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## **Doctor Crucis. The Criteria for Conferral of the Title of Doctor of the Church and their Application to the Case of Edith Stein**

### **Part I\***

#### **Abstract**

Edith Stein is widely recognised as a saint, a martyr, a victim of the Holocaust and a female philosopher – but can she be a Doctor of the Church? So far, thirty-seven figures, including four women, carry the title due to their so-called ‘eminent doctrines’, *eminentes doctrinae*. For centuries, a procedural difficulty existed in awarding the titles to martyrs, however, in the second decade of the 21st century, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints reached a conclusion that martyrdom is not, in principle, an obstacle in awarding

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the title. A question, therefore, can be posed: does the legacy of someone among the Christian martyrs fulfill the criteria of the Church's Doctorate?

The aim of this article is to investigate the criteria for conferral of the title of the Doctor of the Church, prime among which is a criterion called *eminens doctrina*, and apply them to one example, that of Edith Stein. In doing so, I consider the question purely historically and philosophically, starting out with definitions of the Father of the Church and the Doctor of the Church in part one (available below). In the second part of the article (available in 2024), I ask what aspects of the female martyr's theology, philosophy and spirituality fulfill the criteria of an eminent doctrine, as formulated in the Church's documents, and which are insufficient or lacking. In order to highlight the nature of a particular criterion, I contrast Stein's case with other recently debated cases, such as those of Irenaeus of Lyons and John Paul II.

### Keywords

Church Father, Doctor of the Church, eminent doctrine (*eminens doctrina*), Edith Stein, Doctor of the Cross (*Doctor Crucis*), John Paul II.

Edith Stein is widely recognised as a saint, a martyr, a victim of the Holocaust and a female philosopher – but can she be a Doctor of the Church? Thirty-seven figures, including four women, carry the title due to their so called 'eminent doctrines', *eminentes doctrinae*. For centuries, a procedural difficulty existed in awarding the titles to martyrs. In the second decade of the 21st century, *Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum* reached a conclusion that martyrdom is not, in principle, an obstacle in awarding the title. A question can therefore be posed: does the legacy of someone among the Christian martyrs fulfill the criteria of the Church's doctorate?

The aim of this article is to investigate the criteria for conferral of the title of the Doctor of the Church, prime among which is a criterion called *eminens doctrina*, and apply them to one example, that of Edith Stein. After presenting, firstly, a definition of the Father of the Church and, secondly, the Doctor of the Church, I ask what aspects of the German-Jewish martyr's theology, philosophy and spirituality fulfill the criteria of an eminent teaching, as defined in the Church's documents, and which are insufficient or lacking. In order to highlight the nature of a particular criterion, I contrast Stein's candidacy with other currently debated cases, such as those of Irenaeus of Lyons and John Paul II. In doing so, I consider the investigation purely historically and philosophically,

thus investigating possible lines of argumentation, rather than speculating about what is likely to happen.

## 1. Procedures in the Congregation for the Causes of Saints

Since the 13th century, the Catholic Church has officially honoured people whose lives have been recognised as holy and whose contributions to the developing doctrine or spirituality have met the criteria of *eminens doctrina* with the title *Doctor Ecclesiae Universalis*, Doctor of the Universal Church. The tradition of granting some thinkers the title ‘Doctor’ predates, however, the letter *Gloriosus Deus* written in 1295 by Pope Boniface VIII, which named the first four Latin Doctors and established their holiday in the liturgical calendar. This act initiated the official practice, which since the 16th century is expressed in papal bullae, first of which was *Mirabilis Deus*, yet the practice of distinguishing some authorities as, firstly, *sancti patres* and later, among these, special authorities called *doctores*, originates in Christian antiquity.<sup>1</sup> Currently, the title has been given to thirty-seven figures (thirty-three men and four women), with the majority living in antiquity (thus also called the Fathers of the Church) or the Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> Up until February 2022, there has never been a martyr among the Doctors, however, the possibility of distinguishing Irenaeus of Lyons in this way has long been debated. Also Edith Stein, a famous 20th-century victim of Holocaust,

