

Word of God, words of men

Translations, inspirations, transmissions of the Bible in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Renaissance



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Volume 43

Joanna Pietrzak-Thébault (ed.)

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With 40 Figures

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Joanna Pietrzak-Thébault

Preface of the editor

All Polish translators' achievements in the field of biblicistics take their origin from the times, when the process of the confessionalization had become irreversible and started to strongly mark the history of European culture. The name Martin Luther himself appeared in the Polish literature quite early, because in 1524, in the title of the *Encomia Lutheris* by the then bishop of Płock, Andrzej Krzycki. This first work on Polish lands, which referred directly to the reformers' assumptions, after a long time, till today, is remembered only because it was unfairly registered on the ecclesiastical index (Pietrzak-Thébault: 2015, 43). In this inevitably polemic context will appear the translations and the translators themselves will consider their role in such a polemical way. Therefore, it is hard to look among the translations created then for some aconfessional, neutral accomplishment of biblical, philological and textual ideas, of a quality equal to Erasmus of Rotterdam, Lefèvre, Estienne, or Beza (Hanusiewicz-Lavallée: 2009, 75)¹. However, at exactly the same time the Polish language had gained a new meaning, and its role in public and literary life had grown importantly. It is considered that from 1543 the Polish language could be called a national language, because it was used as the language of the state documents (Urbańczyk: 1979, 210). It did not happen due to the fact that great writers already used this language – their time was about to come, and they appeared just because the national language attained a high status and got the “flexibility” allowing it to shape the artistic expression (Urbańczyk: 1979, 210).

The collection of studies presented further, concerning the translation and publication of the Holy Bible in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, focuses then on the linguistic, philological and editorial sides of the phenomenon. However, this phenomenon is impossible to comprehend without describing the historical background. Political and economic prosperity (described by Wojciech Kriegseisen) converged with the first wave, on such a big scale, of an interest and practical activity in the field of language – literature. The developing theoretical

1 About some translations of the Psalter, that seem to question this rule, see further.

idea directed to the theory and practice of translation was accompanied the growing linguistic and literary awareness of the court, and academic and noble circles, Catholic, as well as Lutheran and Protestant ones. This idea was most closely related to the interest in the Bible and the interdependencies between those two fields are the subject of the second of the guiding articles, by Marta Wojtkowska-Maksymik. This intellectual movement would not have been possible without the support of the printing houses, especially the offices in Cracow. Rajmund Pietkiewicz, who can be described as the person, who probably held in his hand each copy of the Bible published on Polish lands in the 16th and 17th centuries, covers in his study what was the real scope of these publications. However, not only the scope and technological “support” are crucial here. It is important to what extent and how the publishing houses, their collaborators, usually anonymous in the editorial field, as well as the organization of text, considering the editing process as a metatext itself, aimed at interpretation, to create as a matter of fact a new quality of the Bible’s perception, and comprehension by the audience. This perception, less and less “abstract”, has had increasingly become an object adapted to the particular needs, and the ways of usage of the Holy Bible can be read via different typographical issues. The answers to the questions about the design of such new editions, and also taking significant benefit from them, can be found to a large extent in the study of Izabela Winiarska-Górska. This study also shows how much still had to be done in this field – how necessary is a new, more profound insight was into the Bible publications of the 16th and 17th centuries, but also into the literature of those years: didactic, devotional, and para-liturgical. Similar questions emerged from the another research’s results, and the article of Mariola Jarczykowa draws similar conclusions. The inscriptions for the catholic king placed in the protestant *Gdańsk Bible* speak a lot about the functioning of the Holy Bible (and of printed books in general too) in the social space of the kingdom, and about the prestige and usage of this most popular translation, used for ages (in practice till recent years), among all denominations of the Polish Protestants and Lutherans. Considering the books’ illustrations of those times only as *decorum* can be far superficial, and even erroneous, because in that matter the editorial idea also manifests itself (in such case the authorship shall be attributed to the publishing house, due to the lack of authors’ names). Two articles in this volume investigate the meanings hidden in the illustrations and on the title pages of books: by Katarzyna Krzak-Weiss and of Aurelia Zduńczyk, who is young, starting her scholar’s path, but competently keeping the pace with her older colleagues.

