

Chapter 9 of M. Jagodziński's book is of great value, for he succinctly presents the man existing in the communion of the Church. The point of departure for this reflection is the communal vision of the kingdom of God, which is the goal of the human being. He is invited by the word of God to a communion that looks forward to the eternal perspective. Thereby, he reflects upon saints and Mary as the realisations of the potency of human being, which is open to others.

The final Chapter 10 of the book evaluated concerns eschatological issues, seen in the communal perspective. Death loses its traditional dimension of separating man's soul from the body, because it is the communion with God. The communal work of humanity will be ultimately fulfilled in God.

Having read the reviewed publication, we arrive at the conclusion that its reader comes across a theologically well-formed and mature author, who wishes to share the fruit of the years of his reflection. The proposal of theological anthropology is a beautiful and ripe fruit indeed, which the reader may savour. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, Rev Jagodziński proves that the concept of *communio* is polished and precise enough an instrument of theological reflection that it may be of use to construct the system of communal theology. Moreover, it is an instrument free from a revolutionary desire to destroy everything that came before. An attentive reader will find the motifs borrowed from the classical study of creation and fall of man, who has been restored to the state of a child of God thanks to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. A personalist will be happy to encounter continual presence of a thought that places man as the person at the heart of the matter. The author chose a methodological way that has let him reach the conclusion successfully. It is a wonderful example of using an integral theological method, which is also capable of saying something new and meaningful. Marek Jagodziński is among the greatest theological systematians and his book dedicated to theological communal anthropology is indisputably worthy of our attention. There is no doubt that it is a pioneering work in the field of Polish theology, which during courses of dogmatic theology makes use of foreign textbooks translated into Polish written by authors who do not get off the beaten theological track. Jagodziński presents a full, coherent and competent vision of theological communal anthropology. His work therefore deserves our interest.

*Rev Prof Ignacy Bokwa*  
*Faculty of Theology at UKSW*

JERZY BUCZEK, *Teologia narodu w ujęciu wybranych polskich teologów* (Rzeszów: Bonus Liber Wydawnictwo i Drukarnia Diecezji Rzeszowskiej, 2014), pp. 414. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18290/rt.2016.63-2-18en>.

“Essentially, the work unfolds the thought of St John Paul II that Poland and its history cannot be understood without Christ.”

“A wise book about Poland.”

Prof Kazimierz Ożóg, excerpts from the editorial review

A wise book about Poland, which cannot be understood without Christ... This very statement and the phrase which are rooted in the dazzling theology and historiosophy of St John Paul II help us notice wherein lies the essential value of Rev Jerzy Buczek's monograph – the value which is timeless and surprisingly valid. This thesis – regardless of its purely academic merit, or rather alongside it, because strengthened and expressed by it – fits in very well with a long-lasting debate about

Poland, which in the third millennium has been exceptionally pregnant with weight and consequences that go far beyond the field of academic theory; consequences which we are now unable to fathom, which will be decisive for the future existence or non-existence of Poland, and thereby of this great spiritual and cultural event, in which our humanity and Christianity have been realised.

The publication has been written – despite its gravity and spiritual captivation it brings about – in a surprisingly calm, quiet tone which is centred on facts, arguments, analyticality, rationality going hand in hand, with a background melody of the deep conviction about the strength and value of the thoughts it presents. Buczek depicts his characters in a masterful way with, as it were, one stroke of a brush, yet with all their complexity, breadth and feisty spirit of their claims. Kajsiewicz, Wyszyński, Wojtyła, Bartnik – each of a different place of origin and biography (Samogitia, Mazovia by the Bug River, Lesser Poland, the Zamość region), working in different times, facing different threats, different environments and contexts – have all arrived at the same level of depth and synthesis: only the true *theo*-logics is capable of saving axiology connected with the notion and realness of the nation (here: of the Polish nation), and thereby of saving and unfolding God’s gift poured into the particularity of aestheticism of a single human life and lot related to – always bound with human existence – a given time, soil and social environment.