<sup>1</sup> *Patres* were referred to by the First Council Constantinople in 381 (*Expositio fidei CL Patrum*) and treated as a decisive authority by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 (*Definitio fidei*). Later, Pope Gelasius I (492–496) issued a decree narrowing down the criteria of orthodoxy for both Latin and Western writers whose doctrines were considered especially valuable in illuminating the Revelation and Gregory the Great further adhered to their authority, as did the Venerable Bede, who listed the four great Latin masters: Ambrose of Milan, Jerome of Stridon, Augustine of Hippo, Gregory the Great. Cf. *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych. Tom I. Tekst łaciński, grecki, polski*, A. Baron, H. Pietras (eds.), Cracow 2009, WAM, pp. 68–69 and 216–224; Gelasius I, *Decretum Gelasianum*, in: H. Denzinger, *Echiridion symbolorum*, P. Hünermann (ed.), Freiburg–Basel–Wien 2009, Herder, p. 202; The Venerable Bede, *Epistola responsoria Venerabilis Bede ad Accam Episcopum*, *Patrologia Latina* 92, J.-P. Migne (ed.), Paris 1962, pp. 303–308, list of the four Latin masters on p. 304; Cf. R. Groń, *Fenomen „Doktora Kościoła” w historycznym rozwoju*, „Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny” 7 (1999) 1, p. 54; H. Rahner, *Kirchenlehrer*, in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* VI, Freiburg 1961, Herder, pp. 229–331; S. Longosz, *Ojcowie Kościoła. Semantyczny rozwój pojęcia*, „Vox Patrum” 9 (16) 1989, pp. 61–108. Sources recall the fact that in 1 Tim 2:7 the Apostle calls himself *διδάσκαλος*.

<sup>2</sup> P. B. Wodrazka, *Eminente Dottrina. La procedura per il conferimento del titolo di Dottore della Chiesa*, Verona 2019, Fede&Cultura, pp. 20–23. Irenaeus is missing from that list.

is subject of interest regarding her possible ecclesiastical doctorate. Moreover, candidacy of John Paul II, a survival of an assassination, is also debated.<sup>3</sup>

Edith Stein was recognised a martyr during the beatification process, and this fact resulted in a dispensation from the obligation of a miracle, demanded in all cases of non-martyrs.<sup>4</sup> According to the tradition developing since his death in 202 AD and recorded in writing by Gregory of Tours in the 6th century (though today debated by many historians), Irenaeus of Lyons was martyred during the reign of Emperor Severus.<sup>5</sup> Despite significant historical doubts regarding his death, Irenaeus functions as a martyr in the Church's tradition. The example of John Paul II – never officially called 'martyrdom' in the Church's documents for he died a natural death – has been a model of virtuously endured suffering in the moment of the assassination. Some of the faithful argue, therefore, that he should be called a martyr, since his immediate reaction to being shot (saying 'I forgive the assassin') and the attitude towards Mehmet Ali Ağca after he recovered – visiting the assassin in prison and conversing with him—situate the Pope within the spectrum of an exemplary Christian approach to martyrdom, typically endured because of faith or a position held in the Church, and virtuously forgiven regardless of expressed remorse or the lack thereof. Naturally however, John Paul II, formerly known as Karol Wojtyła, is not regarded as a martyr in the official documents because he died a natural death, and it takes a sacrifice of life to be a martyr.

Both Edith Stein and John Paul II are subject to the analysis in the context of the procedures for conferring the title of 'Doctor of the Church'. The Congregation for the Causes of Saints (*Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum*) is an authority responsible for carrying out such processes following the acceptance of the Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith (*Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei*),

<sup>3</sup> A. Napiórkowski, P. Warchoń, *Divine Mercy: Will St. Faustina and St. John Paul II become Doctors of the Church?*, Middletown, USA 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Sz. Praškiewicz, *Cuda przedłożone Stolicy Apostolskiej i kanonicznie zatwierdzone do gloryfikacji najnowszych Świętych i Błogosławionych Karmelu Terezańskiego*, <https://www.karmel.pl/cud-do-kanonizacji-siostry-teresy-benedykty-od-krzyza/> (12.10.2020); Sz. Praškiewicz, *Kanonizacja s. Teresy Benedykty od Krzyża (Edyty Stein)*, <https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/T/TH/THW/kanon.html> (12.10.2020); J. Sullivan, *The Path to Beatification*, in: W. Herbstrith, *Never Forget: Christian and Jewish perspectives on Edith Stein*, Washington, 1998, ICS Publications; A. Amato, *Santi e Beati. Come procede la Chiesa?*, Vatican 2016, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

<sup>5</sup> *Translator's Introduction*, in: Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses*, trans. J. Brylowski, Pelplin 2018, Bernardinum, p. 11.

while the final decision is made by the pope (or, historically, also a general council).<sup>6</sup> Benedict XVI awarded two doctoral titles during his pontificate, in 2012 (to the 12th-century Germanic mystic Hildegard of Bingen and John of Ávila, an Andalusian Carmelite supporting the restoration of the Carmelite Order led by Teresa of Ávila). In 2015, Pope Francis bestowed the title on the Armenian mystic Gregory of Narek, whose *Book of Lamentations* is considered a pearl of Armenian poetry and in February 2022 – to Irenaeus of Lyons.<sup>7</sup>

In the case of Edith Stein, co-patroness of Europe, the initiation of the procedure was entrusted to the General Postulator of the Discalced Carmelite Order, yet research on the legacy of the saint in the context of the criteria for Doctor of the Church is being carried out independently by members of the Polish Association of Edith Stein (Towarzystwo Edyty Stein),<sup>8</sup> the German Association of Edith Stein (Edith Stein Gesellschaft Deutschland)<sup>9</sup> and the International Association for the Study of the Philosophy of Edith Stein (IASPES).<sup>10</sup> Various provinces of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, such as its Polish branch,<sup>11</sup> undertook detailed analyses that indicate the universalism of the message of the Patroness of Europe for the entire Church.

