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*John Paul II
and the Polish Messianism.
Introduction
to the Liturgy of History*¹

ABSTRACT

Karol Wojtyła, before he was ordained for a priest, was, as everybody knows, an amateur poet, a promising playwright, and an outstanding actor. It is not widely acknowledged, though, that he was also deeply influenced by Romantic Messianism, an original complex of philosophical, religious and social ideas, created by a number of nineteenth-century Polish poets and thinkers. Quite surprisingly, Polish commentators of John Paul II usually disregard this particular context, because, as they believed, it might somehow undermine the universal meaning of the pope's teaching. Contrary to this view, I propose a program of systematic study of messianic influences on John Paul II. I believe that Polish Romantic Messianism is the key to understanding the thought of the Polish pope. I argue that John Paul II in his theology of history, theology of suffering, and theology of the nation actually developed three crucial ideas of Polish Messianism: millenarism, passionism and missionism. It seems, then, that the work of John Paul II, as the final form of Polish Messianism, is also the key to understanding the heritage of Polish Romantic thought.

KEYWORDS

John Paul II, Messianism, offices of Christ, theology of history, theology of nation, theology of suffering

¹ This is an English translation of a part of the Introduction to Paweł Rojek's book *Liturgia dziejów. Jan Paweł II i polski mesjanizm*, Kraków 2016, p. 11–25.

On 18 May 2000 the front page of the Polish newspaper “Gazeta Wyborcza” featured a surprising poem by Nobelist poet Czesław Miłosz entitled, *Ode for the Eightieth Birthday of Pope John Paul II*. The most outstanding living Polish poet paid an extraordinary tribute to the great Polish pope on the pages of the country’s most widely-circulated liberal daily:

We come to you, men of weak faith,
 So that you might fortify us with the example of your life
 And liberate us from anxiety
 About tomorrow and next year. Your twentieth century
 Was made famous by the names of powerful tyrants
 And by the annihilation of their rapacious states.
 You knew it must happen. You taught hope:
 For only Christ is the lord and master of history.²

This was probably the first such unambiguously positive statement by Miłosz about John Paul II. Earlier, even though Miłosz met pope in private and attended discussions with him at Castel Gandolfo, he could not overcome his distance towards the pope’s work, in which he saw dangerous nationalist and theocratic threads.³ *Ode for the Eightieth Birthday of Pope John Paul II* was, however, something more than just a commemorative laudation. Miłosz formulated in the poem a penetrating thesis about the fundamental sources of inspiration of John Paul II’s thought:

Foreigners could not guess from whence came the hidden strength
 Of a novice from Wadowice. The prayers and prophecies
 Of poets, whom money and progress scorned,
 Even though they were the equals of kings, waited for you
 So that you, not they, could announce, *urbi et orbi*,
 That the centuries are not absurd but a vast order.⁴

2 C. Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems 1931–2001*, New York 2003, p. 709.

3 C. Miłosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, transl. by M. G. Levine, New York 1994, p. 27–31;

C. Miłosz, *Państwo wyznaniowe?*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” May 11–12, 1991, p. 8–9.

4 C. Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems 1931–2001*, New York 2003, p. 709.

For Poles it is not difficult to guess that these poets, “equals of kings,” were the Polish Romantics. In 1927, during the reburial of a great poet Juliusz Słowacki at Wawel Hill in Krakow, in a traditional burial place of Polish kings, Józef Piłsudski, the head of state, issued the famous order: “On behalf of the Government of the Republic, I command you, Sirs, to take the coffin [...] to the royal crypt, for he was the equal of kings.”⁵ Hence, according to Miłosz, it was the romantic legacy of Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Zygmunt Krasiński, and, above all, that of Cyprian Kamil Norwid, that was supposedly the “hidden strength” of this modest “novice from Wadowice.” Notably, Miłosz’s diagnosis was not, as one might expect, critical of these influences. His surprising poem actually marked a change not only of his attitude towards the pope, but also of his attitude towards the heritage of Polish Romanticism in general. In a few texts written towards the end of his life, Miłosz even demanded that the ideas of the Romantics he had criticized throughout his life be restored to the mainstream of Polish culture.⁶ John Paul II was to be – as Miłosz reiterated with growing appreciation – “the last Polish Romantic.”⁷