The reading of all studies univocally shows a common initial point and the focus of attention of the researchers. The keystone here is clearly the language, and its predominant role is corroborated by the next articles three: thanks to Robert Dittmann with Jarosław Malicki and Gina Kavaliūnaitė, the reader will get

knowledge about the connections and mutual influence of the translations into Polish, Czech and Lithuanian. I would like to pay particular attention to the study discussing the impact of the Polish biblical translations, and the religious terminology taking root in Polish language related with them, on the translations of the religious literature of Polish Muslim Tatars. Thanks to Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska we can see, how the philological work achieved seemingly only in the scope of one language and one religion can become an inspiration for works answering to the needs of another religion, and later on even influence them in remarkable and stimulating ways. The three articles presented in this volume of course do not exhaust this rich subject matter. We shall also pay attention to Franciszek Skoryna, the Catholic translator of the Bible into the language defined as the Belarusian variant of the Old Church Slavonic, or as old Belarusian. The language developed for the purpose of the liturgy of the Eastern Church and was successfully used there, thanks to the work of Skoryna, published in 1529, had become a foundation, as well as a prototype of the Belarusian literary language². That on the one hand, and on the other, one hundred years later, and even more to the East, comes to being the translation of the New Testament into Turkish (issued in 1653) came into being made by a Polish captive, captured by Tatars in the south-eastern territory of the Commonwealth, near Lvov, and sold to the sultan's court – Wojciech Bobowski. The young man, Calvinist (who converted to Islam in the sultan's court and took the name of Ali Ufki Bej, but obviously had not forgotten about his roots and knew how to productively use them), who in 1665 published the *Ottoman Psalter (Mezmurler)* – a selection of fourteen psalms of the *Genevan Psalter*, recomposed to Turkish sounds and translated into Turkish (Łątka: 2005, 56–57; Privatsky: 2014, online). Here we start exploring the musical use of the poetic translations of psalms – we will find in our volume another such example, closer to our culture. The compositions of Mikołaj Gomółka, published only two years after the first edition of *Psalms* translated by Jan Kochanowski (1581), which are the subject of an article by Paulina Cereмуżyńska and Fernand Reyes, can be listened to in the form of an interpretation, which aims to reconstruct the musical practice contemporary to the time of the creation of the Gomółka/Kochanowski's psalms.

The collection of the studies and essays, conceived at the beginning as an expert review of the matter of our interest, unexpectedly revealed another face, which may be even more intriguing – it is the multiplicity of research possibilities, constantly broadening of their field. We can find different proofs in the stylistic, linguistic technique of Tomasz Lisowski's comparative research, as well as in considering the translation of Jakub Wujek as a pattern for other under-

2 I would like to thank to Professor Aleh Dziarnowicz of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences in Mińsk for valuable information.

takings, as a starting point for developing the interpretation of the Holy Bible and its further translations. Both Łukasz Cybulski, and Wirginija Vasiliauskiene with Kristina Rutkovska proved the enormous importance of the translation done by the Jesuit of Wągrowiec – a text, which came into being in the time span between the variant of the Sistine Vulgate, seemingly still obligatory in Catholicism, and a newer one – the Clementine Vulgate. This translation had become not only the next element in the polemic series on Polish ground, but also the sole available version for the Polish Catholics for many future centuries³, a model, up to the new translations, that have appeared recently only with the modernization wave of The Second Vatican Council.

The range of topics presented in the volume is very wide, then, but it cannot exhaust the matter of our interest. I regret that some phenomena, names, titles, although mentioned on pages of this book, were not given a proper discussion. But it is worth referring to them, at least in a few sentences, even though for persons acquainted with the history of the Polish biblical translations of the Renaissance they should be certainly well-known. Also, the role of each of them is particular in the history of the development of the Polish language's artistic articulation.

With Stanisław Murzynowski, the first translator of the new times, the author of a translation of the Gospel after saint Matthew from Greek to Polish, is related the history of the systematization of the Polish grammar and orthography. The translation, published in 1551 at the Koenigsberg's printing house of Aleksander Aujezdeckis⁴ (the full New Testament was issued two years later) was accompanied by *Polish orthography*, being in fact a closing and crowning of the experiences of the Cracovian typographers since 1470, and it arranged the spelling rules rather than presented new ideas than creating them⁵. Although the *Orthography* of Murzynowski numbers only eight pages, the aim to put an order is obvious there. "Therefore let's enunciate and write": "[...] so each word would be read and written not so-so, but after some manner", we can read on those pages⁶. It is worth considering that academic Koenigsberg, apart from Cracow, had

3 The references to the Greek versions, criticized by the monastic superiors, disappeared from the next editions not due to the reasons pertaining to the subject matter, but doctrinal ones. On the rich philological proficiency of the Jesuit see Sobczykowa: 2012, 34–36.