Taking into account the intellectual achievements and spiritual legacy of John Paul II, as well as the historical occasion – the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Karol Wojtyła's birth – Polish bishops addressed Pope Francis with an appeal to grant the ecclesiastical doctorate to John Paul II, and in 2020 the chairman of the Polish Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki, asked the presidents of the World Episcopate and the European Episcopate

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<sup>6</sup> P. B. Wodrazka, *Eminente Dottrina*, 2019, pp. 24–75; Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, *Le cause dei Santi*, 2018, pp. 452–472; U. Betti, *A proposito del conferimento del titolo di Dottore della Chiesa*, *Antoniano* 63 (1998), pp. 278–291.

<sup>7</sup> P. B. Wodrazka, *Eminente Dottrina*, 2019, p. 23.

<sup>8</sup> Towarzystwo Edyty Stein in Wrocław, <http://edytastein.org.pl/en/> (12.10.2020).

<sup>9</sup> Edith Stein Gesellschaft Deutschland, <https://www.edith-stein.eu/> (12.10.2020).

<sup>10</sup> International Association for the Study of the Philosophy of Edith Stein [IASPES], <http://www.edithsteincircle.com/> (12.10.2020).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Materiały z Sesji Naukowo Pastoralnej 'Święta Edyta Stein Doktorem Kościoła?'*, 22 March 2003, Kuria Krakowskiej Prowincji Karmelitów Bosych, Cracow, 2003, Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych; *Światłość w ciemności*, J. W. Gogola (ed.), Cracow 2003, Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych.

to support this initiative.<sup>12</sup> Other centers have also asked Pope Francis to confer the title on John Paul II. It is not surprising, since he is the fourth pope in history to have been named ‘great’ after his death.<sup>13</sup> Earlier, in the nearly two-thousand-year-long history of the Church, only popes Leo the Great, Gregory the Great and Nicolas the Great were so defined.<sup>14</sup> Both Leo and Gregory have been Doctors for centuries: Gregory from 1295 – as one of the first four thinkers so defined by the pope in history,<sup>15</sup> and Leo officially from 1754,<sup>16</sup> i.e., from the pontificate of Benedict XIV, the author of the classic work on the principles of canonisation that lists the three criteria for a Doctor of the Church.<sup>17</sup> In accordance with this tradition, John Paul II could be identified not by a number in his name, but by the adjective ‘Great’, like Leo or Gregory, and this would signal not only that his pontificate is perceived as significant in the history of the Church, but also that John Paul II was one of the three Doctors-Popes in history.

In case of Irenaeus of Lyons, the procedure was positively concluded in 2022. It is indicated that the bishop of Lyons was credited with establishing unity among Christians on a matter which was dangerously dividing the Church at the time, that of different methods for determining the date of Easter. Irenaeus, the author of *Adversus Haereses*, hence become a Doctor of Unity, *Doctor Unitatis*, a value reflected in his successor’s motto.<sup>18</sup> A similar title, *Doctor Unitatis Ecclesiae* accompanies Leo the Great, whose pontificate endured the Hun and Vandal invasions of the Eternal City and numerous Christological debates, during which the pope wrote his famous dogmatic letter, *Tomus ad Flavianum*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Catholic Information Agency, <https://ekai.pl/abp-gadecki-prosi-episkopaty-swiata-o-wsparcie-inicjatywy-ogloszenia-sw-jana-pawla-ii-doktorem-kosciola/> (12.10.2020).

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Pope Francis, L.M. Epicoco, *San Giovanni Paolo Magno*, Milan 2020, Edizioni San Paolo.

<sup>14</sup> Except for Nicholas I, who was also called ‘the Great’, but the practice did not last. Nicholas I also never became a Doctor of the Church.

<sup>15</sup> P. B. Wodrazka, *Eminente Dottrina*, 2019, p. 20.

<sup>16</sup> J. P. Freeland, A. J. Conway, *Introduction*, pp. 4–6 in: St. Leo the Great, *Sermons*, trans. J. P. Freeland CSJB, A. J. Conway SSJ, Washington, D.C. Catholic University of America Press, 1996, pp. 3–16; K. Panuś, *Święty Leon Wielki*, Cracow 2005, WAM, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Benedict XIV, *De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*, vol. I–IV, Bologna, 1734–1738.