JOHN PAUL II AND POLISH ROMANTICISM

Karol Wojtyła was undoubtedly formed by Polish Romanticism. From early on in his life the poetry of the Polish nineteenth-century bards fascinated him. He wrote poems referring to them, studied literature under the direction of outstanding experts in Romanticism, and during World War II he created dramas deeply rooted in the tradition of Polish Messianism. The underground Rhapsodic Theater of Mieczysław Kotlarczyk, in which Wojtyła performed for several years, set itself the goal of realizing the Romantic dreams of art transforming reality. This theatre was associated with the underground organisation, which Wojtyła joined. Unia was directed by Jerzy Braun, a declared Polish

5 J. M. Rymkiewicz, *Słowacki. Encyklopedia*, Warszawa 2004, p. 569.

6 C. Miłosz, *O podróżach w czasie*, Kraków 2004, p. 83–103.

7 C. Miłosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, op. cit., p. 28; C. Miłosz, *Potężniejszy niż królowie i docześni władcy tej ziemi*, in: *Aż po krańce ziemi*, red. J. M. Stroka, Kraków 1999, p. 126; C. Miłosz, *O podróżach w czasie*, op. cit., p. 85.

messianist, author of the doctrine of unionism, which developed many ideas of Polish Romantic thought.

This spiritual and intellectual heritage had a fundamental influence on the later teachings of John Paul II. During his travels to Poland, the Pope quoted our bards 38 times, including Norwid on 16 occasions. By comparison, St. Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church, received only two mentions.⁸ These all references were quite relevant. The quote the pope used during his first visit to Poland in Gniezno on 3 June 1979 from Mickiewicz's *The Books and the Pilgrimage of the Polish Nation*, that "a civilization that is really worthy of man, must be a Christian civilization," can be regarded as the leitmotif of his whole pontificate.⁹ Moreover, during his first pilgrimage to Poland, John Paul II many times provocatively referred to himself as the "Slavic Pope,"¹⁰ apparently alluding to Słowacki's famous poem *Amid Discord God Strikes*.¹¹ The poem, written in 1848, expressed a great vision of the coming Slavic Pope, and was, after 1979, widely recognized as prophetic. Next, the idea of confirming the nation of Poland, realized by the Pope at Kraków's Błonia, seemed to be evidently borrowed from the outstanding Polish philosopher August Cieszkowski.¹² Professor Andrzej Walicki, a great Polish and American historian of ideas, after the visit of John Paul II, even wrote a letter to Fr. Stanisław Dziwisz, pope's personal secretary, asking him to explain this striking reference to Cieszkowski, but, unfortunately, did not receive an answer.¹³ During the next pilgrimage,

8 K. Gryz, *Naród i patriotyzm – czy nadal są aktualne? Jana Pawła II myśli o ojczyźnie*, in: *Jan Paweł II. Posługa myślenia*, red. B. Kastelik, A. Krupka, R. Woźniak, t. 2, Kraków 2015, s. 351.

9 John Paul II, *Return to Poland. The Collected Speeches of John Paul II*, London 1979, p. 48; A. Mickiewicz, *The Books and the Pilgrimage of the Polish Nation*, trans. by K. Lach-Szyrma, London 1833, p. 34.

10 John Paul II, *Return to Poland*, 43, 45, 84, for other instances missing in the English edition see Jan Paweł II, *Pielgrzymki do Ojczyzny. Przemówienia, homilie*, Kraków 2012, p. 47, 48, 204.

11 J. Słowacki, *Amid Discord God Strikes*, transl. by L. Krzyżanowski, "The Polish Review" 24 (1979) no. 2, p. 5–6.

12 John Paul II, *Return to Poland*, op. cit., p. 173; A. Cieszkowski, *The Desire of All Nations, Being an English Edition (Abridged) of Our Father*, trans. by W.J. Rose, London 1919, p. 219–220.