4 On the printing process itself in the Koenigsberg's printing house of Aleksander Aujezdeckis and on related circumstances, see Rospond: 1949, 46–49. The translation for the young protestant community was primarily ordered to Fryderyk Staphylus, recommended by Melanchton, arrived from Germany, and finally it was done by Murzynowski himself, Ibidem, 46.

5 The earlier treatise of Zaborowski was printed nine times in years 1514–1546 (Urbańczyk: 1979, 210–211). See also Urbańczyk: 1983, 32–40, 123–135.

6 The only one preserved copy of this edition is kept in the collection of the Library of Warsaw University SD 614.82. Reprints of this work were also published: Towarzystwo Naukowe Płockie, Płock, 2003 and Samizdat of Zofia Łoś, Płock 2011.

become at the time an important typographic centre, and, what goes hand in hand with that, a centre of intellectual debates, where the linguistic trends of conservatives (Sandecki-Malecki) conflicted with the tendencies of progressive modernists ones (Murzynowski)⁷. The language of Murzynowski was “new” because it was close to everyday Polish and the translation was fine, and it was written on the basis of an erudite and rich philological technique (Sobczykowa: 2012, 31–32; Rospond: 1949: 41–51). The popularity of this translation and the clearly polemical, not to say bitter, nature of the editor’s commentary, determined the appearance of numerous following translations within the space of the second half of the century: the Catholic ones and probably of all other reform’s confessions present in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Hanusiewicz-Lavallée: 2009, 66).

Among the translations strongly marked by confession in their nature, one in particular stands out: it is *The Psalter* by Jan Kochanowski. The translation, or rather a poetic paraphrase, published in 1579 in the Łazarzowa printing house in Cracow, was the excellent result of an artistic experiment, and the author himself considered his work as his best poetic achievement, thus exceeding his original works written thus far (both *Songs* and *Epigrams*)⁸. The rock of “Beautiful Calliope” had to breathe with Horace’s poetry thanks to the quill of Kochanowski, because the imitation of Horace’s forms happened to be an exceptionally successful new “attire” for Hebraic poetry, being a far cry from the Latin forms after all. The Kochanowski’s experiment was based on the consistent references to the classical forms, with simultaneous, consistent usage of the *varietas* principle, breaching the parallelism of the Hebrew original: in the metrical plan (in the work of the Polish poet we can find as many as 41 different kinds of stanzas), as well as in the lexical plan (consisting in a highly successful usage of possibilities provided by the synonymy of the Polish language). Kochanowski created of the spirit of the classical poetry. However, he did not yield to the temptation of using ancient, mythological metaphors, present in humanistic religious language but strange to the sphere of Hebraic poetry. But he referred willingly, and almost solely, both to native expressions – to strong ones too, recalling the imagery found in the original – and to neologisms, built in a way showing a unique poetic intuition and linguistic imagination. Moreover, the poetic imagination of Kochanowski already promised the distinctive to the religious (and poetic) language

7 See the copy of the translation of “The Saint Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ by Saint Matthew” with numerous, not to say – innumerable – corrections and remarks by Sandecki-Malecki. See also Rospond: 1949, 457.

8 That was not the first paraphrase in the Polish poetic field of the *Psalter* see the work of Mikołaj Rej, edited in 1532, who translated into Polish the Latin paraphrase of Jan van den Campen, and *Zoltarz Dawidow* [...] of Walenty Wróbel published in 1539. More comprehensively on this topic see Kowalska: 2009, 199–208 and Kamieniecki: 2009, 209–218.

of the Polish baroque, expression of the split, the awareness of the “shadow zones” of a believer – being on a quest rather than convinced. At the same time the poet’s translation, at its *docta* level, made use of the previous translators’ achievements of Europe and Poland (Karpínski: 2007, 111–116). The *Psalter* very quickly became a “songbook” (see the article mentioned earlier by P. Ceremużyńska/F. Reyes Ferrón), and it was also probably the most often published Polish book within the space of the two last decades of the 16th century and at the beginning of the 17th century.

We hope that all the keys to comprehending the uniqueness of this translation will be made available to us in the currently supplemented critical edition of this work, where the commentaries to the *Psalter* will be provided⁹. It will be released in the forthcoming years.

