



The Concept of Religion of the Future according to the Esoteric Community of Wisła in the Interwar Period

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to present the idea of a religion of the future as conceived by the esoteric community of Wisła in Cieszyn Silesia during the interwar period. Esoteric interpretations of Christianity formed its basis, inspired mainly by the Polish romantic tradition connected with Bible reading, as well as the esoteric and spiritual ideas that were popular at that time, originating from Theosophy and spiritism. An important role in this context was played by considerations on the salvational mission of Christ, albeit presented in a perennialist and Gnostic manner. The esoteric spirituality from Wisła of the interwar period later paved the way for a modern alternative spirituality in Poland.

Keywords: esotericism, Theosophy, spiritism, spirituality, immanence, Andrzej Podzorski, Agnieszka Pilchowa, Jan Hadyna, Julian Ochorowicz

Słowa kluczowe: ezoteryzm, teozofia, spirytyzm, duchowość, immanencja, Andrzej Podzorski, Agnieszka Pilchowa, Jan Hadyna, Julian Ochorowicz

Wisła is one of the unique places on the map of Poland due to the history of Cieszyn Silesia, incorporated into Austrian Silesia even before the partition of Poland,¹ and also due to religious differences, but with a marked dominance of Protestant churches and communities.² One of the manifestations of this diversity was the dynamic

¹ The town of Wisła lies in Cieszyn Silesia, the south-eastern part of Silesia. After World War I, Cieszyn Silesia was divided by the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia, see. *Śląsk Cieszyński w latach 1918–1945*, I. Panic (ed.), Cieszyn 2015.

² According to the census carried out at the end of the 19th century, there were 3,980 Protestants, 240 Catholics and 41 Jews in Wisła; 4,196 had Polish nationality, and 64 were German. Currently in the Wisła

activity of the Wisła esoteric community during the interwar period, which included representatives of both the Evangelical Church of Augsburg and the Roman Catholic tradition.³ They did not create any official association, and their views diverged on many points, so today the community appears more like a group of individuals with common interests than a coherent team of people with clearly defined and harmonious views. However, their personal commitment to the study of esoteric concepts, extensive contacts, including international ones, and their significant publishing activity turned out to be a real phenomenon that would shape the alternative spirituality that was developing before and after World War II not only in the vicinity of Cieszyn Silesia, but also throughout Poland.

In the views of the Wisła esoteric enthusiasts, of particular importance were projects regarding the religion of the future, which was to come true in the era of spiritual revival that they awaited. These concepts were based primarily on esoteric interpretations of Christianity. Although Christianity remained an important reference point for most of the esoteric currents running through interwar Poland, the Wisła approach seems unique and it arose from the synthesis of various strands of alternative spirituality specific to this community, especially spiritist and theosophical ones, along with the tradition of reading and commenting on the Bible and the free reinterpretation of Polish romantic and folk traditions within this context. In a short article it is impossible to discuss this extremely complex issue comprehensively, so I will focus on just three authors involved in the Wisła esoteric circle: Andrzej Podżorski (1886–1971), Agnieszka Pilchowa (1888–1945) and Jan Hadyna (1899–1971).

One of the most important inspirations for the Wisła esoteric activists of the interwar period was research conducted at the end of the 19th century by Julian Ochorowicz (1850–1917), a Polish psychologist, philosopher and inventor who spent ten years in this town trying to popularise what he believed to be the unique health benefits of that location.⁴ However, his experiments on mediumism – received with reluctance by the local population, and the clergy in particular, due to the association of these activities with the then-fashionable spiritism – gained particular notoriety. This attitude was reinforced by Ochorowicz's sudden departure from Wisła, which became the subject of many legends, especially since he was never to return. Religion was not the main topic of Ochorowicz's research interests. Nevertheless, his

area, there are five parishes of the Evangelical Church of Augsburg, three Roman Catholic parishes, ten churches and places of prayer of other Protestant Churches (Pentecostal, Baptist, Seventh-day Adventists and members of the “Maranatha” Christian Church) as well as four congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses, cf. R. Czyż, Z. Pasek, *Kościół i wspólnoty religijne Wisły*, “Monografia Wisły,” vol. 3, Wisła 2008.

³ Cf. F. Drewniak, *Ezoterycy w Wiśle*, [in:] *Wisła Julianowi Ochorowiczowi w 150 rocznicę urodzin*. TMW, Wisła 2001, pp. 7–27; Z. Pasek, *Spirytyzm i ruch rozwoju duchowego*, [in:] R. Czyż, Z. Pasek, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–55.