13 A. Walicki, *Idee i ludzie. Próba autobiografii*, Warszawa 2010, p. 386.

in 1983, the pope, in a speech at Jasna Góra on 19 June 1983, clearly paraphrased a passage from Mickiewicz's *Forefathers*, a seminal text of Polish Romantic Messianism.¹⁴ Finally, during a visit in 1991, after a Mass in Kraków on 13 August, he unexpectedly referred to Słowacki, recommending the nascent Third Republic of Poland "to all great saints, the blessed, to these great spirits, Kings-Spirits of our nation."¹⁵

The influence of Polish Romanticism is also visible in the pope's teaching addressed to the whole world. The famous *Letter to the Artists* was in fact an extended commentary on Norwid's thoughts.¹⁶ Norwid's influence is also evident in the encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, which George Weigel described in *Witness to Hope* as "the first social encyclical in which a poet was a major theological inspiration."¹⁷ There were also many surprising Romantic gestures made by the Pope. In 1986 alone, during his visit to a Roman synagogue John Paul II called the Jews "our older brothers in faith," referring to Mickiewicz's famous phrase,¹⁸ and made an appeal for peace at the foot of Mount Blanc, perhaps alluding to the well-known Słowacki's Kordian monologue, spoken at the same peak.¹⁹ Indeed, as Miłosz noted, "the reader of his writings and innumerable homilies sometimes has the impression that the spirit of great Polish Romantics, doomed to fail, has been embodied in the head of the Catholic, namely universal, Church and thus entered the scene of world history."²⁰

In this book, I will try to develop Miłosz's observation and look at the relationships of John Paul II with Polish Romanticism, and more specifically with Polish Messianism. I believe that Polish Romantic Messianism is the key to understanding the thought of John Paul II,

¹⁴ John Paul II, *Pielgrzymki do Ojczyzny*, op. cit., p. 295–296; A. Mickiewicz, *Forefathers*, Part III, Act 2, trans. by G. Potocki of Montalk, London 1968.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Pielgrzymki do Ojczyzny*, op. cit., p. 784; J. Słowacki, *Dziela*, t. 5: *Król-Duch*, Wrocław 1952.

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Letter to Artists*, April 4, 1999, no. 3, 4, 16.

¹⁷ G. Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, New York 2001, p. 421.

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Address at the Great Synagogue of Rome*, April 13, 1986, no. 4; A. Mickiewicz, *Skład zasad*, in: A. Mickiewicz, *Dziela*, t. 12, Warszawa 1955, p. 7.

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Angelus*, Chétif, September 7, 1986, no. 2; J. Słowacki, *Kordian*, Act II, Scene 5, trans. G. T. Kapolka, Chicago 2010.

²⁰ C. Miłosz, *Potężniejszy niż królowie*, op. cit., p. 126.

but also the work of John Paul II is the key to understanding the heritage of Polish Messianism. One cannot properly understand many of the pope's gestures and statements without linking them to the context of Polish thought. As I will show in this book, his theology of history, theology of suffering, and theology of the nation are deeply rooted in the Polish Romantic imagination. Conversely, the further development of Polish Messianism proposed by John Paul II allows for a new reading of the Romantics. The poetic vision of building the kingdom of God on Earth has been reformulated in the pope's social teaching, the idea of national missions was justified in his reflection on cultures, and the bold thought of Poland as the Christ of Nations was deepened in papal meditations on suffering. All these themes were additionally embedded into the teaching on the three messianic functions of Christ, as recalled by the Second Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium*. Papal Messianism therefore seems to be the final form of Polish Messianism. Similar intuitions were probably behind the decision to place the texts of Karol Wojtyła at the end of the recently published exhaustive anthology of Polish Messianism.²¹ By understanding the final form of Messianism, we can better understand the various elements of its history and, above all, separate what is essential from what is accidental in it. "The falls and ridicules haunting the poet's work and biographies were not very important," Miłosz wrote, "if [those poets] found their fulfillment in a man more powerful than the kings and the temporal rulers of the Earth."²² Therefore, it is impossible to understand John Paul II without Polish Romantic Messianism or Polish Romantic Messianism without John Paul II.

CONTROVERSIES OVER PAPAL MESSIANISM

The thesis about the Romantic messianic sources of John Paul II's thought usually provokes one of two strong reactions. On the one hand, there are numerous defenders of John Paul II, who at all costs want to purge him of any connections with this suspicious Polish tradition. If necessary, they are ready to recognize some Romantic influences, but

²¹ *Spór o mesjanizm*, red. A. Wawrzynowicz, t. 1: *Rozwój idei*, Warszawa 2015, p. 463–488.