Another linguistic experimenter was Szymon Budny, a personality of exceptional significance and “individually”, also against the varied and important biblical translators’ achievements of the 16th century in Poland. His linguistic and literary works, innovative both in the field of the vocabulary and the syntax, were a manifestation of his eagerness to make the new translation as close to their originals as possible, even contrary to the recognized tradition. Usually, the acknowledged foundation for the translation of the Old Testament was one of the *Biblia Rabbinica*, also the *Biblia Hebreo-Latina* of Sebastian Münster of 1534, and perhaps the *Biblia Hebraica*, published in Cracow in 1552. For the translation of the New Testament the foundation was considered to be the Parisian editions of Simon de Colines (possibly of 1534 or 1551), and the Genevan publication of Jean Crespin of 1564 (Kamieniecki: 2002, 106–107). These “experiments” were far from idle amusement – apart from the obvious knowledge of the biblical languages, the knowledge of Old Church Slavonic as well, and interest in the eastern Slavic theology highlighted the originality of Budny’s achievement (Kamieniecki: 2002, 108–113; Sobczykowa: 2012, 32–33; Meller: 2009, 97–98). His viewpoint seems to be the closest of all Polish translators and commentators of that time, to the concepts of humanistic philology and to the Erasmian search for the most perfect text shape. What can appear to be a linguistic extravagance is in reality a search for the proper form of the text, and the theological background does not prevent the translator from taking the path to the full doctrinal independence. Aware of the fact, that as an Arian, and even an Arian “heretic”, he moved so far the boundaries of the free reading of the Holy Bible as none before him, he also

⁹ *The completion of the parliamentary edition of all writings of Jan Kochanowski* is prepared by Jacek Wójcicki. The current issue of the *Psalter* is incomplete, until now in the edition of *Dziela wszystkie* (All writings) so-called parliamentary; there were included only the volumes having the transcription with the collotype, and the letter of Jan Kochanowski to Stanisław Fogelweder (J. Woronczak (ed.), Wrocław 1982, vol. I, part 1) and the index of the terms and forms (J. Woronczak (ed.), Wrocław 1991, t. I, part 3).

provides a very bold (if the matter referred to another topic, we could even say “perverse”) evidence of his esteem for – marked by the translation’s reform – the practice of saint Hieronymus usually rejected by Biblical scholars, and he understands the significance of the Latin tradition (Hanusiewicz-Lavallée: 2009, 70–71)¹⁰.

The subjects that I just managed to mention about, are not as much unrecognized, as require a new methodological approach – both in the editorial context, and the history of our language, including in the scope of the taking shape of its literary style. Similarly, the matters thoroughly discussed in this volume are proof of the unique, the never recurring, activity of this century, exceptional for the Polish culture. The disputes over the Old and New Testaments, the translator’s drive, the activity of the printing presses, and the search for new reading formulas became the focus of works at that time – and that hermeneutical pursuit is essential to our contemporariness. It results from a continuously up-to-date humanistic paradigm, and manifests itself in the forged, detailed practices, much varying, and at the same time common to so many citizens of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: to speaking (and reading) Polish, as well as to the speaking (and reading, or at least being willing to read) other languages – German, Lithuanian, Belarussian, Ruthenian, Tartarian... These translators’ and commentators’ ambitions are also noticeable also in the following 17th century, which seems to prove that such pursuits go beyond the distinct counter-reformation caesura and indicate their unexpected continuity, previously undiscerned. It happens thanks to the comprehension, humanistic in its nature, that language, its formal correctness and literary articulation, are the only way to lead a man to an understanding of the Holy Scripture. Today those intuitions and quests are still scientifically attractive – and this volume proves that (and, ironically, its deficiency too!). They raise not only intellectual curiosity, but also an admiration for the then aspiration to join the comprehension of the God’s word with drawing out from it a hidden, new beauty of the human word, and also for the ability to integrate, by the young Renaissance printing culture, the requirements of pragmatism and the need of beauty.

Joanna Pietrzak-Thébault
Translated by Urszula Zinserling

10 Also about the successors of Budny: Czechowic and Szmalc. See Szczucki: 1993, 42–64; Ogonowski: 1971, 16, L. Szczucki/J. Tazbir: 1959, 629–631; Kot: 1956, 63–118.