⁴ Julian Ochorowicz even initiated the construction of villas, which he intended to rent or sell to people who wanted to recuperate or strengthen their life forces in this very place. A short biography of Ochorowicz was presented by K. Cedro-Abramczyk, *Julian Ochorowicz – wynalazca, psycholog, polihistor wiedzy tajemnej*, Gdynia–Kraków 2019. On the topic of the mediumistic specifics of Polish interest in spiritism, see A. Mikołajko, *Spirytyzm czy mediumizm? O polskich zmaganiach ze zjawiskami przeczącymi nauce*, [in:] *Polskie tradycje ezoteryczne 1890–1939. Formacje, ludzie, idee*, “Światło i Ciemność,” M. Rzeczycka, I. Trzczińska (ed.), Gdańsk 2019.

works devoted to psychic phenomena, which are not easily explained, as well as the significance of secret knowledge in ancient cultures, and finally, his interest in issues regarding the renewal of social, state and personal science became important reference points for the formation of later projects for a new religion.⁵

The first concept of the religion of the future emerged from the circle of the Polish Theosophical Society in Zaolzie. It was founded by Andrzej Kajfosz (1889–1970) in 1919.⁶ Although this part of Cieszyn Silesia became part of Czechoslovakia, this organisation also operated on the Polish side, and Andrzej Podżorski, a teacher from Wisła,⁷ became the editor of “Wyzwolenie” (en. “Liberation”), the first Polish theosophical journal, and in the very first issue of this magazine he published a text-manifesto entitled *On the religion of the future*.⁸ In his view, the doctrine of modern Theosophy had become a model for a new religion. In this essay, Podżorski referred to the most important postulates of this trend, along with his characteristic perennialist belief that Christianity is merely one of many religious traditions. He also drew attention to the role of Eastern religion that was so important for theosophic spirituality, as was evident from the introduction of concepts derived from outside the Western cultural circle (such as karma or reincarnation). As a consequence, Podżorski, like many other Theosophical authors, treated the figure of Christ on an equal footing with other great founders of religion, perceiving the reason for the unity of their teachings not in a specific common source, but in the experiences of the “soul,” i.e. in the personal experiences of each person:

The best teaching and the best religion for the soul is the one that most satisfies its aspirations. This principle is the foundation for all the greater or lesser religions of the world, such as the religion of Zoroaster, the Buddha, Christ, and sectarian religions, the living fragments of major teachings.⁹

It should be underlined that this approach was quite bold from the Polish perspective, including that of the esoteric milieu that tended to emphasise the uniqueness of the figure of Christ. One example is Tadeusz Miciński (1873–1918), a member of the first Polish lodge of the Theosophical Society, founded at the beginning of the 20th century in Warsaw, who vehemently defended Christ’s historicity and lack of

⁵ Cf. A. Mikołajko, *Julian Ochorowicz in Search of the “Matrix” of Life*, [in:] *Polish Esoteric Traditions 1890–1939. Selected Issues*, A. Świerżowska (ed.), Gdańsk 2019, pp. 34–52.

⁶ For the history and characteristics of this theosophical formation see J. Szymeczek, *Towarzystwo Teozoficzne*, „II Biuletyn Ośrodka Dokumentacyjnego Kongresu Polaków w Republice Czeskiej” 1996 (Czeski Cieszyn), pp. 26–35; *idem*, *Kajfosz Andrzej*, [in:] *Bibliografický Slovník Šlezska a Severní Moravy*, Sešit 10, L. Dokoupil (ed.), Ostrava 1998, pp. 78–79; *idem*, *Ruch teozoficzny na Śląsku Cieszyńskim (Zaolziu) od początku XX wieku do 1952 roku*, [in:] *Obszary i przestrzenie edukacji. Meandry – konteksty – dylematy*, E. Karcz-Taranowicz (ed.), Opole 2016, pp. 297–304; I. Trzcinińska, A. Świerżowska, J. Szymeczek, *Z dziejów polskiej teozofii*, [in:] *Polskie tradycje ezoteryczne 1890–1939*, vol. 1: *Teozofia i antropozofia*, M. Rzczyńska, I. Trzcinińska (eds.), Gdańsk 2019, pp. 38–130.

⁷ *Andrzej Podżorski*, [in:] *Zacni Wiślanie. Słownik biograficzny*, T. Łączyńska (ed.), vol. 1, Wisła 2000, pp. 84–89.