²² C. Miłosz, *Potężniejszy niż królowie*, op. cit., p. 126.

only understood in such general terms that they become virtually invisible and certainly have nothing to do with the supposed dangers of Messianism. On the other hand, some critics of John Paul II emphasize the Romantic and messianic influences that they believe discredit his heritage. Between these two extremes there are researchers who see the obvious influences of Romantic Messianism on Karol Wojtyła, but try to limit them only to the period of his youth, or only to his literary creativity. In this way, the mature theological or philosophical teaching of the pope is supposed to be protected from suspicious inspirations. The odium of Messianism is too overpowering to allow for the development of a benevolent messianic interpretation of the entire teaching of John Paul II. As a result, the work of the Polish pope – not only for the rest of the world, but, above all, in Poland – is carefully studied from the numerous perspectives of scholastic philosophy, Spanish mysticism, German phenomenology, French humanism, Italian personalism, Jewish philosophy of dialogue – anything but the immediate context of Polish Romantic Messianism.

Miłosz's thesis about the Romantic sources of the John Paul II's thought went almost unnoticed. As far as I know, Fr. Alfred Wierzbicki was the only one who argued directly with it. A long-standing head of the Lublin Institute of John Paul II and editor-in-chief of the quarterly *Ethos*, he wrote in his book *Poland of John Paul II*:

Of course, the mentality of John Paul II, let alone papal teaching, cannot be explained only by acknowledging him as a continuator of Polish Romanticism. Miłosz is right, however, when he emphasises this thread. [...] However, this is a peculiar Romanticism, free from irrationalism and particularism. This Romanticism cannot be identified with Messianism.²³

The only common point between Romanticism and the thought of John Paul II, according to Fr. Wierzbicki, would be a religious interpretation of history, which, of course, is not something specifically Romantic. Fr. Wierzbicki, like most of Polish theological and philosophical commentators of the teaching of John Paul II, strongly rejects any speculation about the influence of Messianism on the pope's thought. This rejection is made without any attempt to discuss what Messianism

23 A. M. Wierzbicki, *Polska Jana Pawła II*, Lublin 2011, p. 136, see also 63–64.

would actually be. In the same vein, Fr. Maciej Zięba OP, founder and president of the Krakow Institute Tertio Millennio, commenting on the thunderous statement of John Paul II, that a spark should come out of Poland, preparing the world for the final coming of Christ, reassured them calmly that “the interpretation of these words must be, as always done by the Holy Father, free from accents [...] of national Messianism.”²⁴

It is not difficult to understand the caution of official commentators. Polish Romantic Messianism from the very beginning provokes great controversy, so recognising its influence on John Paul II could cast a shadow on his teaching. That’s why it is his critics who most often talk about the pope’s relationship with Messianism. Although the famous book, *John Paul II. Critical analysis*, by the former Dominican Tadeusz Bartoś, does not contain the “analysis of Karol Wojtyła’s myth as the Great Romantic” and “interpretation of Wojtyła’s role as a spiritual guide through the prism of Polish Messianism” promised boldly in the blurb (Bartoś has little to say on the subject of Romanticism and Messianism), there are many statements suggesting the existence of such links, supposedly discrediting the Pope. Bartoś, for example, commenting on one of the John Paul II’s interviews, writes:

In the papal perception of the world [...], a professional political analysis combines with a religious-messianic element into one whole. This combination seems to be characteristic of the Pope’s profile. In his vision of history, the categories of Romantic Messianism are heard discreetly [...] and that idea of Poland, which is supposed to be the Christ of the nations.²⁵

Hence, Bartoś apparently agrees with Miłosz that the Pope was “the last great Romantic,” but he also believes that we already reached the “end of the era of great Romantics.”²⁶ To Bartoś, Messianism is a harmful myth that justifies national defects, frees us from criticism and invites us to celebrate our defeats. It is – as he says – “an extremely poisonous mixture of hypocrisies” which “still haunts us today.”²⁷ The more

24 M. Zięba, *Jestem z wami. Kompendium twórczości i nauczania Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II*, Kraków 2010, p. 299.

