technological ingenuity of the European society. The latter element made Europe unique. The bottom-up creativity found understanding and support on the part of the Church - the powerful institution responsible for religious legitimizing of earthly reality (social order).

The high innovativeness of medieval Europe was also influenced by external factors, such as the topography of the continent, impact of incoming cultures, import of distant technologies, ancient and Muslim heritage, protection of the eastern flank by Byzantium. Almost none of the external factors could, without the constant approval of the Church, which was an ideological hegemon, act as effectively as it acted.

We need compare the innovation-related activity of the Church with secular initiatives in the field. The analysis proves the contribution of the Church was both significant and diversified. It held the dominant positions in science, science infrastructure and creation of a favourable general climate for innovation. Secular sphere excelled in military and transportation. In other fields (agriculture, proto-industry, etc.), the Church's contribution was substantial though smaller than secular.

## Science

Modern science originated in Europe between the 11th and 17th centuries. Many factors contributed to its creation; they are sometimes divided into internal and external ones. The former include the evolution of ideas, views and theories, i.e. centuries-lasting work of the scientific community. The latter relate to the creation of conditions and infrastructure without which the scientific community would not be able to develop and operate.

When we consider external factors; economic, political, social, organizational, geopolitical, etc. (see my text: Medieval Roots of Modern Science - [here](#)), the extremely important role of the Church is beyond dispute. When we analyse internal factors, we see that the emergence of modern science was the result of a clash between theological, doctrinal principles and the assimilated (through the agency of the Church) legacy of ancient and Muslim science (see my reviews of books by Butterfield, Grant, Jaki, Shapin and Woods and the article: Science and Religion - [here](#)).

In the 11th-12th centuries, external factors created the **New Environment**, strengthening the status of intellectual work. Scientific activity increased in the 12th-13th centuries, followed by the **Rationalist Turn**; it emphasized the role of natural causes in the study of physical phenomena. When the universities absorbed the ancient legacy, the clash with Christian doctrine initiated the **Metaphysical Awakening** (13th - 15th centuries). The doctrinal (theological) assumptions used to describe the world were clearly defined. They became the building blocks of the **Dogmatic Corridor**, which charted the new course for the academic world – a permissible direction it could follow. The authority and temporal strength of the Church stood guard over the Dogmatic Corridor. The Dogmatic Corridor paved the way for the development of medieval thought towards the development of a new method, a new goal and a new subject of science. The necessary ingredients for the emergence of modern science were created, though they were still not combined into a new whole.

It was necessary to wait until two key areas of medieval natural philosophy, astronomy and physics, used these elements to form theories that simultaneously destroyed old and built new concepts on their ruins. The **Great De-Constructions** must have been created - works of Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler.

The mentioned turning points describe rather than explain the emergence of modern science. The explanation must take the Catholic Church's unique approach to intellectual effort into account. Science and knowledge were perceived as God's gift to man and therefore gained the honorary status of one of the pillars of Christianity. For this reason, the Church undertook to build a powerful scientific infrastructure and was financing the science itself. At the same time, science enjoyed far-reaching autonomy, because until the 13th century there was a ubiquitous opinion that science and faith (theology) were in fundamental accord as they both read (decoded, described, explained) the same work of God. Theology - in the book of Revelations; science - in the book of nature. Moreover, the dogmatic foundations of Christianity did not have

any built-in restraints that would have blocked the transition from Aristotle's scholasticism to the Great De-Constructions of early modern times. On the contrary, theological catalysts could be indicated and were helpful in such a transition. Moreover, the realm of science proved to be very useful to the Church in its competitive/allied relations with secular authorities.

## Idea of this book – how did it come from?

The book on the European Phenomenon is the follow up of the previous one, titled “Western civilization and Time”.

In “Western Civilization and Time” I have proven that over the last hundred years, time has become one of the overriding social values and manifests itself in the feeling of compulsion and man's expectation of Acting-Ever-Faster and Live-Longer-And-Longer. These are the current civilization priorities. They can be measured statistically. For several decades, they have caused the most significant changes in the distribution of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). An increasingly significant portion of GDP is allocated to the implementation of these preferences and this portion is the fastest growing among all components of GDP.

Looking back into the past, we see clear links between the current appreciation of time and the historical processes of secularization and modernization.