⁸ A. Podżorski, *O religii przyszości*, “Wyzwolenie” 1919, no.1, pp. 10–14.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

precedence, citing, among others, the views of Annie Besant (1847–1933).¹⁰ This is probably why the publications of Edouard Schuré (1841–1929) enjoyed tremendous popularity in Poland, presenting Christ's appearance in the world as the closure of a series of initiation apparitions of the Great Initiates.¹¹

Further on in the cited text, Podzorski focused on presenting the fundamental principles of this theosophical concept of the world, discussing its basic goals and assumptions, and the idea of an evolution characteristic for this esoteric movement. In writing about human life that developed in a reincarnational sequence, he summarised the meaning of these lives and the accompanying effort of personal and inner work, impossible to accomplish without the support of spiritual masters:

In this pilgrimage, man is accompanied by the leaders of earthly existence, great spirits, serving in voluntarily work around the development of humanity. In theosophical circles they are called Masters. They are voluntary exiles, visible and invisible, known and unknown executors of "divine laws," friends of humanity, whom they support in their pursuit towards the complete development of the divine body (Atma), i.e. to complete liberation. The liberated self can immerse itself in cosmic consciousness and live in Nirvana without losing his "I" or renounce its happiness in favour of its younger confreres. This is called the **Great Renunciation** or **Great Sacrifice**. They are our **saviours**.¹²

The theme of sacrifice, translating into the postulate of personal commitment and devotion to confessional ideas, was very familiar to Poles, and not only those interested in Theosophy, because it was connected with the Romantic messianic reflection. In Podzorski's text, the sacrifice primarily gained a cosmic sense, and the Mahatmas were the model saviours. Thus, the explanation of the act of salvation known from the Christian context lost its uniqueness and merged with the concept of liberating knowledge, available for anyone ready to acquire it.¹³ In the end, however, Podzorski noticed:

This teaching is not a dogma that must not be violated for fear of condemnation and curse, but it can be investigated, accepted or rejected. The essence of Theosophy is not about making teachings that satisfy human curiosity, but is about ethical pursuits.¹⁴

¹⁰ T. Miciński, *Walka o Chrystusa*, Warszawa 1911. In this book, Miciński quite enigmatically referred to the theosophical concept of Christ known from the work of A. Besant, *Esoteric Christianity or the Lesser Mysteries*, New York 1902. It should also be remembered that for Miciński, Christ was not an ordinary historical hero or miracle worker, but the image of a perfect self usually juxtaposed with his luciferic ambivalence, cf. A. Czabanowska-Wróbel, *Dziwne płaszcze Micińskiego*, "Teksty Drugie" 2008, no. 3, pp. 125–131; J. Ławski, *Wyobrażenia lucyferyczna. Szkice o poemacie Tadeusza Micińskiego "Niedokonany. Kuszenie Chrystusa Pana na pustyni"*, Białystok 1995. It was only in the Polish Theosophical Society founded in the early 1920s that Wanda Dynowska adopted views similar to those of Podzorski.

¹¹ Before the outbreak of World War II, several books by E. Schuré were published in Polish. Reissued several times, *Les Grands Initiés. Esquisse de l'histoire secrète des religions* (1889) is among the most popular.

¹² A. Podzorski, *op. cit.*, p. 10. All sections in bold in the cited texts are the work of their authors.

¹³ In this approach, the concept of salvation approaches Gnostic reflection, according to which the one who previously saved himself, i.e., led himself to liberation, can be a saviour, cf. K. Rudolph, *Gnosis. The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. R. McLachlan Wilson, P.W. Coxon, K.H. Kuhn, New York 1987, p. 122.

¹⁴ A. Podzorski, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

Particular attention should be paid to this last postulate – ethical social activity – especially since Podzorski was known for his pragmatism and social missions, for example, he founded the Beskid Museum in Wisła. In this act, one may find theosophic inspirations, but its meaning and overtones in the local Wisła community were devoid of esoteric associations. Theosophy, however, did not take hold in Wisła permanently, and Podzorski chose to associate with the circle of local esoteric devotees, and the spirituality propagated by Kajfosz among the Theosophists of Zaolzie adopted a decidedly Christocentric character, as confirmed by the preserved minutes of weekly theosophical meetings, during which Kajfosz also explained selected biblical passages, from the New Testament in particular.¹⁵

This change was undoubtedly caused by the large-scale lack of acceptance by the members of the Polish Theosophical Society in Zaolzie for the messianic role of Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986), who, according to Besant and Charles W. Leadbeater (1854–1934), would integrate the functions of the second coming of Christ and the Buddha of the future.¹⁶ It was also very poorly received by members of the Wisła esoteric group who represented non-Theosophical factions. In the esoteric journal “Odrodzenie” (en. “Revival”), published in Cieszyn Silesia from the early 1920s, a text even appeared by an author under the pseudonym of Ors, who considered Krishnamurti to be a false prophet.¹⁷