<sup>18</sup> Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, the Bishop (emeritus) of Lyon, followed a motto that read: *Qu’ils soient un* – ‘that they may be one.’

<sup>19</sup> B. Green, *The Soteriology of Leo the Great*, Oxford 2008, Oxford University Press, pp. 1–22; S. Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome*, Leiden–Boston 2008, Brill, pp. 1–9.

The candidates can obtain an ecclesiastical doctorate if their achievements are recognised as fulfilling the criteria prime among which is *eminens doctrina*, an outstanding doctrine. Carrying out the processes in Vatican's Congregation does not necessarily lead to proclaiming a new Doctor, for the conclusion of the process can be negative. Let us now consider what are the merits of the title of Doctor of the Church.

## 2. Titles of Father of the Church and Doctor of the Church

Who is a Doctor of the Church, or more precisely, since the official title is *Doctor Ecclesiae Universalis*, a Doctor of the Universal Church? Customarily, the concept is defined based on the definition of the Father of the Church, which is why we must first define the latter.

The idea of the Fathers originates from the letter known to history as 1 Corinthians, in which St Paul, driven by concern for the spreading of grassroots ideas, spontaneously accepted by the faithful, states: *For even if you had tens of thousands of educators in Christ, you do not have many fathers.*<sup>20</sup> In this way, the Apostle emphasizes his authority over others also proclaiming the Gospel. This informal distinction between the many teachers preaching the Gospel on earth and the special distinguished authorities having a decisive voice in ongoing debates was later developed by a centuries-old tradition that distinguished regular teachers from the more broadly recognised authorities, hence called Fathers.

In early Christian antiquity, the term 'father' was used to indicate those who faithfully conveyed the deposit of faith (*depositum fidei*) from direct apostolic witnesses, as indicated in the practice of Irenaeus of Lyons or Eusebius of Caesarea.<sup>21</sup> The ancient Church considered passing the faith as a kind of spiritual paternity, distinguished from physical progeny but analogous to it: passing on one's faith gives life, which is the role of a father, yet not physical but eternal. This idea was recorded in writing by Irenaeus and other early Christian writers.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Cor 4,15.

<sup>21</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses*, III, 3, 4; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia ecclesiastica*, I, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus haereses*, IV, 41, 2. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, V, 15, 3. See also F. Drączkowski, *Patrologia*, Pelplin–Lublin 1999, Bernardinum, p. 6.

Today, after centuries of using the title, Fathers of the Church are customarily defined by the following four criteria<sup>23</sup>:

1. *Antiquitas*, i.e., the chronological affiliation of the dates of life to antiquity, usually including the so-called apostolic period, i.e., the time of the activity of direct witnesses of Christ's life, called the apostolic fathers or simply the apostles. In the case of patristics, antiquity, therefore, means the first seven and a half centuries after Christ. Figures closing the patristic period are John of Damascus, who died around 749 in the Greek East, and, in the Latin West traditionally Isidore of Seville, who died around 636, or, alternatively, the Venerable Bede, who passed away in 735.<sup>24</sup> Historical debate over the caesura between antiquity and the Middle Ages is thus resolved in patristics in favor of recognising the 6th, 7th, and early 8th centuries as belonging to antiquity. Fathers are ancient in this sense.
2. *Doctrina orthodoxa*, i.e., an orthodoxy of teachings, understood not as absolute inerrancy, but fundamental compliance with the teaching of the Church. The adjective comes from the Greek words *orthos* (right, correct) and *doxa* (opinion, judgement, view). Orthodoxy of the Fathers does not mean that they did not commit any theological mistake during their lifetime, especially from the perspective of later clarified solutions (history records such cases, e.g., position of Augustine of Hippo on the issue of *limbus puerorum*<sup>25</sup> which the Church explicitly

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<sup>23</sup> H.R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church. A Comprehensive Introduction*, trans. S.S. Schatzmann; Massachusetts 2007, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007, Baker Publishing Group, pp. 3–5, 542; F. Drączkowski, *Patrologia*, Pelplin–Lublin 1999, Bernardinum, p. 6; M. Fiedorowicz, *Teologia ojców Kościoła. Podstawy wczesnochrześcijańskiej refleksji nad wiarą*, trans. W. Szymona, Cracow 2009, Mysterion, pp. 271–272.