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I. Contexts

Wojciech Kriegseisen

Historical Overview of the Political and Denominational Reality in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from the Mid-sixteenth Century to the Mid-seventeenth Century

The latter half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century constitute the most interesting epoch as far as the political and religious history of the multi-ethnic and multicultural Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is concerned. The exact 100 years that separate the beginning of the reign of Sigismund II Augustus and the death of Władysław IV Vasa in 1648 constitute also the period of a rapid increase and then the ever growing decrease in the importance of Polish-Lithuanian Protestantism. Introduced in the name of the *raison d'état* of a multi-faith country in 1573, confessional equality was reduced after the death of Sigismund III Vasa in 1632 to guarantee of tolerance, which over the course of forthcoming years was to become gradually more and more limited. Changes in denominational politics took place parallel to the political problems that were on the increase in the seventeenth century. After 1648 the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth entered the epoch of permanent crisis, which it never managed to leave – not until its very end in the late eighteenth century. We are at a loss with regard to the causes and ensuing results as available scholarship does not allow one to ascertain whether the changes in the religious relations were caused by the mounting internal tensions or whether the said shift aggravated the situation.

The death of King Sigismund I the Old in 1548 and the enthronement of his son Sigismund August in Cracow, the last ruler of Poland and Lithuania from the Jagiellonian dynasty, marks the beginning of the open Reformation ferment, which in the following years merged with the so-called Executionist movement that intended to modify the country in the direction of the Nobles' Democracy (Nobles' Commonwealth) (Schramm: 1965, 232–251). However, it is worth remembering that the first manifestations of the Reformation date back to a considerably earlier period. The Lutheran Reformation movement that took place in the towns of Pomerania (Gdańsk, Toruń, Elbląg) in the 1520s was quashed as a result of Sigismund I's military intervention and in the consecutive decades the Reformation tendencies had to develop undercover (Kriegseisen: 2010, 430–448). The dynamics of the penetration of these ideas

were influenced by the intensive exchange that the Polish noble and burgher elites were involved in with Western Europe as well as the in-depth reception of Renaissance ideas. The Reformation tendencies resurfaced in hopes that Sigismund Augustus, with whose court were associated not only Evangelical preachers (Wotschke: 1907, 329–350), but also prominent lay figures such as Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, Great Treasurer of the Crown Jan Lutomirski, or the Radziwiłł Family, would incline favourably towards the cause (Cynarski: 1988, 84–87).

In contrast with the previous decades, the post-1548 Reformation processes in Poland were dominated not by Lutheranism that resonated from Germany but by Calvinism, which is evidence of openness to Western European modernisation proposals (Schramm: 1985, 41–52). Furthermore, what was equally important was the fact that, in accordance with Calvin's doctrine, the authority in congregations was bestowed upon the laity, which must have pleased the noble leaders of the Executionist movement fighting for leverage and domestic influence (Bartel: 1965, 644–650; Zeeden: 1985, 192–221). Works of Calvin and Zwingli were popular with the participants of the 1550 Sejm in Piotrków and were unsurprisingly sold there. Even if the information that hundreds of copies were bought by the representatives is exaggerated, it is a testimony to the growing demand (Górski: 1929, 21). Concurrently, there appeared another factor that strengthened the attraction of Protestantism. At the end of 1548, a group of Evangelicals banished from the Kingdom of Bohemia on the strength of the edict issued by Ferdinand I arrived in Poland. These members of the Church of the Bohemian Brethren (*Jednota bratrská, Jednota bratří českých*) (Schramm: 1965, 87–88) settled in the Greater Poland, where they impressed the residents with their discipline and doctrinal maturity.

In the 1550s the nobility of the Kingdom of Poland acted publicly as the collective protector of the Reformation (Tazbir: 1987, 17). Many towns and villages saw the end of the celebration of the holy mass (Catholic service); Evangelical sermons were delivered either by former Roman Catholic priests or by new Protestant preachers. Catholic churches on the premises of noble estates, among others ones belonging to the Boner, Firlej, Górka, Leszczyński, Oleśnicki, Ostroróg, and Zborowski families, were converted into places of Protestant worship (Schramm: 1965, 30–35). The Reformation movement was gaining its *momentum*, as it involved the entire country and was typified by a rather advanced if – with the exception of the Duchy of Prussia – uncoordinated character (Barycz: 1971a, 221–242). Soon Lesser Poland was to be in the lead. Catholic priests were expelled from Pińczów, a private town owned by Mikołaj Oleśnicki, and in the October of 1550 the first Evangelical Synod took place there. Its aim was to establish the basic doctrinal regulations to be obeyed by the fledgling Protestant congregations in the region (Kowalska: 1999, 19).