The attitude of the esoteric thinkers from Wisła towards Krishnamurti changed radically after his dissolution of the Order of the Star, as well as his withdrawal from the ranks of the Theosophical Society in 1929.¹⁸ Ors once again wrote in the esoteric journal “Hejnał” (en. “Bugle Call”) published in Wisła, praising Krishnamurti’s wisdom and recognising him as a true spiritual master:

Krishna, you also came to work on awakening humanity for the better [...]. You were dealt a disfavour by being proclaimed as a second Christ. But you changed your approach in time. You untied the knots that restrained your will. Now you walk alone, though not alone, because others will be with you in spirit and at work, even if they do not physically cross your path.¹⁹

In the next issue of “Hejnał,” Agnieszka Pilchowa presented her own version of Krishnamurti’s story, recognising that his formation was overwhelmingly influenced by an encounter with Christ in one of his earlier incarnations.²⁰ Thus, Krishnamurti

¹⁵ These minutes are kept in the archive in Frydek-Nydek.

¹⁶ Research on this topic was conducted by J. Szymeczek.

¹⁷ Ors, *Kto idzie? (Z powodu ogłoszenia Wielkiego Nauczyciela Ludzkości przez obóz Tow. Teozoficznego “Adyar”)*, “Odrodzenie,” Grudzień 1926, p. 16.

¹⁸ J. Krishnamurti, *Rozwiązanie Zakonu Gwiazdy*, trans. H. Bołoz-Antoniewiczowa, Warszawa 1929, p. 5. For more on the dissolution of the Order of the Star, see also M. Lutyens, *Krishnamurti. The Years of Awakening*, London 1975, pp. 272–275; A.J.G. Methorst-Kuiper, *Krishnamurti*, trans. D.V. de Munther Thompson, Bombay [1970], pp. 35–38.

¹⁹ Ors., *Kto przyszedł?*, “Hejnał” 1929, no. 9, p. 288.

²⁰ See: A. Pilchowa, *Krishnamurti*, “Hejnał,” 1929, no. 10, pp. 304–309. In April 1910, Charles W. Leadbeater began publishing a series of stories about earlier incarnations of Krishnamurti, dating back to 22,662 BCE, in the “Theosophist” journal, which had a shared title of *Rents in the Veil of Time* and then appeared in separate book, A. Besant, C.W. Leadbeater, *Lives of Alcyone*, Anand Gholap Theosophical Institute 2009, http://www.anandgholap.net/Lives_of_Alcyone-AB_CWL.htm# (accessed: 15.10.2019).

was considered to be a kind of prophet of esoteric Christianity of the coming age. Similarly, Pilchowa presented the beginnings of her own relationship with Christ, which was assumed to have begun during their meeting in antiquity, as she described in detail in her most famous book, *Pamiętniki jasnowidzącej* (en. *Memoirs of a Clairvoyant*).²¹ Her voice in this discussion was extremely important, because one might dare to claim that the author's texts contributed significantly to the formation of Wisła esoteric Christology. Pilchowa herself came from a poor Polish Roman Catholic family living near Ostrava. She bitterly criticised this Christian tradition, although her vision of the world did contain many magical aspects of Polish folk religiosity. The gift of clairvoyance and bioenergotherapeutic powers attributed to her meant that the Wisła esoteric enthusiasts of the inter-war period gathered around her for a long time.

Like Ochorowicz, this group was received by local Christian churches, and the radical Pietistic communities in particular, with great reservation and even hostility. Furthermore, the "spiritist" label had stuck to them, which was accurate to some extent. Indeed, while Ochorowicz studied predominantly the unknown psychic phenomena, the fascinations of the Wisła esoteric group of that period shifted much more towards spirituality, including spiritist inspirations, although they were never officially identified with it.²² Undoubtedly, the esoteric devotees from Wisła were more in tune with the beliefs of spiritists regarding Christ, leading to salvation through a moral life and liberation from matter, as well as the concurrent idea of spiritual enlightenment and conviction of the important role of auxiliary spirits. Many of them also shared views regarding the universal evolution of being, largely in line with theosophist beliefs. At the same time, in a manner characteristic of other Polish esoteric groups, they emphasised the independence of their own ideas, for whom stances adopted elsewhere were only a starting point for the creation of their own ideas.