<sup>24</sup> H.R. Drobner and F. Drączkowski name Isidore as the last in the Latin West but newer publications list Bede. Bede himself is the one to refer to Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory as the selected authorities among the fathers, thus a precursor of using the ecclesiastical title of the Doctor. See Benedicta Ward, *The Venerable Bede*, Harrisburg, 1990, Morehouse Publications, p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum*; cf. also *Przeciw Julianowi*, 1: „Pisma Starochrześcijańskich Pisarzy”, trans. W. Eborowicz, t. 19, z. 2, Warsaw 1977, pp. 125–126, 145–146; *O wolnej woli*, lib. III, XXIII, 68, in: Augustine of Hippo, *Dialogi filozoficzne. Tom III*, Warsaw 1953, PAX, p. 226f.



rejected).<sup>26</sup> Orthodoxy means rather that their thought was free from heresy. Fathers are orthodox in this sense, thus ensuring they professed the ‘righteous faith’.

3. *Approbatio ecclesiae*, i.e., recognition among the ecclesial community. This criterion favors figures for selection who were widely approved not so much by the world, but the group of faithful and the Church. This is confirmed by their further positive reception in theology, e.g., by numerous references to their writings or authority in the magisterial documents of the councils. Fathers most often performed episcopal functions, so they were usually approved and recognised locally as teachers of faith. The argument that determines the application of the term ‘Father’ to them pertains, however, to their wider influence on the universal Church as such, not only the local communities they led.
4. *Sanctitas vitae*, i.e., sanctity of life, in the sense of the ancient Church, meaning the reputation among the faithful accompanying the person (often martyred) during life and after death. Since the late ancient centuries, this opinion was expressed by a translation (a transfer of the body to a more dignified place) and the cult surrounding the new burial place or relics of the deceased. Similar to the second criterion, in Christianity, holiness or sanctity is not understood as faultlessness of every act during one’s life. Rather, it is a recognition of a person’s permanent openness to sanctifying grace, which leads to salvation.

The above-listed criteria contain phrases that remain open to interpretation. For example, it is debatable what constitutes fundamental compliance with the teaching of the Church and which doctrines transgress this criterion. This is visible in an approach to Tertullian’s views following his departure from the Church, such as his position on remarriage after death of the spouse or his teachings on moral unacceptability of escaping tortures. One can also debate the level of approval necessary to establish the Father’s authority (what about the influences of figures such as Adamantius, the author of *Peri tes eis theon orthes pisteos*, on the universal Church?). Using the title of ‘Father’ in the case of people who meet only some of the criteria remains a matter of choice. The

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<sup>26</sup> International Theological Commission, *Nadzieja zbawienia dla dzieci, które umierają bez chrztu*, the document was accepted by the Pope on 19 January 2007, trans. J. Królikowski, Poznań 2008, Pallotinum, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20070419\\_un-baptised-infants\\_pl.pdf](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070419_un-baptised-infants_pl.pdf) (12.10.2020).

prevailing centuries-old practice dictates the application of the term, and there is no institution deciding *ex auctoritate* to whom the title should be given or not given. Some scholarly consensus pertaining to the list of the Fathers is visible in *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* or *Enchiridion Patristicum*, however, it blurs the distinction between early Christian writers and the Fathers, that is between all ancient writers and special, authoritative thinkers. In this sense, the title of Father of the Church is informal.<sup>27</sup> There is no woman among the Fathers, and therefore the expression ‘Mother of the Church’ does not exist, even though there were early Christian female writers, whose text survived to our times.<sup>28</sup>

The Doctor of the Universal Church is, unlike the Father of the Church, more precisely defined and therefore applicable only to a limited group. The above-mentioned areas of ambiguity included in the criteria of Fathers are specified, and in this sense the title of the Doctor is formal. What are the criteria for awarding this title?<sup>29</sup>

The first, preliminary condition visible in the historical practice of awarding the title is chronological in nature and signifies temporal affiliation to our era. What distinguishes Doctors from Fathers is that they do not have to meet the criterion of antiquity: any historical period will do, except for the times preceding the very foundation of the Church in the early 1st century AD. This excludes Old Testament figures for a simple reason of them not being acquainted with the message of Christ.

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. the selection of Fathers in: Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers: From Clement of Rome to Augustine*, trans. *L'Osservatore Romano*, San Francisco 2009, Ignatius Press; Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers and Teachers: From Saint Leo the Great to Peter Lombard*, trans. *L'Osservatore Romano*, San Francisco 2010, Ignatius Press.