25 T. Bartoś, *Jan Paweł II. Analiza krytyczna*, Warszawa 2008, p. 87–88.

26 T. Bartoś, *Jan Paweł II*, op. cit., p. 14, 26.

27 T. Bartoś, *Jan Paweł II*, op. cit., p. 89.

Messianism in John Paul II, the worse for him. The same reasoning can be found in an ardent German critic of John Paul II's pontificate, Horst Herrmann, who wrote with satisfaction about the "sternly messianic" basis of the pope's teaching.²⁸ Interestingly, analogous accusations against the Pope are also formulated by Catholic integrists. One of them, Fr. Francesco Ricossa, triumphantly argued that the influence of Mickiewicz's Messianism indirectly associated Karol Wojtyła with esoterism, Kabbalah, and freemasonry.²⁹

Between these two extremes there are authors who point to the evolution of thought between Karol Wojtyła and John Paul II. Although young Wojtyła, it is said, was greatly influenced by Polish Messianism, he increasingly distanced himself from this when maturing, and already on the papal throne, as John Paul II, was completely free from it. In result, even if in the pontificate of the Polish pope, one can see some influences of Polish Romanticism, they have nothing to do with dangerous Polish Messianism. George Williams, author of the influential book *The Mind of John Paul II*, published in 1981, suggested such an interpretation. He was the first to point out that John Paul II, on his first pilgrimage outside the Vatican walls, a few days after his election, went to Mentorella, a sanctuary founded by the Resurrectionists, a Catholic order, established among Polish emigrants in nineteenth century France, close at the beginning to Mickiewicz and other messianists. Williams explained the unexpected visit by saying:

It is reasonable to assume that at some point in his development as a Polish teacher, Karol Wojtyła overcame the Messianism of Polish prophetic poets, but although he avoided their rather bizarre heresies [...], he kept some of their literary and national themes deep in his heart and mind. The apostate from Polish Messianism [...] under the mysterious judgments of providence, became the Polish Vicar of the Messiah Jesus [...]. He must have been considering all this among the Resurrectionists' cypresses.³⁰

28 H. Herrmann, *Johannes Paul II. beim Wort genommen. Eine kritische Antwort auf den Papst*, München 1995.

29 F. Ricossa, *Karol, Adam, Jacob*, "Sodalitium" 48 (1999), p. 61–73.

30 G. H. Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II. Origins of His Thought and Action*, New York 1981, p. 47.

Williams admits then that John Paul II had a messianic episode, but it was, fortunately, overcome. If any messianic themes can be noticed in his teaching, they are thoroughly “transformed, rebuilt and sublimated.”³¹ This interpretation is also accepted by Polish literary scholars, who point to the process of overcoming Polish Messianism by the future pope. For example, in the early eighties, Jarosław Maciejewski was pointing out that papal “Romanticism” had been finally “liberated from the dilemmas of our bards, decisive and harmonising Polish moral dilemmas,”³² and more recently Krzysztof Dybciak argued that the “literal understanding of the messianic theory” visible in young Wojtyła, was “fortunately remodelled as a result of a thought evolution.”³³ In this way, one can freely study the romantic motifs of the young Karol Wojtyła’s work without getting entangled in potentially dangerous reflections on the influence of Polish Messianism on the whole pontificate of John Paul II.

SOURCES OF THE NEW INTERPRETATION

As we can see, commentators on the legacy of John Paul II are usually conspicuously silent about his relationship with Polish Romantic Messianism, and if they speak out, it is usually to separate acceptable Romanticism from unacceptable Messianism, young Karol Wojtyła from a mature John Paul II, or both. In this book, contrary to these interpretations, I will show that it is exactly Polish Messianism, and not some undetermined Romanticism, which permeates the entire teaching of John Paul II, and not only the early works of Karol Wojtyła. I will also argue that the influence of Messianism is not a disadvantage but a great advantage of the work of John Paul II. Polish Messianism, if it is understood in the right way, is an inspiring attempt to formulate an alternative to modern, increasingly secular interpretations

31 G. H. Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, op. cit., p. 314.

32 J. Maciejewski, *Karol Wojtyła i Jan Paweł II wobec literatury (II)*, “W Drodze” 8 (1983), p. 58.

33 K. Dybciak, *Pisarstwo Karola Wojtyły/Jana Pawła II jako synteza głównych wzorów polskiej tradycji intelektualnej*, in: *Karol Wojtyła/Jan Paweł II wobec tradycji kultury polskiej*, red. G. Halkiewicz-Sojak, A. Komorowska, B. Łuczak, M. Sokulski, Toruń 2015, p. 58.

of Christianity. For us, Poles, it is a particularly valuable testimony to the internal connection between Polish culture and Christianity.