One example of such an approach was the extensive mythology contained in Pilchowa's writings, who claimed that the source of these stories were her own personal visions, as well as the teachings of her spiritual teachers in the astral reality. Pilchowa claimed that the Cosmos was the joint work of God as well as perfect human beings created at the beginning, appearing first in a spiritual form only and endowed with extraordinary powers. Pilchowa completely omitted the biblical description of the creation and original sin of the first people and their expulsion from paradise. In her stories, the reason for the fall was pride and the licence of the demiurgical

There is no indication that these publications were known to Pilchowa. Cf. M. Lutyens, *Krishnamurti. The years of Awakening*, London 1975, pp. 23, 42. For the characteristics of Pilchowa's esoteric ideas see: S. Hadyna, *Przez okna czasu. Jasnowidząca z Wisły*, Kraków 1993; I. Trzcinińska, A. Świerżowska, *Illness Narratives in the Esoteric Vision of the World: Agnieszka Pilchowa's Views and Concepts*, "Religio: Review pro religionistiku" 2018, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 49–70.

²¹ A. Pilchowa, *Pamiętniki jasnowidzącej z wędrówki życiowej poprzez wieki*, Wisła 1930.

²² In the esoteric magazines of Wisła, and above all in "Hejnał," texts by spiritists, information on current activities of spiritist societies around the world, as well as books on this subject, were published many times e.g. A. Kardec, *Księga duchów*, trans. J.Ch., Wisła 1934 (*Le Livre des Esprits*, Paris 1857). At the same time, Pilchowa always emphasized that her personal experiences and contacts with spiritual teachers were of a different nature and resulted from her gift of clairvoyance. For this reason, in her youth she came into conflict with the famous community of spiritualists in Radvanice in the Czech Republic.

spirits associated with it, whose work on the creation had spun out of control and manifested in the form of a world fallen into matter. Finally, the luminous spirits also adopted a material form and activated the strict karmic law and reincarnation cycle. According to Pilchowa, this mechanism was an instrument of justice, a response to mutual aggression and ubiquitous sin.²³

Pilchowa's texts also exposed a significant transformation of the role of Christ, shown not as the almighty Creator, but as a compassionate Saviour who showed the way towards liberation. This emerged from the assumption that Christ was not the creator of karma, and therefore, his incarnation proved insufficient to abolish its action.²⁴ In the Easter issue of "Hejnał" from 1929, Pilchowa published a text entitled *Zmartwychwstanie* (en. "Resurrection") bearing a portentous subheading: "Christ, by accepting apparent death, opens the gates of heaven to all – in Good Will."²⁵ Although she stated that "Christ hung on the cross in body,"²⁶ she also referred to "revelations" (referred to at the time as "spirit instructions"), which allowed an unconventional reading of Christian dogmas. So, she wrote:

Christ returned to his disciples in spirit and testified to the Truth that the path to God lay open. But when you want to go where Christ entered, first taste the gall and vinegar, don the crown of thorns and your own cross, the great cross of matter that crushes you to the ground – carry it.²⁷

Recognising that Christ revealed himself after the resurrection in the form of a spirit, Pilchowa agreed with the belief that death merely belongs to the sphere of passing matter, which is an illusion in itself and as such does not apply to those liberated from corporality. In her opinion, in the future all people were to participate in the release from matter.

One of the most important inspirations for Pilchowa's specific gnosis (as well as for many other Polish esoteric devotees) was the poetry of Juliusz Słowacki, especially his Genesis philosophy. His *Ewangelia prawdy* (en. "Gospel of Truth") was published in "Hejnał," written in the form of an apocryph containing, among others, teachings heard by Christ's disciples. Particular emphasis was given to the sentence: "Spirits are guilty of all bodies and all worldly misery."²⁸ Słowacki also called for a quest of "Knowledge," not further "opinions."²⁹ Although from a theological point of view, similar concepts should be described as heretical, the visions of a poet considered

²³ For more on Pilchowa's mythological ideas, see I. Trzczińska, *The Mythology of Agnieszka Pilchowa*, [in:] *Polish Esoteric Traditions 1890–1939. Selected Issues*, A. Świerżowska (ed.), Gdańsk 2019, pp. 117–137.

²⁴ A. Pilchowa, *Krishnamurti...*, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

²⁵ A. Pilchowa, *Zmartwychwstanie*, "Hejnał" 1929, 3, p. 65.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ J. Słowacki, *Ewangelia prawdy*, "Hejnał" 1929, no. 6, p. 161. This work by Słowacki enjoyed great interest among the Polish Theosophists. After World War II, it was also published in London by Kazimierz Chodkiewicz (1892–1980). In the Genesis philosophy of suffering by Słowacki, Poles were recognised as being a condition for evolution, and consequently also the liberation of the whole world.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 163.

a national sage gained the status of prophesy and were perceived by the majority of Poles as a revelation of future truth, and this is how Pilchowa understood it.