<sup>28</sup> Such as Faltonia Betitia Proba, Egeria, the Empress Eudocia Augusta or the called ‘desert mothers.’ The expression ‘desert mother’ is used, e.g., in reference to Amma Syncletica or Amma Sara, whose saying are known; see Laura Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers*, New Jersey 2001, Paulist Press; *Gerontikon*, trans. M. Borkowska, Cracow 1983, Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów Tyniec, pp. 347–353; J.A. Wiseman OSB, *Historia duchowości chrześcijańskiej*, trans. A. Wojtasik, Cracow 2009, WAM, pp. 103–106.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, *Instruzione della Congregazione delle cause dei Santi sul conferimento del titolo di Dottore della Chiesa*, in: eadem, *Le cause dei Santi*, 2018, pp. 629–637; R. Groń, *Fenomen „Doktora Kościoła”...*, (1999) 1, pp. 54–61.

The second criterion is the remarkable sanctity of life (*insignis sanctitas vitae*). Unlike the Fathers, Doctors must all be holy. Only when sanctity has been recognised and confirmed by the Church, can one be proclaimed a Doctor.<sup>30</sup>

The precisely defined condition of the sanctity of life contains an interesting contemporary discussion about the possibility of granting a martyr the title of Doctor.<sup>31</sup> As already noted, as of early 2022, only one, most recently proclaimed martyr, is a Doctor. Since antiquity, the Church recognised the act of martyrdom as determining the sanctity of life, yet this advantage proved to obstruct martyrs' chances for the ecclesiastical doctorate. The privileged status of the death of a martyr, in the case of proclaiming sanctity, exists also today, because martyrs are e.g. dispensed from the miracle required in the normal course of the beatification process, as was the case when Edith Stein was beatified as a Christian martyr.<sup>32</sup> Other candidates for holiness require the examination and acceptance of a medically documented miracle that cannot be scientifically explained. Since martyrs are privileged in pronouncing the sanctity of their lives, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints had to decide how to treat the processes leading to the recognition of their ecclesiastical doctorate. The conclusion of their investigation turned out to be favorable to those who died a martyr's death. The verdict reads 'The love of a martyr can also enhance the splendor of science' (It.: *La carità del martire può abbellire anche dello splendore della scienza*).<sup>33</sup> Thus, martyrs can be proclaimed Doctors, and their death can in fact function as a guarantee or accentuation of their teaching, not an obstacle.

The most important criterion of an ecclesiastical doctorate is the identification of *eminens doctrina*, an eminent doctrine, one to be found in the life and thought of a given saint.<sup>34</sup> Characteristics of *eminens doctrina* were first described in the 13th century by Pope Boniface VIII and further specified by Benedict XIV as 'an illumination of Revelation contained in the Scriptures' by 'dispelling the darkness of errors (*errorum tenebrae fuerint profligatae*), elucidating the obscure

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<sup>30</sup> Hildegard of Bingen's canonisation, initiated in the Middle Ages, was not finalised, yet she received an equivalent canonisation in 2012, at the time of receiving the ecclesiastical doctorate.

<sup>31</sup> Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, *Le cause de Santi*, 2018, pp. 629–637.

<sup>32</sup> Sz. Praškiewicz, *Cuda przedłożone Stolicy Apostolskiej i kanonicznie zatwierdzone do gloryfikacji najnowszych Świętych i Błogosławionych Karmelu Terezańskiego*, <https://www.karmel.pl/cud-do-kanonizacji-siostry-teresy-benedykty-od-krzyza/> (12.10.2020).

<sup>33</sup> Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum, *Le cause de Santi*, 2018, p. 631.

<sup>34</sup> R. Groń, *Fenomen „Doktora Kościoła”...*, 1999, p. 56.

(*obscura fuerint dilucidata*), clarifying the dubious (*dubia declarata*) or explaining the enigmas of the Scriptures (*Scripturarumve aenigmata reserata*).<sup>35</sup> The emphasis was thus placed on biblical exegesis as well as opposing the hearses, exemplified by the doctorates of Jerome of Stridon or Augustine of Hippo. After six centuries, Pope Pius IX broadened the scope of reference of eminent doctrines to moral teachings or spirituality (exemplified by doctorates of Alphonsus Liguori and Francis de Sales respectively) and added the criteria of the positive influence on the Church (*in bonum Ecclesiae*) as well as actuality of *eminentes doctrinae* for some areas of life.<sup>36</sup> As of today, after innovations introduced by Vaticanum Secundum, eminent teachings are defined as conferred by the Holy Spirit in the form of a gift of wisdom manifested in the testimony of life that has a significant impact on the sanctity of the followers.<sup>37</sup> These three additional criteria emphasize influential moral and spiritual examples.

Summarising these historical developments one can point out two important aspects of *eminentes doctrinae*: chronologically first is a contribution to Christian doctrine, i.e., a major teaching that developed Christian comprehension of Revelation. Secondly, specifically after Vaticanum Secundum, *eminentes doctrinae* is understood as a testimony of life that inspires others to peruse a way of life leading to sanctity. Either of these ought to make a wide and profound influence on the Church. I will discuss these two aspects one after another.