One of the most intriguing evidence of John Paul II's Messianism is the forgotten paper by Sister Emilia Ehrlich OSU, *Remarks on Some Aspects of Messianism*, delivered on March 29, 1982 at the Polish Institute of Christian Culture in Rome.³⁴ Sister Emilia was an Ursuline scholar, one of the closest collaborators of John Paul II, his longtime personal secretary and librarian.³⁵ It is difficult to estimate her impact on the papal writings, but she cannot be denied knowledge of John Paul II's thought, with whom she remained in daily working contact. In her text, she argued that the fundamental ideas of Polish Messianism virtually agree with the orthodox Catholic teaching of the messianic functions of Christ, performed by the People of God in the world, recalled recently by the Second Vatican Council. She analysed, among other things, the writings of Stanisław Orzechowski, one of the fathers of Sarmatian Messianism, and notably of Karol Wojtyła, who developed the Council's teaching about the mission of the People of God. In her opinion, it is contemporary theology that should become the basis for a new reading of Polish Messianism.

Today, enriched with one and a half centuries of Christianity and national history, we can rely more firmly on the foundation of the Church, which blesses our Christian priestly, prophetic and kingly Messianism. [...] Yet, with these enormous tasks we also receive the power to fulfil them and as much grace as God gives to the nations probably once in a thousand years.³⁶

This "foundation of the Church," as well as the extraordinary "grace" was undoubtedly, as suggested Sister Ehrlich, the very pontificate of John Paul II. Her astonishing testimony, coming straight from the papal chambers, has unfortunately been completely ignored. I do not know any single text that refers to this paper by Sister Ehrlich. After the years of neglect, I will develop in this some of its main ideas.

³⁴ E. Ehrlich, *Remarks on Some Aspects of Messianism*, transl. by K. Popowicz, "Theological Research" 7 (2019), p. 29–51.

³⁵ A. Klich, *Papież i zakonnica*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" April 26, 2011, p. 8–11.

³⁶ E. Ehrlich, *Remarks on Some Aspects of Messianism*, op. cit., p. 49.

There are, however, more hints of messianic influences on John Paul II. Perhaps the most famous praise of the Romantic impact on Pope II was surprisingly formulated by one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century, the Jesuit Henri de Lubac, on the margins of his book *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore*, one chapter of which was devoted to Mickiewicz. He wrote that after the election of John Paul II

Mickiewicz's fundamental idea – that is, that the Gospel of Christ, whose guardian is the Church [...] should be realised in both the lives of nations and individuals [...] – was to be recognised more than ever. [...] Never has this teaching been clearer and more tenacious than in the speeches of John Paul II.³⁷

The same affinity was noticed by the outstanding historian of ideas Andrzej Walicki. In an interview with the editors of the Polish journal “Political Theology,” he said that in the Polish pope’s thought, “a significant influence of messianic ideas can be noticed [...]. In many of his texts, John Paul II [...] wishes to revive earthly life in the spirit of ecumenical reconciliation and making political relations more ethical, which was, as you know, the central idea of Polish [...] Messianism.”³⁸ A lot on this subject was also written by the literary scholar Michał Masłowski, who noted that “the problem of John Paul II’s Messianism and his relationship with Polish Romanticism is complicated and would require a separate dissertation.”³⁹ The thesis on the Messianism of John Paul II was also expressed on various occasions by theologians Czesław Stanisław Bartnik⁴⁰ and Piotr Napiwodzki,⁴¹ theatrologist

37 H. de Lubac, *La Postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore*, vol. 2: *De Saint-Simon à nos jours*, Paris 1981, p. 281.

38 A. Walicki, *Między polskim mesjanizmem a misjonizmem. Z Andrzejem Walickim rozmawiają Marek Cichocki i Dariusz Gawin*, “Teologia Polityczna” 4 (2007), p. 35.

39 M. Masłowski, *Problemy tożsamości. Szkice mickiewiczowskie i (post)romantyczne*, Lublin 2006, p. 441.

40 C. S. Bartnik, *Idea polskości*, Radom 2001.

41 P. Napiwodzki, *Bliżej niż się wydaje. O końcu świata, milenaryzmie i chrześcijańskiej nadziei*, Poznań 2010.

Dariusz Kosiński,⁴² literary scholar Łukasz Tischner,⁴³ and publicist Grzegorz Górny.⁴⁴ I am particularly inspired by important articles by my friends Michał Łuczewski⁴⁵ and Michał Sokulski,⁴⁶ who tried to combine, independently to Sister Emilia, papal Messianism with the conciliar teaching about the three missions of Christ. Unfortunately, although the thesis about the relationship of John Paul II with Polish Messianism seemed so obvious for many contemporaries, and was suggested by so many serious commentators, it has never been, as far as I know, developed in a systematic way. This book is aimed to fill this gap as well as possible.