In the margins of these considerations, it is worth mentioning that the Wisła esoteric thinkers did not usually enter into open discussions with representatives of official church institutions, but this group tried to develop their own type of religiosity, corresponding to their ideas about spirituality, which is confirmed by a songbook they published in Wisła in the 1930s.³⁰ It included texts by the Wisłans themselves³¹ as well as works by Polish Romantics. An important message of these songs was to highlight the idea of a total transformation of humanity, for which the Transfiguration of Christ became a model, recalled by the songbook in the work of another Polish Romantic Bard, Zygmunt Krasiński (1812–1859).³² Similar threads can be found in the writings of Bô Yin Râ (Joseph Anton Schneiderfranken, 1876–1943), who enjoyed great popularity in Poland, and especially in Wisła. In his interpretation, Christ was not accompanied by Elijah and Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration, as his disciples had thought, but by luminous figures – probably from the White Brotherhood, while the resurrection of Christ constituted liberation from matter.³³ This imagining of Christianity as a path of radical transgression and liberation from matter was, according to the esotericists from Wisła, one of the most important distinguishing features of the religion of the past.

Pilchowa believed that people had not been ready to acquire this liberating knowledge, which would only see fruition in the period of the New Era. Thus, she recognised that ultimate salvation depends to a great extent on man himself and his inner maturity, and Christ is only the most important example in this context. According to Pilchowa, in the New Era, knowledge about God will emerge not from books, but from expanding individual experience and knowledge, and in this transformation the truth about the Messiah's second coming is expressed:

The time has come for humanity to understand Christ more easily: everyone can absorb His thoughts into their own spirit. The Low Powers made sure that the figure of Christ appeared in the holy books in a vague light. God the Father does not condemn anyone to eternal destruction. He does not punish, but protects his children from being lost. [...] Humanity, in its darkness, cannot see its Saviour. Official religions do not dispel this state, offering a narrow idea of God. **The Bethlehem Star shone during the night of man's fall; now the daybreak of spiritual awareness is approaching. The Saviour will come. But not in the form of a man – He is to be born in human hearts.**³⁴

³⁰ *Zbiór pieśni*, Wisła. The year of issue was not indicated, although an annotation that the brochure was published by "Hejnał" suggests the 1930s, since this magazine was published between 1929 and 1939. The tradition of Protestant songbooks in Poland was presented by Z. Pasek, *Topika zbawienia w polskich kancjonalach ewangelikalnego protestantyzmu*, Kraków 2005.

³¹ The songbook also contained a poem by Pilchowa or Podżorski, marked only with initials – because both of them signed "A.P." it is difficult to clearly determine who the author of the song was.

³² Z. Krasiński, *Chrystus wciąż w tobie mieszka!*, [in:] *Zbiór pieśni*, p. 9.

³³ Bo Yin Ra, *Księga miłości*, trans. M. Tarnowski, Łódź 1923, pp. 24–25.

³⁴ A. Pilchowa, *Pamiętniki jasnowidzącej...*, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Pilchowa did not view Christ's second coming as a material revelation, but a deep, even mystical experience, thanks to which people would regain many lost gifts, such as clairvoyance and the opportunity to return to the spiritual dimension.

Despite such clear Gnostic and even dualistic inclinations, Pilchowa underlined in various ways that all healing of the body and support, including the material assistance that she tried to bring to the needy, was owed to Christ. For example, she wrote:

It is not my fame that is of concern here, but the glory of Christ, because I am not healing with my own power, but with His wonderful strength and His grace. The incidents described here are to stand as a reminder for readers, which everyone can achieve without exception in the name of Christ.³⁵

In addition, Pilchowa's generous advice on nutrition and a healthy lifestyle was related to bodily fitness, and it contained many motifs that could even be described as sensual. After her tragic death in the Ravensbrück concentration camp in early 1945, her work was virtually forgotten.

Jan Hadyna,³⁶ one of Pilchowa's most devoted collaborators at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, gained much more influence. He came from a Lutheran family, and also received a thorough education. Although he wrote relatively rarely, he turned out to be the main originator, editor and manager of significant esoteric ventures. The most interesting testimony of his views is offered by his thus far unpublished diaries.³⁷ As a subject of research they are fraught with difficulty. In his notes, Hadyna often used shorthand; he also wrote briefly, sometimes in broken sentences, and used vague symbols and references that are difficult to locate and interpret at present. Their reading, however, is essential for the reconstruction of the views held by the esoteric group from Wisła. Hadyna's diaries contain his discoveries and thoughts in the field of spirituality, as well as the tasks he set for himself. For example, on 18 February 1927, he noted: "I want to devote this journal to self-education [...] thereby heeding my closest surroundings as my Teachers [...] and, so to speak, 'Disciples' too. We all should be Masters and Students to ourselves."³⁸ The concept of self-knowledge remained the key to most of Hadyna's notes.

