

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

KNIGHTS WITH WOODEN SWORDS

THE POLISH BRETHREN

by

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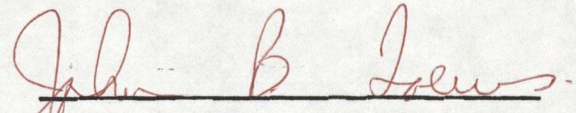
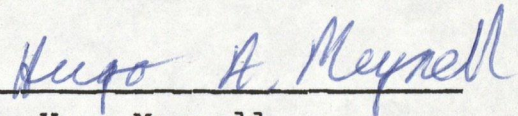
THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Kings With Wooden Swords—The Polish Brethren," submitted by Maria Ferensowicz in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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## ABSTRACT

"Knights With Wooden Swords," was a symbolic name for the Polish Brethren. They were the most radical religious group of Poland's Reformation. They were radical in both theology and social ideas. As antitrinitarians, the Polish Brethren rejected the Trinity and believed in one alone who was God, God the Father. As social radicals, they rejected any alliance between Church and State. Because of their radicalism, the Polish Brethren were persecuted throughout their one hundred years of existence in Poland by Roman Catholics and Magisterial Protestants alike.

The pre-Socinian phase (1565-98) in the history of antitrinitarianism in Poland saw the compilation of the Polish Brethren's radical doctrines. Constituting about one percent of Poland's population during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Polish Brethren had to struggle for their existence in the face of a militant Counter-Reformation that was matched by antagonisms on the part of the Magisterial Protestants. Thus, the Brethren were forced into almost complete social and religious isolation. The persecution culminated in their banishment from Poland in 1658.

The Polish Brethren's radical doctrines were largely grounded in their literal interpretation of scripture, but the Brethren were also influenced by Anabaptists and Italian religious refugees. Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), an Italian, arrived in Poland, "the refuge of heretics", in 1579. Socinus was responsible for consolidating the theological and sociopolitical doctrines of the Polish Brethren. The

year 1598, under his leadership, saw the triumph of rationalistic Unitarianism in the history of Polish antitrinitarianism. Socinus' doctrine became the official doctrine of the Church of the Polish Brethren, who thereafter commonly came to be called Socinians.

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Maria Ferensowicz,

April, 1986

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## PREFACE

In 1592, Swietoslaw Orzelski, a historian supporting Lutheranism in Poland, wrote,

There is nothing new about diversity of religion in Poland. Aside from the Greek, which is Christian, pagans and Jews were known for a long time and faiths other than Roman Catholic have existed for centuries.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of Orzelski's statement was clear. If members of the Greek Orthodox, Armenians and Catholics had lived peacefully together for generations, then why should not Lutherans, Calvinists and Polish antitrinitarians do the same? The Reformation brought to the fore many Polish humanists who advocated religious freedom for even the new reformed religious denominations of the Polish realm. These Polish humanists justified their support of the newly evolved religious confessions of Poland by appealing to the country's tradition of religious tolerance. Religious tolerance as defined by them saw the manifestation of the individual's autonomy in the choice of creed and the autonomy of the religious group in the pursuit of its collective activities. They appealed also for legal equality of the different confessions before the state, which was eventually realized in large measure in 1573. Yet from the first years of their existence in the sixteenth century, the Polish Brethren had to consider the possibility of total banishment in the face of their continuous persecution by other religious parties.

The Polish antitrinitarians, or Unitarians (popularly known at the time as the Polish Brethren) were the most radical religious confession



in Poland's Reformation.<sup>2</sup> They distinguished themselves by their radical theological and sociopolitical doctrines, as well by their strict moral conduct. Their religious and social ideologies were influenced by the Anabaptists; and the first proponents of antitrinitarianism in Poland were closely tied, in particular, to the Moravian Anabaptists and Italian emigrants. The first stirrings of the movement in Poland, in 1556, are connected with Piotr of Goniadz (1530-71). This student of the Italian scholar Francesco Stancaro, professor of Hebrew at the University of Cracow, became familiar with Michael Servetus' (1511-53) antitrinitarian teachings during his own studies at Padua. Piotr was influenced also by Stancaro, who in his lectures likewise attacked the dogma of the Holy Trinity. Piotr of Goniadz consolidated his antitrinitarian views during his visit with the Moravian Anabaptists. In Poland, at the Calvinist Synod in Secemin (1556), Piotr openly presented his radical social and religious views. In social matters he demanded, among other things, the abolition of capital punishment, renounced the bearing of arms and going to war, appealed for the recognition of the equality of every man before the law, and called for the surrender of private property, especially feudal estates. In the realm of religion, Piotr of Goniadz recognized the holy scriptures as the sole authority in matters of faith, repudiated the dogma of the Holy Trinity, and considered baptism and the Eucharist merely as important symbols in one's faith. He also upheld Luther's claim of justification by faith.