Time as a value manifests in our willingness to pay an ever-increasing price for additional years of life and faster living in the everyday economic race. Both priorities: to live ever longer and act ever faster are leading our culture in an unexpected direction. There are no boundaries to the desire to live longer and longer and achieve everything faster and faster. Therefore, we are seriously discussing whether death is inevitable since our possibilities are growing so fast that endless life seems to loom on the horizon. Here the book 'Western Civilization and Time' ended, yet it opened another question: what was the origin of such a civilization?

The new book aims to show it is difficult to imagine that a civilization that now reveals its Longer and Faster priorities would ever arise without Christianity and the Church.

## Book's structure, parts already finished, and those in working versions for further discussion

The book consists of four parts, dedicated consecutively to:

- overall presentation of the European Phenomenon,

and the influence of the medieval Church and Christianity on:

- technological progress,
- the emergence of modern science,
- the emergence of a European market economy.

The book has an open structure. Its construction aimed to present the above-mentioned issues from several complementary points of view. The presentation is not linear. Individual fragments are autonomous. So far, 610 pages have been written - the expected volume is 800 pages.

## **Part I Presentation of historical European Phenomenon**

### **The historical European phenomenon, or how Europe outstripped Asia** ([Historyczny fenomen europejski, czyli jak Europa prześcignęła Azję](#))

An introductory text with synthetic overview of the ongoing debate on the historical European Phenomenon, rise of Western civilization and a revisionist critique of historical European / Western achievements.

### **The role of Christianity and the Church in the Europeanization of Europe** ([Rola chrześcijaństwa i Kościoła w europeizacji Europy](#))

A working paper (a fragment of my new book) dealing with the medieval Europeanization of Europe. The description of the role of Christianity and the Church in the rising of Europe to world dominance; it must be preceded with the reflection on how Europe as the separate and integrated civilizational unit came into being. And what was the role the Church played in that process. So, there is a brief discussion of the literature on the subject (a ranking of 27 authors according to their assessment on the importance of Christianity and the Church) and then there is a description of two stages of integration: the V-VIII centuries - religious homogenization; VIII-XIII centuries - cultural homogenization as well as the separation of the sacred and secular spheres (Gregorian Revolution (XI – XII centuries)

### **Western civilization: a polemic with revisionist critics of the West** ([Cywilizacja zachodnia: polemika z krytykami Zachodu](#))

Essay based on Ricardo Duchesne's book "The Uniqueness of Western Civilization". A part of the book is a critical analysis of a revisionist trend in World History. Revisionists diminish or negate the importance of Europe's historic achievements in the economy, science and technology.

### **The European Miracle** ([Cud europejski](#))

Review and synopsis of one of the most important books on the European Phenomenon, by Eric L. Jones.

### **Douglass North's vision of the historic rise of the West** ([Douglassa Northa wizja historycznego rozkwitu Zachodu](#))

The article presents some of the fundamental theorems of New Institutional Economics and how they can be applied to the analysis of the economic history cases. In a sense, the article complements North's "Paradox of the West" as it reveals theoretical assumptions of North's approach.

Besides the texts mentioned above, I have translated the renowned text of Douglass C. North (with the link to English original) and discussed several important pieces. They probably won't be the part of the book, but it's worth keeping them in mind. Those are:

[Douglass C. North. Paradoks Zachodu](#) (Paradox of West)

[Jerzy Kłoczowski. Europa. Chrześcijańskie korzenie](#) (Europe: Christian roots)

[Marcel Simon. Cywilizacja wczesnego chrześcijaństwa](#) (Civilization of ancient Christianity)

[Thomas Woods. Jak Kościół katolicki zbudował cywilizację zachodnią](#) (How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization)

## **Part II The role of Church and Christianity in technological development of medieval Europe**

### **The influence of the Church and Christianity on technical progress of medieval Europe** ([Wpływ Kościoła i chrześcijaństwa na postęp techniczny w Europie średniowiecznej](#))

I present a synthetic picture of the influence of the Church and doctrine; estimated participation of ecclesial and secular innovations in the medieval technological progress; an attempt to reconstruct the Church's policy of building a pro-innovative climate and a number of other issues.