As a result, on 12 December 1550 Sigismund August, clearly under the direct influence of the episcopate, ordered Oleśnicki to re-instate *status quo ante*. Furthermore, the king prohibited the dissemination of Reformation doctrines, swore to proscribe Evangelicals from state posts as well as to implement the verdicts of ecclesiastical courts with the help of royal starostas (Lubieniecki: 1971, 60–61; Sucheni-Grabowska: 1996, 304–309). Declaring the Protestants ineligible for public functions and the confirmation of the state execution of church court rulings severely affected the proponents of the Reformation. However, after the Sejm of 1550 they in fact did feel the support of the Catholic exponents of the execution of law and strove to pursue a confrontational course (Sucheni-Grabowska: 1996, 306).

A test of strength ensued in Cracow, where Bishop Andrzej Zebrzydowski accused Konrad Krupka Przeclawski, a noble man of an established burgher family, of heresy. He was charged not only with partaking of the holy communion *sub utraque specie*, but with convening “clandestine meetings”, i. e., Protestant religious services, with making his subjects work during holy days and with disobeying the rite of fasting (Bukowski: 1883, 181–185). He disregarded summons and, in consequence, was in his absence officially considered a heretic; the court declared him an outlaw and ordered confiscation of his assets (Barycz: 1971b, 284–296). Both Przeclawski and his supporters traversed Lesser Poland in protestation of the verdict and the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts. The matter was discussed at Sejmiks (regional assemblies) in 1551; at the Sejmik in Proszowice a royal edict dated 12 December 1550, which warned against the prelude to the tyranny of bishops (Lubieniecki: 1971, 60–61), was produced. The dispute over the ecclesiastical judiciary snowballed into a major issue while the Evangelicals were supported by the Executionists, to whom the freedom of religion and religious practice were the unalienable attribute of noble liberties.

Given such countrywide sentiments, the opponents of the Reformation were at a disadvantage as far as any attempt to introduce the mandatory Catholic denomination was concerned; furthermore, trials against the exponents of the Reformation angered members of the nobility, who construed them as an example of violation of the *nihil novi* constitution. Some cases yielded acts of civil disobedience while the estate solidarity of the nobility started to evolve into religious solidarity. In the November of 1554, Evangelicals in Lesser Poland, in particular, Protestants at a congregation in Słomniki, decided to establish an overt church structure, which – in the subsequent years – gave rise to five synodal conventions, during which the organisation of the Evangelical Reformed Church as well as the union between the Calvinists and the Czech Brethren were discussed and approved of (Sipayłło: 1966, XXXIV):

After the Sejm of 1555 the state authorities ceased to support ecclesiastical courts, which – in practice – led to their acknowledgement of the freedom of

private Evangelical religious service – the nobles were granted the right of worship on the premises of their own estates. These regulations meant the acceleration of the Reformation process – work on the unification was under way. On 31 August 1555 in Koźminek in Greater Poland, the Czech Brethren and the Evangelicals from Lesser Poland united under the banner of the confession of the former. However, the agreement did not last long but it did for some time strengthen the advocates of the Reformation, who – in defiance of Catholic propaganda – proved that they were capable not only of division but of unity as well. The role of their organiser was played by the most renowned of Polish Reformation theologians – John Laski (Jan Łaski) (Kowalska: 1999, 30–46). He preceded his return to Poland by publishing a Reformation manifesto: dated 31 December 1555, *Epistolae tres lectu dignissimae, de recta et legitima ecclesiarum bene instituendarum ratione ac modo* was issued in Frankfurt am Main and expressed his opinion that the Reformation would be supported by the highest authorities of the Kingdom of Poland (Łaski: 2003, 16–26). Having reached Poland in the December of 1556, Laski was soon to realise that his hope was groundless. Till his death in the January of 1560, he concentrated his efforts on organisational groundwork and on fight against divisive tendencies espoused by Antitrinitarians.

During the 1562/63 Sejm Protestant politicians, including Marshal of the Sejm (speaker) Rafał Leszczyński and castellan of Cracow Marcin Zborowski succeeded in rejecting the postulate of bishops. The case of the re-introduction of the ecclesiastical sovereignty over lay courts eventually failed to materialise; moreover, the demand to return the churches and their assets appropriated by the Evangelicals was also dismissed (Zakrzewski: 1870, 115ss., 156ss). When in the January of 1563 the news regarding the siege of Połock by Moscow forces broke Sigismund Augustus was forced to choose between the interest of the state and of the Catholic Church. In return for the taxes that would support the expenses of the military, he eventually agreed to repeal the execution of the verdicts of ecclesiastical courts on the part of starostas (Polak: 2004, 94–95). This victory of the Reformation was, however, counter-balanced by the political weakening of their milieu as a direct result of the 1562 division of Protestantism in Lesser Poland into two strands, i. e., Calvinists (Larger Congregation) and Antitrinitarians (Lesser Congregation) (Halecki: 1915, 80–82).