First, an ecclesiastical doctorate may be awarded provided that the saint has developed a doctrine consisting of a major contribution to the Church's teachings, especially in understanding the mystery of God manifested in Revelation. Honorary titles applied to particular Doctors often indicate which aspect of this mystery has been developed by a given teacher. Ephrem the Syrian is called *Doctor Marianus* being the first theologian in history who argued for Holy Mary's purity from sin, including the original sin. Cyril of Alexandria is called *Doctor Incarnationis*, i.e., the Doctor or the Teacher of incarnation, because his approach to this doctrine was crucial. Augustine of Hippo is considered to be *Doctor Gratiae*, Teacher or Doctor of Grace, because his conceptualisation

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<sup>35</sup> Benedict XIV, *De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*, lib. IV, pars II, cap. 11. Trans. J.G.M., I translate '-ve' in *Scripturarumve* as 'or' rather than 'and' for it is the first and more common meaning.

<sup>36</sup> Sacra Rituum Congregatio, 11 March 1871 in: *Acta Sanctae Sedis* 6 (1870), pp. 317–318 and 10 (1877), pp. 349, 411. Cf. R. Groń, *Fenomen „Doktora Kościoła”...*, 1999, p. 56.

<sup>37</sup> J. Castellano Cervera, *Eminens doctrina. Un requisito necesario para ser doctor de la Iglesia*, „*Teresianum*”, 46 (1995), pp. 3–21.

of grace was key to the developing understanding. Leo the Great, *Doctor Unitatis Ecclesiae*, is praised for maintaining unity in the Church, as mentioned above. Teresa of Avila, a 16th century reformer of the Carmelite Order, whose *El Castillo Interior (Internal Castle)* significantly enriched Christian understanding of the phenomenon of prayer, is hence considered a, *Doctor Orationis*, or a teacher of prayer. *Doctor Mysticus*, or teacher of the mystical experience, describes John of the Cross, a collaborator of Teresa, author of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and other writings highlighting the problems of Christian mysticism. Teresa herself was also called *Doctor Mysticus* by St Paul VI.<sup>38</sup>

Naturally, pointing out a particular saint as an authority on a given topic does not mean that Christianity did not have any understanding of the issue before a specific Doctor. Christians prayed and understood prayer long before Teresa of Avila; they experienced and studied mystical experiences before John of the Cross and they believed in and understood incarnation before Cyril of Alexandria (consider only Athanasius of Alexandria's *De incarnatione verbi*). Often, however, an accurate verbalisation of a given topic was lacking, and frequently an adequate differentiation between orthodox and heterodox propositions was still necessary. The decisive conception of a Doctor thus became a lasting element of the Christian teaching.

Doctrines are, moreover, considered eminent if they made a wide and profound influence on the whole universal Church, not only local communities. For example, Teresa of Avila's school of prayer was followed broadly beyond the borders of the Carmelite Order which she reformed. Yet the extent and depth of the influence of the Doctors is best exemplified by the ancient Doctor-Fathers. Until 1978, half of the Doctors were the Fathers of the Church, and thus figures whose activity dates back to antiquity, when Christian doctrine and theology were just taking shape. Teachings developed by particular Doctors shaped elements of orthodoxy and thus became indispensable. This manifests the universality of the message for the entire Church.

Admittedly, there are some Doctors whose message seems dedicated to a certain part of the Church, as is the case of Gregory of Narek praised as *Doctor Armeniae*, Doctor of Armenia, or the Venerable Bede, known as *Doctor Anglorum* (Doctor of the English). Although the former is an important reference point for the Armenians and their culture, and the latter has special merits for the development of English Christianity, in each case, an impact on the

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<sup>38</sup> Paul VI, *Proclamazione di Santa Teresa d'Avila Dottore della Chiesa*, 27 September 1970.

entire universal Church was demonstrated, for example in Gregory of Narek's conception of theology.<sup>39</sup> The title is *Doctor Ecclesiae Universalis*, Doctor of the Universal Church, and hence the outstanding teaching (*eminens doctrina*) must apply to the entire community of the faithful, not merely to a part of it. In this context, it is worth mentioning one of the most famous Doctors of the Church, Thomas Aquinas who, in addition to his traditionally attributed title *Doctor Angelicus* (*Angelic Doctor*, hence *Angelicum* is a customary name of the University developed from the *studium generale* he taught at in Rome), was called *Doctor Communis*, a *Common Doctor*, one from whom everyone can learn.<sup>40</sup> This expresses the idea of a universality required of each Doctor in the selected aspect of his or her outstanding doctrine.