Buczek brings it all together, orders it and compiles into a calm – as I have mentioned before – account. This is accompanied by a certainty of his points (not his own, but of those outstanding figures, great theologians, exquisite sons of the nation) and a sort of authorly humility (as it were, uncertainty of himself, his role in the work)... The dissertation did take a lot of time (the author worked on it for almost thirty years) and entail a variety of Buczek’s consistent research: from his academic exercises, to parish pastoral care, specialist studies, PhD, work as a chancellor, rector, and a number of other engagements. For all this time he constantly, more or seemingly less intensely, wherever he was, worked in the field of the thought of those geniuses of Polish theology and pastoral care (and of *raison d’état*, I daresay) – Kajsiewicz and Wyszyński, John Paul II and Bartnik have always been the horizon of his reflection, in the realm of which he tackled the issue of theological reflection upon the notion of nation, its position in theology, its biblicality, Christologicality and, for Poles, its painful validity.

The issue is hard, but Buczek bravely faces the difficulty.

\*

From the *theo*-logical perspective (which is the footing of the reflection on the very theology of nation), it is obvious that neither homeland nor nation can mean “everything” – be the supreme value – for a Christian. In the Gospel, Jesus says (in a variety of ways) that God is the homeland of each man and our homeland is in heaven. This is what the famous *Letter to Diognetus* (the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Alexandria) talks about: “Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. ... They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. ... They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven.”<sup>1</sup> The ending of Thomas à Kempis’s (the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Netherlands) treatise on spiritual exercises mentions it as well: “May the city of God and heavenly dwelling be your proper homeland, where Christ stays at the right hand of the Father. You should neither like nor cast your eyes on any other land or homeland than the heavenly area of saints, where the nice angelic choruses sing to God for ever. Amen.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letter to Diognetus* (no. 5-6), [http://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit\\_20010522\\_diogneto\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20010522_diogneto_en.html) [November 15, 2016].

<sup>2</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *Cztery medytacje* (Kraków: Znak, 2001), 74.

However, a crucial counterpoint must follow this thesis, both theologically relevant and, as to say, Christological, or to be more precise – incarnational. Assuming flesh, God did not become a “man as such” (without homeland and nation). One cannot be man without a determined sex, nationality, coordinates of time and place of living. Therefore, salvation reaches daughters and sons of “this earth,” the code of “this earth.” This important, Christian *par excellence*, claim protects man from depreciating his roots from post-modern nihilism, from feeling disdain for his own “province.”

The tension in question shows, as it were, the place of the theology of nation in the reflection and life of a Christian, both its value and non-absoluteness. The Truth about God’s Incarnation indicates that what is universal may and must be expressed in what is concrete. And, let us reiterate what Kajsiewicz and Buczek said (p. 30): “God is the primary principle of the being of a nation.” This boils down to a broader statement that the being of a nation does indeed exist as a gift of God and God Himself is its primary principle.

The matter is nonetheless multifaceted.... Before Poland regained independence in 1918, Idzi Radziszewski, founder of KUL, had written that without the intelligentsia that was Christian through and through and without the mind correlated with (penetrated by) faith, Polish independence was and would be utterly threatened. Saying “the intelligentsia,” the first rector of KUL meant, above all, the social class for whom the Church had then (and always) been obliged to provide dogmatic, ethical and social education – necessary for the unfolding of personal faith and protection of the independence of the homeland. All of that resulted in the KUL foundation.

We may as well understand the title of the book in this paradigm, along the lines of a broader intention of the author. The *theology of a nation*, that is *theo-logia*, *scientia fidei*, *intellectus fidei*, the doctrine of faith in the deeper of its possible ties with the notion of nation, which helps us to understand the nation in a god-ly (as God wishes) way, deepen its understanding, protect from any kinds of evil (of nationalism, individualism, collectivism, nihilism, as well from the nothingness of the “dissolution” in a sea of other cultures and social creatures). Ultimately, what we mean today is a form of a new national (nation’s) evangelisation. This seems to be a primary and essential goal of this academic monograph.