THE TEACHING ON MESSIANIC FUNCTIONS

A common feature of most of the presented interpretations of the legacy of John Paul II is the lack of a developed theory of Polish Messianism. Some reject the messianic inspirations of the pope, others follow them passionately, but hardly anyone bothers to explain what they are supposed to mean. In the first chapter, then, I provide a rather detailed analysis of Polish Messianism and propose a number of important terminological decisions. I will present three basic elements of Polish Messianism, namely: millenarianism, proclaiming the necessity of building the kingdom of God on earth, passionism, perceiving a special value in suffering, and, finally, missionism, recognizing the special missions of nations. As it seems, Messianism is an example of family resemblance concepts, since these three ideas might, but not

42 D. Kosiński, *Performer. Jan Paweł II i polski teatr przemiany*, "Więź" 20 (2008), p. 57–65.

43 Ł. Tischner, *Mistyka i duchy wieszczów*, "Znak" 661 (2010), p. 10–14.

44 G. Górny, *Tam, gdzie Bóg ma jeszcze swoją ojczyznę*, "Arcana" 15 (1997), p. 74–88.

45 M. Łuczewski, *Pan i Ożywiciel Solidarności. Anatomia odgórnej rewolucji*, "Pressje" 21 (2010), p. 118–129; M. Łuczewski, *Mesjanizm dla mas. Szaleństwo Jana Pawła II*, "Pressje" 24 (2011), p. 58–65; M. Łuczewski, *Norwa nauka mesjanizmu. Z dodatkiem rozważań o istocie ducha polsko-żydowskiego*, "44/Czterdzieści i Cztery" 4 (2012), p. 103–123.

46 M. Sokulski, *Przedświt jako tekst profetyczny*, "Dyskurs" 1 (2005), p. 105–132; M. Sokulski, *Echa mesjanizmów: sarmackiego i romantycznego w wizji polskich dziejów Karola Wojtyły (Jeremiasz)/Jana Pawła II (Homilie z pielgrzymek do Ojczyzny)*, in: *Karol Wojtyła/Jan Paweł II wobec tradycji kultury polskiej*, op. cit., p. 209–232.

need to coincide. This yields a wide space of possible forms of Messianism. However, these three fundamental ideas, as I will show further, connect systematically on the ground of the teaching on the three messianic functions of Christ, in which all faithful are included. This teaching was recalled by the Second Vatican Council, and was many times enthusiastically highlighted by Karol Wojtyła. Millenarianism corresponds to the royal messianic function, passionism to the priestly, and missionism to the prophetic.

In the second chapter I will look again at a few well known facts from the life of Karol Wojtyła. I will show that they can be arranged in a story of a Polish messianist who becomes a Catholic priest. Young Wojtyła was shaped by Romantic poetry, especially through the work of Słowacki and Norwid. For many years his closest friend and master was Mieczysław Kotłarczyk, a fanatic follower of the mission of art, which was to revive Poland and the whole world. During the war, Wojtyła joined the underground Union, which aimed not only to fight the German occupant, but also to bring about a great transformation of the whole world after the war. Its leader, Jerzy Braun, openly referred to the heritage of Polish Messianism. At the end, I will show how Wojtyła's messianic inspirations were partially strengthened and partially obscured by the theology of Second Vatican Council, which unexpectedly accepted many postulates of Polish Romantics. That is why Wojtyła could stay faithful messianist being openly devoted to the heritage of the Council.