The set of readings noted in dailies is interesting and includes works by Polish Romantics, especially Słowacki and Krasiński, and books by Paul Sédir (1871–1926), primarily passages about prayer. Hadyna mentioned the "Revelations of St. Gregory VII" with particular reverence – these are the supposed messages of Pope Gregory, originating from spiritist seances and published in two volumes.³⁹ Interestingly, the

³⁵ A. Pilchowa, *Ewangeliczne metody leczenia*, "Hejnał" 1937, no. 4, p. 244.

³⁶ In 1929 Hadyna became the editor of "Hejnał." In 1934 he established his own journal entitled "Wiedza Duchowa" (en. "Spiritual Knowledge"), which was replaced in 1935 by "Lotos," which was published until World War II in 1939.

³⁷ Over a dozen notebooks with Jan Hadyna's notes kept until the 1950s have been preserved. They are stored in a private archive. This article uses entries from two drafts dated 1926 and 1927/1928. Other materials are in preparation.

³⁸ J. Hadyna, *Dziennik*, 1927/1928, p. 1.

³⁹ *Karta z zamkniętej książki bytu: i pierwsze rewelacje Grzegorza VII papieża* from the series of revelations obtained by Jadwiga Domańska (1889–1967); collated and compiled by Fr. Habdank,

statements contained within these pages were also thought to have come from the spirit of Ochorowicz. They are an important testimony of the popularity of the spiritual interpretation of Christianity in Poland. In Ochorowicz's "revelations," much space is devoted to esoteric concepts about religion to be revealed in the future. So here we find some doubt as to whether a material second coming is possible at all,⁴⁰ as well as considerations about the humanity of Christ, recognised as a kind of emanation of human perfection, so that every person might match him.⁴¹ Ochorowicz's spirit was also said to have presented a program of upcoming changes in the religious life of humanity, announcing the creation of one church for all religions:

The time of historical reforms is approaching – the generalisation of all religions under the slogan: One Shepherd and one Sheepfold. [...] free will truly will become law and power; the only authority will be the feeling of God in man, ideas which we will prepare...⁴²

The vision of esoteric Christian universalism turned out to be much in tune with Hadyna's thought. His personal reflections on this topic focused primarily on biblical reading, and biblical sigils often appear in his dairies, indicating important passages of the Holy Bible. Sometimes he also included short comments on selected texts in his entries. The most significant are the interpretations of key passages from the Book of Exodus (20, 3). On 28 August 1926, Hadyna wrote:

"I" was spoken, combining in one go letters of individual links into one powerful chain, an expression...

You will not have other gods before me. "I" am Your God. (...) Faith. Peace. Joy.⁴³

Hadyna's writings stand as a clear testimony that traditional Christian ideas based on the idea of transcendence had lost their meaning for him. They were replaced by the concept of immanence, referring to the experience of the self recognised as a space of true epiphany. Therefore, in his case, the concepts of the religion of the future were replaced by the idea of spirituality based on the individual practices and personal experience of the truths revealed in Scripture and nature.

The fascination with the practices of personal spirituality characterised by blurring the borders of traditionally understood spheres of the sacred and profane was also shared by Hadyna's friends from his youth. In the pages of his journal, he mentioned hiking in the mountains with two friends, during which they meditated on selected fragments of the Holy Bible, and also prayed together, finding symbols of Christian holiness in nature and the whole world around them. For example, on 20 August 1926, Hadyna wrote: "Soaked to the skin – cold – at the top – at a crossroads of

Kraków 1919; *Dalsze rewelacje Grzegorza VII, papieża*, Cieszyn–Warszawa 1921. The author of most of the communiques was Domańska, who had also worked previously as a medium for Ochorowicz.

⁴⁰ *Karta z zamkniętej księgi bytu...*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁴¹ "Everyone can be the Son of God, when he stands in place of understanding the important reason for permanence," *Karta z zamkniętej księgi bytu...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–61.

⁴² *Dalsze rewelacje...*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁴³ J. Hadyna, *Dziennik*, 1926, p. 90.

