



August Cieszkowski

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Introduction

In his CDAMM article on '[Polish Messianism](#),' Damian Cyrocki looks at various influential figures. Here is an excerpt on one figure: August Cieszkowski (1814–1894).

August Cieszkowski

August Cieszkowski was a friend of [Zygmunt Krasiński](#) and a great supporter of evolutionary messianism. In his view, progress was possible only through systematic and long-term changes. Cieszkowski's philosophy did not, then, assume a revolution, but an evolutionary idea of social progress. The road to the kingdom of God assumed the introduction of changes in every aspect of life—in politics, social relations, economy, education, art, and in private life. According to Cieszkowski, revolutionary social upheavals lead only to disasters. He was convinced that revolutionaries do not believe that the course of history is guided by providence and want to change it themselves, which in turn made them heretics. He was of the view that people must cooperate with God, not work without or against him. This cooperation is best expressed through the development and sacralisation of social relations (Sajdek 2008, 82).

Cieszkowski taught that the saving mission of Jesus has not yet come to an end, and it will only be attained when the words of the Lord's Prayer are fulfilled. In particular, he meant that God would reign in heaven and on earth. The philosopher lamented that the Church devotes too much attention to the afterlife and marginalises the fulfilment of God's will on earth. Only when the latter is fulfilled will the kingdom of God come (Walicki 1971, 34). For Cieszkowski, the Lord's Prayer had a prophetic character. Speaking of bread, Jesus assumed the coming of a system in which everyone would have a job, a degree of what we would now call social security, and the problem of hunger would disappear.

Cieszkowski had no place for national messianism. For him, there was only one Messiah, and that was Jesus. There was only one sacrifice, and that was the one on Calvary. However, Jesus's mission was divided into two parts. First, he was to bring order to the kingdom of heaven and let the souls of the dead into it, and only then establish the kingdom of God on earth. Ultimately, humanity was to unite, and the philosopher postulated the creation of international organisations that would implement certain ethical

postulates and guard peace. The Polish nation was a tool to help accomplish this mission, but it was not the Messiah.

Cieszkowski distinguished three stages in the history of mankind. The first took place before the coming of Jesus and was centred around nature and the body. The second, which began with the coming of Jesus, brought the soul to the foreground but also put it in opposition to the body. It was only in the third stage that this opposition was to cease to exist. The third stage was to be known as the age of the Holy Spirit and was the period of the abolition of all contradictions. It was in this kingdom, which was to come in the nineteenth century, that the union of the people with God was to take place (Cieszkowski 1922, 20).

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