### **Medieval agricultural revolution – Quantitative Analysis** ([Średniowieczna rewolucja rolnicza w liczbach](#))

An article on the origin of resources that enabled Europe to chase great powers of the time (China, India, Islam states). Calculations I presented show the roots and scale of the resources acquired thanks to the agrarian growth in IX-XIV centuries

### **Watermills and windmills. Medieval power industry** ([Młyny i wiatraki. Energetyka przemysłowa Średniowiecza](#))

When we discourse about medieval watermills and windmills, we are talking about creating in Europe the first energy infrastructure on this scale in the world for the needs of the emerging industry. The energy supplied by mills and windmills has launched, among others, textile, clothing, wood, mining, metal, construction, agri-food processing, paper and tanning industries.

### **Medieval merchant ships** ([Średniowieczne statki handlowe](#))

The book portrays the evolution of European merchant ships constructions over the period from the 1st to the 16th century. It's a study of the history of technology with elements of economic history. Maritime transport is considered one of the most important tools for creating the power of Europe. It integrated remote areas; commercial shipping recorded the largest increase in productivity among all economic fields. It was a significant impeller and creator of technical progress; ships of Europe were the vehicles disseminating European cultural patterns, methods

of life organization, tools, weapons, plants, religions, political ideas, people and diseases throughout the world. Bibliography is available on request.

**What accelerates and what hinders technical progress. On historical determinants of innovation** ([Co przyspiesza a co hamuje postęp techniczny. O historycznych uwarunkowaniach innowacyjności](#))

Extensive commentary to Joel Mokyr's book "The Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress". Analysis of factors recognized in the literature as important in stimulating or inhibiting technical progress.

**History of technology - suggestions on recommended reading** ([Historia technologii – sugestie, od czego zacząć lektury](#))

Reflections on the history of technology need to be based on some knowledge of factual material. I present twelve books worth reading. Most of them are recommended in university courses of history of technology. Among the authors are Frances and Joseph Gies, James MacLachan, Ian McNeil, Lewis Mumford, Bryan Bunch, Alexander Hellemans, Daniel Headrick, James McClellan and Harold Dorn.

In addition to the literature mentioned above, I have discussed two very interesting and important texts. They probably won't be a part of the book, but it's worth keeping them in mind. Those are:

[Arnold Pacey. Technology In World Civilization](#)

[Mark Z. Taylor. Politics of Innovation: Why Some Countries Are Better Than Others at Science and Technology](#)

**Part III The role of Church and Christianity in the emergence of early modern science**

**Medieval roots of modern science: the influence of cultural and social milieu on the emergence of science, the role of the Church** ([Średniowieczne korzenie nauki nowożytnej: wpływ otoczenia na powstanie nauki i rola Kościoła](#))

I have discussed Edward Grant's theory on medieval roots of science, and further described external factors that affected science's settings and formed its organizational, economic, social, and political milieu. Historical, geopolitical, social, organizational, political, and economic factors are presented as well as the role of the Church in the working of each of them

**Historiography of science and religion** ([Nauka a religia: historiografia problemu](#))

I elaborate on the evolution of historians' and sociologists' views in the period 1874-2010 about the proper way of describing the historical relationships between science and religion. The most important concepts, which were the milestones of this evolution, were presented: starting with the nineteenth-century works of Draper and White, which showed these relations as a conflict

lasting for centuries to the currently functioning paradigm, which recognizes religion as an important co-creative element of the modern science.

### **Non-empirical foundations of empirical sciences** ([Nieempiryczne fundamenty nauk empirycznych](#))

Text in working version. The twentieth-century philosophy of science, despite all discrepancies, is characterized by the common thought that statements which do not have empirical status, i.e. do not succumb to the falsification procedure, play some role in the creation of scientific theories. In the philosophy of science, such statements are commonly called metaphysical judgments. These non-empirical metaphysical statements are considered to be external to a scientific theory (for example, Carnap, Popper), internal, i.e. are the immanent part of a theory (for example, Lakatos) or accepted by agreement of scholarly communities (for example, Kuhn, Kitcher, and Longino). This surprising consensus of so often extremely different theories of science strongly legitimizes Christianity as a possible co-creative element of modern science.