Secondly however, after the Second Vatican Council *eminens doctrina* is identified in the lives of saints whose example substantially enriched the Christian experience in an original way, such as by paving new paths in Christian spirituality. Holy founders or reformers of new congregations or initiators of the new forms of spirituality, like John of the Cross or Teresa of Avila, are good examples of this. Their teaching is outstanding in the sense already mentioned, moreover, they founded religious congregations and thus set a certain spiritual path that leads to holiness, as was confirmed by the subsequent numerous canonisations of Discalced Carmelites. The infallibility of the path indicated by a given Doctor is manifested in the sanctity achieved by his or her followers. A large number of canonised Carmelites, including Teresa of Lisieux and Edith Stein, confirms the accuracy of the model on which they relied, the spiritual school of Teresa of Avila.

As is visible in post-Vaticanum Secundum practice of awarding the title, *eminens doctrina* does not have to be intellectual *par excellence*, much less the result of erudition or comprehensive education. The wisdom associated with the Doctors of the Church proclaimed in the 20th century often manifested itself in the saints who were of no or poor education, to mention Catherine

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<sup>39</sup> A. Amato, *Universalità della dottrina Narekiana*, in: ibidem, *Gregorio di Narek. Dottore della Chiesa*, Vatican 2015, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, pp. 41–43.

<sup>40</sup> Batholomeao of Lukka, *Historia Ecclesiastica Nova*, lib. XXIII, c. 9, Florence 1317: „currently, due to extinguished clarity of his teachings, they call him *Doctor Communis* at Paris University”. Trans. J.G.M. John Paul II, also called Thomas Aquinas *Doctor Humanitatis* (Teacher of Humanity, on 13 Sep. 1980) and *Doctor Divinitatis* (Teacher of Divinity) and Teresa of Lisieux called him the Doctor of Doctors. Cf. H. Majkrzyk, *Doktor Doktorów. Święty Tomasz z Akwinu*, Kęty 2012, Derewiecki, pp. 133, 182.

of Siena or Teresa of Lisieux. The very example of the saint, exposed for example in a memoir, may display a new, original aspect of the Christian experience, an aspect worthy of the name *eminens doctrina*. A particularly good example of such an outstanding teaching is that of Teresa of Lisieux (late 19th century) and her so-called 'little way' or 'little path to heaven': her path of being a child of God that involved an unlimited trust towards the Father and authenticity, typical of a child, towards others. The teaching, written in a simple, unlearned way in the saint's diary, *The Story of the Soul*,<sup>41</sup> comprises a vivid illustration of a life embodying the ideal of being a child of God already known to the Church,<sup>42</sup> but reaching a crystal-clear form in the testimony of this saint. In her example, rather than through a theoretical achievement, Teresa enlightened the Church on the matter of being a child of God, hence offering it an *eminens doctrina*.

The last criterion for achieving the title of Doctor of the Church, the criterion named by Benedict XIV and one which determines the precision of the application of this title, is the official act of conferring the title (Latin *expressa Ecclesiae declaratio* or *explicita declaratio*). Without such an act there can be no ecclesiastical doctorate. Although Pius XII called Dietrich von Hildebrand, who was personally known to him, 'a 20th-century Doctor of the Church',<sup>43</sup> yet phrases of this kind are merely an expression of personal recognition, and not the official use of a title that von Hildebrandt cannot carry since he is not canonised. As in the case of the sanctity of life, where a debate over the state of sanctity is conceivable, so it is possible to express unofficial opinions concerning eminent teachings. It remains merely a scholarly or theological debate, however. From a historical point of view, it is the appropriate act (*Ecclesiae declaratio*) that determines who is a Doctor and who is not. Only after an act of conferring a title, performed by the Pope or the general council, is the term 'Doctor of the Church' predicated upon a particular saint.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, the title is formal.

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<sup>41</sup> Teresa z Lisieux, *Dzieje duszy*, trans. K. Rogalska, Poznań 2008, Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych.

<sup>42</sup> See e.g., Mt 18, 3: "If you do not change and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

<sup>43</sup> J. Cardinal O'Connor, *Biographical Note*, pp. 269–272, in: D. von Hildebrand, *Trojan Horse in the City of God. Catholic Crisis Explained*, Manchester, New Hampshire 1967, Sophia Institute Press, p. 269.

<sup>44</sup> "Tria sunt necessaria: eminens scilicet doctrina, insignis vitae sanctitas [...] et praetera Summi Pontificis aut Concilii Generalis legitime congregati declaration." Benedictus XIV, *De servorum Dei beatificatione...*, lib. IV, pars. 2, cap. 11, n 13.

Since the framework for the application of the title of Doctor of the Church has been sketched, we can ask how the spiritual and intellectual legacy of Edith Stein, St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, stands in the light of the presented criteria.

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