

Introduction

Despite the various studies that have been done on the thought and legacy of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, there is still much that has been left unexplored. His teaching had an enormous and unquestionable influence on the development of catholic social ethics, theology of the body, and ecumenism. Many would say that he was merely a faithful successor to implementing the teachings of the magisterium and that of the still fresh Second Vatican Council. Some biographers would see the importance of his personal experience as a Pole living in a country torn between empires in World War II, ravaged, and later a made a part of the Soviet Bloc. His early years, as an intellectual and priest, did not go unnoticed by his biographers (as we can see in writings by Georg Weigel), but only recently, there has been made, a larger inquiry into the origins of his thought found in the Polish literary, religious, and philosophical traditions.

Some scholars saw the subtle connection between the thought of Polish Romantics and the Pope. After all, Karol Wojtyła was part of the organisation named Unia, led by a messianist Jerzy Braun. But his own engagement in messianic thought was disputed by many scholars and biographers, and Father Maciej Zięba OP, who was a close associate of John Paul II, undermined the role of Polish Messianism on the Pope's thought.

It was philosopher Paweł Rojek who suggested that there is more to the messianistic foundations of the Pope's thought. His first proposal of approaching Wojtyła's thought through the lenses of his "messianic anthropology" appeared in a special volume of "Pressje" titled *Zabiliśmy Proroka* [We have killed the Prophet], dedicated to the (wasted) legacy of the Polish Pope, in his paper *Pokolenie kapłanów, proroków i królów? Mesjańska antropologia Jana Pawła II* [The generation of priests, prophets and kings? Messianic anthropology of John Paul II], and he suggested this in a paper in which he outlined his concept of "integral messianism" in 2012.¹ In 2016, Rojek elaborated on this idea in the book *Liturgia dziejów. Jan Paweł II i polski mesjanizm* [Liturgy of History. John Paul II and the Polish Messianism].² The ideas contained in this book are of great importance not only to Polish Catholics, who can see the connections between the Pope's teachings and Polish intellectual history, but also to every scholar who is seriously interested in the thought of John Paul II and his reception in the country of his origins. Polish messianic thought cannot be reduced to the romantic and national elation. Rojek shows how it is ingrained in the Revelation, and cannot be disregarded simply as an unorthodox branch of Polish culture. Henri de Lubac SJ had already noticed the originality of Polish messianism (specifically Adam Mickiewicz, but also the rest of the "bards") as being part of greater Catholic tradition, not falling into the millenarian heterodoxy (see H. de Lubac, *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore*, vol. 2: *de Saint Simon à nos jours*, Paris 1981).

In this volume of "Theological Research," we present to our readers the first English translation of the *Introduction* to Rojek's book. It is followed by a paper of historical importance: *Remarks on some Aspects of Messianism*, written by Emilia Ehrlich OSU, a long time secretary to John Paul II, who died one year after the Pope had. In 1982, she had already proposed "rereading" texts written by Polish Romantics, and discovered a strain of said messianism in the Bible and Church Tradition, relative to the Second Vatican Council and thought of Karol Wojtyła. Messianism, according to Ehrlich, "concerns and bounds all faithful." Marcin Suskiewicz sees Polish Messianism as a project of a different

¹ See P. Rojek, *Pokolenie kapłanów, proroków i królów? Mesjańska antropologia Jana Pawła II*, "Pressje" 24 (2011), p. 28–38; P. Rojek, *Mesjanizm integralny*, "Pressje" 28 (2012), p. 20–49.

² P. Rojek, *Liturgia dziejów. Jan Paweł II i polski mesjanizm*, Kraków 2016.

road to modernity, a modernity much truer to the Christian tradition. *Liturgia dziejów* [Liturgy of History] is thus an “attempt to provide a meta-theory to the effect that religion and modernity can be reunited.” Suskiewicz sees other possibilities for such interventions, which were exposed thanks to Rojek’s work. Massimiliano Signifredi is concerned more so with John Paul II and his theology of nation, which transcends the concept of particular nations toward messianistic vision of human history. To Michał Masłowski, Rojek’s endeavour is much more problematic, and he does raise many questions concerning his understanding of messianism and Papal theology. Andrzej Wawrzynowicz gives some insight into studies on Polish Messianism, and its importance for contemporary political and philosophical thought. In this regard, he sees Rojek’s work as an important contribution to the discussion, understanding John Paul II as having been “a theoretical advocate, and the practical and moral essence of integral messianism.” Paweł Rojek tries to answer all questions raised by the aforementioned authors. But the discussion upon the influence of Polish Messianism, and all that it brings with itself (eg. political philosophy, theology of nation, milenarianism, passionism, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy), on the thought and pontificacy of St. John Paul II, should be continued and elaborated upon. Not only as a genealogical project, but raising the question of possible gains it can bring to the understanding the Church’s in the present and the future³.

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³ I would like to thank Christian Stanley Ciesielski for correcting the English version of the text.