### **Mechanism of setting up of early modern and modern science** (Mechanizm powstania nauki wczesnonowożytnej i nowożytnej)

Text not written yet. It will be an expansion of the comments I have written above in the sketch about science. Firstly, I will detail the nodal points of the science creation process: creating a **New Environment** (X-XII century), **Rationalist Turn** (XII-XIII century), **Metaphysical Awakening** (XIII-XV century), building up of **Dogmatic Corridor**, **Great De-Constructions** (XV-XVII century). Secondly, I will engage in the problem of theological and doctrinal catalysts conducive to the transition to modern science, i.e. to the said **Great De-Constructions**.

In addition to the texts mentioned above, I have written essays on five interesting and important books. They probably won't be part of the book, but it's worth keeping them in mind. Those are:

[Steven Shapin. Rewolucja naukowa](#) (The Scientific Revolution)

[Edward Grant. Średniowieczne podstawy nauki nowożytnej](#) (The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages)

[Herbert Butterfield. Rodowód współczesnej nauki 1300- 1800](#) (The Origins of Modern Science)

[Stanley Jaki. Zbawca nauki](#) (The Savior of Science)

[Alfred N. Whitehead. Nauka i świat współczesny](#) (Science and the Modern World)

## **Part IV The role of Church and Christianity in the rise of capitalism and market economy**

I have collected the literature on the subject and wrote the working version of the text. Its several elements have already been mentioned on other occasions.

**Why has the European economy developed during political disintegration in the 9th-14th centuries? The role of the Church** (Dlaczego gospodarka europejska rozwijała się w czasie politycznej dezintegracji. Wieki IX-XIV. Rola Kościoła)

Text to be written. Currently, I have signalled the problem in Annex 6 of the paper titled "The Influence of the Church and Christianity on Technical Progress in Medieval Europe" (see here). It shows several aspects of the church's role in building an early modern economy, including the creation and promotion of bottom-up, self-governing corporations and the strategy of normative pacification. It will be expanded into an independent work.

**Technology and the Economic Growth: Accelerators and Brakes. Theories and History – Europe and China** (Wzrost gospodarczy: stymulatory i hamulce. Koncepcje i historia – Europa, Chiny, Azja)

Text in working version. The discussion of the theories explaining the historical functioning of European and Asian economies (including E.L. Jones, A. Maddison, D.C. North and formalized growth theories). Also, a debate why early modern China economy decelerated (per capita).

**Role of shipping in the economic growth of the early modern European economy** (Historyczne znaczenie żeglugi we wzroście gospodarczym Europy)

At present, this is a chapter of the book on medieval merchant ships.

### **Invitation to cooperate**

The project grows as the work progresses. Those interested in the problems and my vision which could be seen in the texts already written are welcome as working companions. We need many things: to write new texts related to my project, discuss many important articles and books, make editorial work, like bibliographies of texts (those already written or almost finished). Specialists may participate and bring new insight to our discussions at our periodic meetings. I don't feel the need to be the only author of a nascent work. If you would like to join the writing of new fragments or discussions - feel invited. Willingness, acceptance of the general idea, experience in scientific work, time and that special feeling of connection is all you need.

### **Responses to my invitation: Jacenty Siewierski, Ryszard Kleszcz, Adam Nowaczyk**

In 2017 I met Doctor Jacenty Siewierski. We started working together. Our views on the problem of the role of Christianity in the emergence of Western civilization are identical. He is the author of an excellent work titled "Christianity and the Expansion of Western Civilization".

He agreed to put his book on my page (see here). Dr. Siewierski has a subpage on my website titled *Why Europe*. Apart from the book, there is a number of his other texts from previous years and some quite fresh. Dr. Siewierski's works go great with the idea of my project.

In turn, Professor Ryszard Kleszcz has been a good colleague of mine for several decades. He is an excellent philosopher, also in areas of my interest (philosophy of religion and analytical philosophy). His knowledge and humor are invaluable in our discussions, which we organize every few months among people interested in the issues of the Christian roots of the West. Among his many qualities, he has the rare gift of translating complicated problems in a clear way to non-specialists.

Professor Adam Nowaczyk, an outstanding Polish logician and specialist in analytical philosophy, is also the participant in our discussions. He introduces refreshing scepticism to our conversations. How many wonderful, seemingly, ideas couldn't stand the confrontation with the arguments of colleague Nowaczyk or required a thorough revision! A cold shower of logic always refreshes.

**You are invited to join us! (It's all work and play)**

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