The intentions and interests of Sigismund Augustus in terms of confessional politics at that time are best defined by *votum* of Vice-Chancellor of the Crown (*vicecancellarius regni Poloniae*) Piotr Myszkowski at the Sejm of 1565, during which he exhorted his fellow representatives to rise above religious controversies and to exist in harmony:

Rozumienie różne Pisma niech miłości nie targa między nami, ani niech jeden drugiemu nie urąga, niech każdy przy swem rozumieniu ostaje. Jako to widzieli, co się działo w Niemczech, co we Francji, iż póki jedni drugim urągali, użyli niepokojów wielkich, których uchodząc, zostawili każdemu wolne rozumienie, i tak pokój między sobą postanowiwszy trwają w zgodzie. (Kraśiński/Chomętowski: 1868, 65–66).

Let different understandings of Scripture tear not the love between us; let them not serve for one to affront another, let each in his own understanding abide. As they have seen what has come to pass in Germany, and in France, that as long as some affronted the others, they endured great disturbances, but abandoning these [dissents], they left to each man his own understanding, and so, having established peace between themselves, they remain in concord.

In comparison with the Reformation of the nobles, plebeian Protestantism was not as developed. The Reformation in the countryside is worth mentioning only in the context of the activities of the magnates or the administrators of estates who were at a liberty to use propaganda and influence their subjects and/or resort to religious coercion (Urban: 1959, 130–170). The fate of burghers bode better but even they were dependent on the protectorate of the nobility (Müller: 1996, 265). Evangelical centres came into existence in numerous towns and cities of the Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania but their fate is testimony to their weakness. Although in the then capital of Cracow in 1556 the congregation amounted to approximately 1000 members but as early as in the late-sixteenth century it fell victim to the counter-Reformation movement (Schramm: 1970, 1–41). In contrast, in Royal Prussia it was the municipalities that served as the burgeoning centres of the Reformation (Małek: 1997, 182–191). In 1557 and 1558 Gdańsk, Toruń and Elbląg were granted royal privileges allowing them to practise dual communion, which in fact meant that there was approval of further Protestantisation (Bogucka: 2008, 238–246; Pawlak: 1994, 36–37). Not unlike in Greater Poland, where Lutherans residing in its many municipalities were granted privileges (Małek: 1999, 65–72). However, the only fully Protestantised territory of the Crown was Livonia, which was granted freedom of religion in 1561 and the *feudum* of Courland, where already in 1554 such a freedom had been announced and which in practice meant full-on Lutheranism (Schmidt: 2000, 195–220; Bues: 2002, 61–79).

Reformation tendencies grew in strength in the 1560s in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which was enabled by the weakness of the local Catholic Church. What is also worth remembering is the specific structure of the hierarchy of power in Lithuania, where magnates took precedence over nobility. In effect, denominations preferred by the magnates played a decisive role there. This particular milieu regarded the Evangelical confession as an example of the sought-after Occidentalisation. A fitting example of this influence is provided by the Radziwiłł Family – Chancellor Mikołaj Radziwiłł Czarny and Hetman, the second-highest

military commander, Mikołaj Radziwiłł Rudy. Their endorsement of Calvinism also gave rise to the publication of important works: in 1563 in Brześć Litewski (Brest) the flagship translation of the Bible into Polish, the so-called *Brest Bible* (*Biblia brzeska*) (Jasnowski: 1939, 196–200, 360–368) was published. Magnates' confessional choices were followed not only by numerous Lithuanian Catholics but by Ruthenian Protestant nobility as well, whose representatives frequently converted to Reformed Protestantism. In 1569 circa half of the Evangelical political elite of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania consisted of former adherents of the Eastern Orthodox Church (Liedke: 2004, 59–73).

