

## *From the Editors*

We live in a time when the idea of a “new world order” has unexpectedly returned to the mainstream of public discussion. The social *imaginary* is shaped on the one hand by the projects of the “Great Reset” or the new world order after the pandemic, and on the other by terrifying images of the struggle for the “Russian world” (*Русский мир*) and the fear of the hanging hecatomb of a world war. It seems that the rebirth of various visions of a new, better world in a context marked by existential anxiety, disturbingly consonant with the constructivist recognition of imagining things “different, better than they are” as the basis of social change, is worthy of more in-depth analysis from the perspective of Catholic social thought and religious-political studies. Ultimately, they bring us back to the question of hope: What we can and can’t legitimately hope for.

In this context, we would like to devote this issue of the journal to the pattern of political and eschatological hopes. What seems important here is the ability to distinguish the legitimate promises of politics from those that constitute a dangerous temptation to realize the “kingdom of God” in earthly times. The question then arises of how to distinguish between this true and false promise, and whether and to what extent religion can be helpful in this endeavour. Is the longing for a “better world” contained in religious faith a threat to a policy that respects human dignity, or rather one that protects it?

In the thicket of questions that surround the issue of messianic hopes, the thought of Pope Benedict XVI, whose encyclical *Spe Salvi* (2007) became one of the most profound analyses of the very sense of Christian hope and its modern transformations, seems to be a unique guide. This is why our issue entitled “The Hope of Faith and the Hope of Politics” opens with the rich article “Faith, Politics and Eschatology in the Thought of Joseph Ratzinger” by Tracey Rowland. She situates Joseph Ratzinger’s political theory within the tradition of St Augustine. She emphasizes that, according to Pope Benedict, Christian faith has destroyed the myth of the divine state and replaced it with a conception of the state governed by the ‘objectivity of reason’. The understanding of reason here, however, is much broader than that typical of (post)modernity and encapsulates metaphysical and moral reason.

Aleksander Bańka continues the reflection on Ratzinger’s thought, seen here as a response to the challenges of the 1968 revolution inspired by Marxism and existentialism. In his article “Between Sartre and Ratzinger, or the Legacy of the «No Man’s» Revolution”, the author shows, *inter alia*, Benedict XVI’s certainty that only a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the real alternative to the ideology of absolute freedom.

Since the organization of Western “free societies” after the Second World War was linked to human rights, it is necessary to ask whether today they can be treated as constraints of modern politics or, on the contrary, become the driving force behind various visions of a “new, brave world”, following the ideology of absolute freedom. In her article “Human Rights at the United Nations: In a Tension between Universality and Ambivalence”, Marguerite Peeters traces the milestones of the progressive destabilization of the universal core of human rights since 1968. Grégor Puppincq (“Human Rights and Transhumanism: From Natural Rights to Trans-Natural Rights”) reveals the philosophical underpinnings of this destabilization by contrasting the Aristotelian-Christian perspective on human dignity, which values the unity of body and soul, with materialist philosophies that prioritize intellect over physicality. Finally, Michał Gierycz (“The Crisis of Human Rights. On the Importance and Timeliness of Their Catholic Critique”) recalls the largely forgotten Catholic critique of human rights before John XXIII and reveals its importance for understanding the reasons for the current metamorphosis of human rights.

The following five articles develop, in different ways, the reflection on hope, religion, and politics. In “Utopia as a Parody of Hope? Some Remarks on the

Temporality of Politics”, Sławomir Sowiński uses a case study of the reconciliation process between Poland and Germany to discuss the meanings attributed to the term utopia in contemporary politics. Brian Scarnecchia (“Environmentalism Critiqued: Pope Benedict’s Use of ‘Human Ecology’ to Meet the Challenge of Environmentalism as a Collectivist ‘Political Religion’ for a New World Order”) reveals the attempt of the environmental movement to create a kind of civic religion and the demystification of this agenda by Pope Benedict XVI. Michał Kuź in “Voegelin’s Escape from Legal Positivism: Constitutionalism and the Politico-Religious Problem” discusses the strengths and weaknesses of Eric Voegelin’s approach to politics, pointing out his lack of an answer to the politico-religious problem. Finally, Dorin Dobra (“Between Secularization and Loss of Faith”) and Francisco Batista (“Secularisation of the Christian West: The Contemporary Babylon?”) discuss – from different perspectives – what (if anything) has remained of Christian faith convictions in (post)modernity.

In the section “Miscellanea”, one will find stimulating contributions from Catholic Social Teaching, discussing the writings of Card. Stefan Wyszyński on academic life (bp. Jacek Grzybowski, “Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński on Universities and Philosophy”) and ethical objections to assisted suicide (Manfred Spieker, “Socio-ethical Objections to Assisted Suicide”). There is also an article devoted to the approach of some branches of Protestant churches to war (Krzysztof Gładkowski, “Pietism and War”). The following three texts are devoted to Islamic Studies. Two of them deal with Islamism: one in the French context (Mariusz Sulkowski, “*Perpetuum Mobile* of Radicalism – Islamism in in la France *Laique*”), the other in the case of Egypt and Tunisia after the Arab uprisings (Ihab Shabana, “Between Political Arena and the Mosque: Islamist Governance in Egypt and Tunisia after the 2011 Arab Uprisings”). The third text discusses the problem of feminism in Islam (Żaklina Dworska, “Musawah Movement’s Activism for Women’s Rights as Strengthening the Trend of Islamic Feminism”). The last two articles address some current problems of liberalism: the idea of post-liberalism (Wiktor Mikosza, “The Postliberal Order: a New Movement Emerging in American Political Thought”) and multiculturalism (Jerzy Ciechański, “Consensus Over Political Divisions: Polish Input in the Debate on Multiculturalism and Immigration to the European Union”).

Finally, in the “Reviews” section, one will find reviews of the book by Piotr Mazurkiewicz entitled *Two Towers and a Minaret* written by Jane F. Adolphe, and of Bogdan Szlachta’s book on liberal democracy (*Demokracja liberalna*).

*Źródła, ustanowienie (?) i kres (?) [Liberal Democracy. Origins, Establishment (?) and Demise (?)],* written by Mariusz Sulkowski. In addition, Filip Skoczeń and Marcin M. Supiński present the summary report of the 4<sup>th</sup> international academic conference on religion and politics: *A New, Even More Brave World... The Hope of Faith and the Hope of Politics*, held at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University between 30 November and 1 December 2023. Finally, Patrycja Laszuk reports on the conference on *Mass Refugees from Ukraine in the Aftermath of the Russian Aggression. The Polish and Lithuanian reception models*, which was held at the same University on 5 February 2024.

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