Buczek has after all written a mature and prophetic monograph. A volume of 414 pages comprises four chapters. It is a thought-out, internally simple and, as it were, self-projecting structure (four characters – four chapters). Its parts are well-balanced and, already at first glance, we are convinced of the accuracy of the outline. The book is provided with a lucid introduction. It contains bibliography, abbreviations, excellent index (a very detailed one, which comes in handy as it facilitates using the book, especially as far as the academic purposes are concerned), as well as a summary in English. The publication lives up to methodic and methodological standards. Its sources are well-founded. The author is knowledgeable in the issues he analyses and discusses. In my opinion, no one has thus far ordered and reflected on the Polish theology of a nation that thoroughly. The book is extremely up-to-date in the most positive sense of the word, as the subject is heated, valid and significant. In any case, the work is truly theological and faces this existential problem head on by means of theological and academic instruments. In the book there are a number of inventive fragments, which are well thought-out and testify to the author’s erudition. The conclusions we encounter throughout the thesis are cautious (at times too cautious, in my opinion, “overly humble,” as it were, hidden behind the screen of the analysed texts and its authors). Notwithstanding, thanks to this, they are steeped in content, which adds to the trustworthiness of the research undertaken.

\*

As a result, we have been given much more than a compendium of the Polish theology of nation. Let us realise with a vengeance how much courage and consistent and nonconformist effort of carrying out research for years this work demanded. The book has been created when the political, academic and media mainstreams have been promoting the notion of the so-called modern patriotism (what stems from numerous media enunciations is that it only consists in using public transportation, cleaning up after your dog, being ashamed of your nation's vices, condemning any kinds of uprisings or "patriotic sacrifice" and replacing the word "homeland" with "this land").

Buczek has written and published his book at the moment (2015 AD) when Kajsiewicz is in fact unknown to the public (Rev K. Maleta wrote about him a lot, but he has been dead for 25 years); Wyszyński has been "trendy," but I have noted that the so-called open Catholic journalism has been debating about his vision more and more heatedly; there is an ongoing process of trying to turn Wojtyła into a full-on European and a driver of the train of globalism ("open to everyone and everything"); and the brilliant thought of Bartnik (30 years ago he understood well what we are only starting to note) is pushed aside, if not brutally attacked. All of this has been happening alongside the mockery of Poland (backwater, backwoods, surrounded by the mist of Smolensk, has not been enlightened yet, etc.)

And here we are, at the nadir of (pseudo)academic training, Buczek publishes 400 pages of study, calmly as if nothing had happened and reminds us the great Polish theology of nation – with all its grandeur, humility, universality (open to all nations, to their own theology of nation), condemnation of nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia, as well as any kind of violence directed at other nations (all of which has nothing to do with Catholic Christianity). Buczek presents it, updates and interprets creatively. Just like a sip of fresh water from a crystal-clear spring...

*Jerzy Szymik*

*Faculty of Theology of the University of Silesia*

CHERYL M. PETERSON, *Who Is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), pp. VIII+153.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18290/rt.2016.63-2-19en>.

In not-only-contemporary theology, ecclesiology belongs to the most basic and ever important subjects. More and more publications confirm that it engages not only Catholic theologians, who very often recall and deepen ecclesiological concepts of Vatican II and the teaching of John Paul II. We also come across valuable works about this topic among Protestant authors, e.g. a study by Cheryl M. Peterson that we shall review. Having previously lectured at the Marquette University in Milwaukee for a few years, she has been professor of systematic theology at the Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus for 10 years now. She is pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. *Who Is the Church?* is her first book, which have gained favourable reviews, especially amongst Protestant readers. The book is based to a great extent on her PhD thesis entitled *The Question of the Church in North American Lutheranism: Toward a Theology of the Third Article*, defended at the Marquette University in 2004.