During the Lublin Sejm of 1569, acting in defiance of a section of magnates, nobles implemented the most important political plan of Sigismund Augustus – a union, on the strength of which the Polish-Lithuanian relation evolved into the real union (Bardach: 1970, 11–67; Lulewicz: 2002, 17–39). In 1569 the Senate had the following representation: 70 Catholics, 58 Evangelicals, two Eastern Orthodox Christians (Halecki: 1915, 157), and the representatives of nobility in the lower chamber consisted of a considerable section of Protestants. At that time, Catholic, Evangelical and Eastern Orthodox nobles lobbied for the political project that would bestow upon them sovereignty over royal authority. The construction of the Democracy of Nobles ran parallel to the organisation of the structures of the Reformed Church, which was also controlled by the nobility; both processes strengthened each other (Schramm: 1985, 46–47). Founded in 1569, the Commonwealth was a country devoid of a defined confessional profile, yet the majority of the residents were Catholic – senators included Catholic Bishops, but there was not a single Eastern Orthodox hierarch or superintendent of any of the Evangelical Churches. On 12 August 1569 Sigismund Augustus closed the Lublin proceedings with a speech, in which he expressed his hope that the next Sejm would sort out the denominational relations within the Commonwealth (Pirożyński: 1972, 9–10).

The political success of the 1569 Sejm encouraged Evangelical leaders to conduct a series of unification activities that were supposed to serve as a prelude to the wide-ranging Protestantisation of the Commonwealth. The ultimate goal of the Calvinist leaders was to convince Sigismund Augustus to establish a state Evangelical Reformed Church, while the minimal threshold aim was to found a united Evangelic Church that would be equal to the Catholic one. At the April 1570 general synod in Sandomierz took place a political unification of the three strongest Protestant denominations in Poland: Reformed (Calvinists), Lutherans and the Czech Brethren (Jobert: 1994, 92–96). However, what was not achieved was dogmatic agreement and, as a result, ecclesiological and liturgical autonomy was granted to all of the denominations. The act of the Sandomierz Covenant (Agreement) was reached, i. e., each of the denominations acknowledged every other as the rightful Evangelical Christian confession, each swore to cease

proselytising, and each declared the commonality of the pulpit and organisation of joint general synods (Maciuszko: 1974, 124–128).

Sigismund II Augustus died on 7 July 1572. The decisive political force, the Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian nobility whose leaders largely supported Reformation, had to take care of the security of the state and the guarantees of religious and political freedoms (Gruszecki: 1969, 17–31). The Senate was almost evenly split along religious lines, with 58 Catholic senators and 59 non-Catholic ones (Dworzaczek: 1962, 41–56). What appears of key importance is that Evangelicals, who had pondered turning the Commonwealth into a Protestant country only several years earlier, now sought merely a guarantee of religious equality. The Convocation Sejm, sitting in Warsaw on 28 January 1573, passed the agreement negotiated by Evangelicals and the Sejm committee headed first by Stanisław Karnkowski, Bishop of Kujawy, and then by Primate Jakub Uchański (Budka: 1921, 314–319; Gruszecki: 1969, 225–241). The agreement, known as the Warsaw Confederation, stated that all *dissidentes in religione* (dissidents in religion – the adherents of different confessions) enjoyed the guarantee of religious peace, and any persecution for reasons of belief, including on the grounds of orders issued by authorities or court judgments, was illegal (Korolko/Tazbir: 1980, 25–26; Salmonowicz: 1974, 7–30). The Warsaw Confederation can be considered a success of Protestants, with the reservation that by becoming a party of this agreement, they abandoned the hope of making the Commonwealth an Evangelical country (Ogonowski: 1957, 17–18).

In 1573, the Commonwealth, formed in 1569, rejected both the idea of an Evangelical state Church and the notion of subordinating the state to the Catholic Church. Polish and Lithuanian *dissidentes in religione* chose a middle way – the state of the nobles did not favour either side of the denominational conflict and tasked itself with keeping the peace between them. The good of the Commonwealth thus prevailed over religious interest, and this advantage of “politics” over “religion” was something that those who had opposed the idea had to reckon with.

In the late sixteenth century, the Commonwealth of Both Nations, or the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Lutheran Livonia and Courland had about 7.5 million inhabitants, speaking mainly Polish and Ruthenian, but also Lithuanian and German. Apart from Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Evangelicals of various confessions, there were Armenians, Jews, Crimean Karaites, as well as Tatars. This was when the image of the Commonwealth as a mosaic of cultures, confessions, and religions, and a paradise for Jews and heretics, was formed. The political life was dominated by an elite largely composed of non-Catholics; for instance, in 1572, some 60 % of the participants of the opinion-forming Kraków Sejms in Proszowice were Calvinists and Polish Brethren (Urban: 1953, 333). Evangelical nobles likely con-