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News

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The Pope was Jewish says historian

A MANCHESTER historian has claimed that Pope John Paul II was Jewish.

Yaakov Wise says his study into the the maternal ancestry of Karol Jozef Wojtyla (John Paul II's real name) has revealed startling conclusions.

Mr Wise, a researcher in orthodox Jewish history and philosophy, said the late Pope's mother, grandmother and great-grandmother were all probably Jewish and came from a small town not far from Krakow.

The Pope was a priest and cardinal archbishop in the Polish city before his election to the papacy.

Mr Wise said: "According to orthodox Judaism, a person's Jewish identity is passed down through the maternal line. I saw a photograph of the Pope's mother and I showed it to people who didn't know who she was.

"They all said she looked Jewish. So I started doing more investigations about her background."

Although he believes the Pope's father was an ethnic Pole, he thinks that John Paul's mother Emilia Kaczorowski - Emily Katz in English - was Jewish and that she was the daughter of Feliks Kaczowski, a businessman from Biala-Bielsko in Poland. Katz is a common surname amongst East European Jewish families.

Emilia's mother, the Pope's grandmother, was Maria Anna Scholz. Scholz, or Schulze, is also a common surname among Jews, as is Rybicka, or Ryback, which is the surname of the Pope's great-grandmother Zuzanna.

All the names or their variations appear on gravestones in the old Biala Jewish cemetery, as does the surname of Felik's mother Urszula Maklinowska. Mr Wise said: "The Pope's ancestry has been researched by an American historian.

"But nobody has traced the family name through the Jewish community and, as Jewish historian, I have access to information that a non-Jewish historian wouldn't know about.

"I'm not making any firm conclusions, but what I'm saying is that there is a lot of circumstantial evidence to say that he was Jewish.

"The Pope's mother married out of the Jewish community to wed a Catholic. Her children were born and raised as Catholics and the Pope was baptised. It would shed light on why the Pope had to go into hiding from the Nazis in November 1940.

"If he had been a pure ethnic Pole this would not have been necessary.

"It would also explain why this Pope in particular felt a strong desire to improve relations between the Church of Rome and the Jewish people."



LINEAGE: Pope John Paul

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