3 roads on 3 sides of the world – we stopped – and here at the foot of a signpost that served as a Cross – we said a real prayer.”⁴⁴

Observing traces of the sacred in each life form led Hadyna towards consistent perennialism. On 9 September 1926, he wrote:

Become Jesus’ children! Before you can be his soldiers. The Holy scripture – the Bible – is an intermediary. A pattern. Stick to Jesus – reach into the sources of the Truth, the oldest works [...] – First the Foundation – then the systems. Wuotan. First the Bible, then others.⁴⁵

Therefore, a feature of Hadyna’s perennialism, at least in the 1920s, was a quest for unity in the communication of various religions (hence the comparison of Christ with Odin-Wuotan), while assuming that the most important source remains the biblical messages. In this approach, mythology became the language of the soul, the best expression of the experience of individualistic spirituality. In Hadyna’s diaries we find many concepts close to Gnostic assumptions, especially since he identified “Faith” with “Knowledge.”⁴⁶ According to him, the way of Christ captured the ideal pattern of human transgression, suffering and striving for resurrection.⁴⁷ At the same time, he emphasised the irreplaceability of Christ. For example, in January 1927 he wrote about a great war of spirits, defeated thanks to His sacrifice: “[...] Jesus’ words ‘I have conquered the world’ have come true... and behold, in great repentance, it fell at his feet and Body... + submitted.”⁴⁸

Hadyna was fascinated by the figure of the Madonna, which, moreover, caused him many doubts and even a sense of guilt. According to him, Mary’s revelation was also supposed to mark the space for the second coming of the Messiah. For example, he wrote: “And again, from my experiences... from that exaltation of the mother in me – the Immaculate Virgin, in Whom may he – the Comforter – appear as soon as possible, for Whom we are preparing and Our Temple we worship...”⁴⁹ It seems that Hadyna was ready to finally read the figure of the Madonna in an apocalyptic and cosmic context, and as a universal archetype of femininity, highlighting that the Roman Catholic church “wrongly” explains her meaning⁵⁰ and that its discovery is also a matter of the future.

Hadyna’s spirituality should be read in the context of his interest in innovative research in the field of psychology. This choice could have been influenced by Jan Pilch, “The Grandfather,” a schoolteacher in Karpętna (now Karpentna in the Czech Republic), who helped save the remains of Ochorowicz’s library in his deserted house in Wisła. He had many scientific and esoteric passions, as evidenced by his rich and

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 41.

⁴⁶ J. Hadyna, *Dziennik*, 1927/1928, 3.02.1928, p. 113.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 95.

⁴⁸ J. Hadyna, *Dziennik*, 1926, p. 108.

⁴⁹ J. Hadyna, *Dziennik*, 1927/1928, p. 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 28–29. A similar concept was described in the late 1930s by Antoni Czubyński (1885–1960) in his elaboration of apocalyptic symbolism in the context of astronomical and astrological research. This book was published by the Polish Astrological Society. A. Czubyński, *Komentarz astralityczny do Apokalipsy*, Bydgoszcz 1938.

unfortunately unpreserved correspondence, with Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) among others.⁵¹ Emilia, one of his daughters, was married to Jerzy Hadyňa, Jan's brother. Jan Hadyňa corresponded later, among others with Roberto Assagioli (1888–1974) and Alice Bailey (1880–1949), as well as with Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961).⁵² In the post-war period, these interests helped Hadyňa transform the formula of esoteric spirituality in such a way that it became a clear announcement of New Age concepts in Poland.

In the texts of the Wisła esoteric group, the religion of the future remained a version of Christianity. It had clear Gnostic and even dualistic tendencies, paradoxically juxtaposed with concepts of a modern change in lifestyle. It also marked a definite shift towards immanence. Its announcement was to be the practice of spirituality, as a synthesis of the theosophical approach, placing a strong emphasis on social activities,⁵³ a kind of mysticism leading to gnosis and personal spiritual experiences, as well as psychological inspirations. It also seems that the rejection of the world present in these projects was largely due to the statement that the course of history, running through numerous historical catastrophes, does not allow hope for an optimistic solution. Salvation, however, can be attained by the individualistic practice of spiritual quest and celebration of everyday life.

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⁵¹ Stanisław Hadyňa (1919–1999), composer and writer, creator of the "Śląsk" Song and Dance Ensemble, nephew of Jan Hadyňa, presented a handful of memories of his grandfather. He wrote that Jan Pilch also corresponded with Charles Richet, Giovanni Schiaparelli and William Crooke. We can guess that Pilch owed these contacts to Ochorowicz, see S. Hadyňa, *Wioska jedyna na świecie*, [in:] *Stanisław Hadyňa – twórca niezwykły*, red. D. Kałużbiec, Chorzów 2000, pp. 66–67.

⁵² For a more complete list of Jan Hadyňa's correspondence, see S. Hadyňa, *Przez okna czasu...*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁵³ It was presented in this light by Annie Besant, who saw it in relation to the theosophical idea of brotherhood and specific conditions enabling its implementation, see A. Pasricha, *The Political Thought of Annie Besant*, New Delhi 2009, pp. 48, 103.

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