In the next three chapters, I will trace three main ideas of Polish Messianism in the thought of Karol Wojtyła and John Paul II. I will focus on three fundamental topics of his thought: the theology of the nation, the interpretation of suffering, and the vision of work. Culture, suffering and work are, for the pope, the fundamental dimensions of human existence. As he wrote, the national culture is "specific way of man's existing and being,"⁴⁷ suffering is "almost inseparable from man's earthly existence,"⁴⁸ and work is "fundamental dimension of man's existence on earth."⁴⁹

I would not like to give the impression that I cover the whole heritage of John Paul II. I will not even analyse all the papal messianistic

47 John Paul II, *Address to UNESCO*, Paris, June 2, 1980, no. 6.

48 John Paul II, Apostolic letter *Salvifici doloris*, February 11, 1984, no. 3.

49 John Paul II, Encyclical letter *Laborem exercens*, September 14, 1981, no. 4.

sayings and gestures that were recalled at the beginning. Instead, I will look at some of his key works, namely pre-war poetry, occupational dramas, small philosophical and theological writings from the seventies, homilies from the first pilgrimage to Poland and selected papal documents, in particular the great social encyclical from the eighties, *Laborem Exercens* and *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*. Intentionally I do not separate Wojtyła's early literary works and the subsequent teaching of John Paul II. I believe that, in many cases, poems and dramas allow a better understanding of the apostolic letters and encyclicals, which in turn reveal the hidden meanings of Karol Wojtyła's earlier works.

First, I will deal with missionism in John Paul II's thought. I will briefly present the principles of papal theology of the nation presented during the first pilgrimage to Poland and developed in the encyclical *Slavorum apostoli*. It seems to me that a proper understanding of the mission of Slavs, outlined in 1979, is possible only if one considers the pre-war poems of Wojtyła from *The David's Psalter (The Slavic Book)*. John Paul II was convinced that Slavs, and Poles in particular, could offer the world an integral vision of Christianity that combines flourishing religious life with progressive modernization. This was to be, by the way, the fulfillment of their prophetic mission. This point was usually misunderstood by pope's commentators, especially in Western countries. The vision of John Paul II was reduced to the project of liberal democracy enabled with some religious elements. It seems however that the pope hoped the whole modern civilization might be fundamentally reshaped by the Christian experience, preparing thus the world for the second coming of Christ.

In the fourth chapter, I will study the issue of passionism. First, I will look at Karol Wojtyła's war reflections, which resulted in two preserved dramas devoted to the collective suffering of Poland. In *Jeremiah*, he formulated the concept of suffering as a punishment, while in *Job*, he suggested a deeper interpretation of suffering as a particular union with Christ. The latter theme was later developed in 1984 in the apostolic letter *Salvifici Doloris*. Suffering, according to John Paul II, is a special form of continuing the priestly mission of Christ. I will show that the contemplation of the sense of suffering combined with the reflection on the history of Poland led him to a theological justification of the messianistic formula of Poland as Christ of nations. In this context, the Pope formulated also a great vision of the liturgy of history, deeply inspired by Polish Messianism.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, I will look at the most important element of Polish Messianism in the writings of John Paul II, namely millenarianism. This chapter has a quite complicated structure because I try to show the relationships between the pope's teaching on work with the philosophy of Fr Józef Tischner on the one hand, and the practice of Solidarity on the other. The theology of work formulated by the Pope is, as I am going to show, a development of the messianistic millenarianism. John Paul II believed that human work is in fact the performance of the royal function of Christ and the way to build the kingdom of God on earth. The theme of the liturgy of history appears here too. The results of human work become the necessary, though not sufficient condition for the presence of Christ. The great Solidarity movement, directly inspired by John Paul II, combined religious and social elements. The pope seemed to believe that Solidarity might be the beginning of the process of religious transformation of the modern world. By the end of this chapter, I will try answer why this did not happen.

At the end of the book, I deal with the surprising process of the return of Messianism, which is taking place in Poland before our eyes. After 1989, it seemed that old Romantic ideas have no future in new Poland, due to the rapid political, economical and social transformation. Yet, today we see that these ideas can be an inspiration also in the late modernity. I wrote more about the unexpected relevance of the Polish intellectual traditions in my *Avant-garde Conservatism*.⁵⁰ It seems, however, that the kind of Messianism recurring today, often overlooks the key messianic idea, namely the transformation of the world, focusing only on the Polish uniqueness or celebration of national suffering. There are also attempts to interpret the legacy of John Paul II in this reductive way. Contrary to that, I think that the pope was an integral messianist; he was not merely missionist and passionist, but also millenarists, in an appropriate sense. What's more, only such an integral messianist programme can be a real challenge for the modern world.

Translated by Katarzyna Popowicz

⁵⁰ P. Rojek, *Awangardowy konserwatyzm. Idea polska w późnej nowoczesności*, Kraków 2016.

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