A great influence upon the antitrinitarian movement of the Polish Brethren was exerted by Italian emigrants who, having fled persecution from the Roman Catholic Church in Italy, had taken refuge in Poland.

They included Francesco Stancaro, Laelius Socinus, Gianpaolo Alciati, Giovanni Gentile and Bernardino Ochino. These Italinas practiced the new critical philological analysis of texts in their exegesis of scripture. They brought their expertise in the field of humanist-historical textual criticism to Poland. Among them, Laelius Socinus (1525-62) was the most influential, and later his nephew Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), who came to Poland in 1579, would champion rationalistic Unitarian ideas and consolidate the movement of the Polish Brethren.

Among native Polish antitrinitarians, Grzegorz Pawel, Marcin Czechowic, and Jan Niemojewski were the main leaders of the Polish Brethren. They were prominent policy-makers who implemented many radical sociopolitical and theological decrees which distinguished the Polish Brethren from the other reformed dominations in Poland.

In 1562, the Cracow Synod saw the genesis of the Polish Brethren. A breach between the Calvinists and the antitrinitarians had occurred. Calvinist Elder Stanislaw Sarnicki accepted leadership of the Calvinist Church, or Major Reformed Church. To distinguish itself from the Calvinists, the antitrinitarian faction, under the leadership of Grzegorz Pawel, formed the Minor Reformed Church. This group however, came to be popularly known at the time as the Polish Brethren. Each wing proclaimed their particular ideologies at subsequent synods-the Calvinists at Cracow (1563) and the Polish Brethren at Mordy (1563). In 1565, the ultimate split occurred. The Minor Reformed Church, or the Polish Brethren movement, was born and thereafter maintained its separate organization, holding its own synods, and running its own houses of worship, printing shops and schools.

The Polish Brethren nurtured the radical ideas of Piotr of Goniadz. They also accepted, as the cornerstone of their theology, his rejection of both the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. It is the aim of this thesis to examine the Polish Brethren's radical religious and sociopolitical programs, and as well, to analyze Catholic and Protestant reaction to them. By examining the historical setting of sixteenth-century Poland and the subsequent evolution of the Polish Brethren's radical tendencies, it will hopefully become clear why they were the target of unmitigated antagonism. The thesis will focus on the pre-Socinian phase in the history of antitrinitarianism in Poland. This phase (1565-98), I feel, is crucial to an understanding of the Polish Brethren, for it is during this time that the Brethren formulated their radical ideologies.

Soon after their emergence, the Polish Brethren found themselves in almost complete social and religious isolation. As antitrinitarians and sociopolitical radicals, they were persecuted by both Catholics and Protestants of the Magisterial Reformation such as the Lutherans and Calvinists. The Magisterial Reformation refers to the three varieties of Reformation, namely the Lutheran, Reformed or Calvinist, and Anglican, that rejected the papal authority and espoused justification by faith and Church reform on the basis of scripture, while retaining, where possible, the establishment of official state Churches. The Polish Brethren, meanwhile, belonged to the Radical Reformation of which the Anabaptists were the largest group. In contrast to the Magisterial Reformation, this reform movement rejected any alliance between Church and state. Another tendency in the Radical Reformation was spiritualism, a development of late medieval mysticism that emphasized direct divine inspiration. A

third ingredient, rationalism, led, in its extreme form, to the rejection of both the divine nature of Christ and the Trinity. The Polish Brethren drew sympathy from both the Moravian Brethren, and Anabaptists, like the Mennonites, who were scattered throughout the Polish realm. The Moravian Brethren followed the traditions of Jan Hus. The Moravian or Bohemian Brethren should not be confused with the Moravian Anabaptists such as the Hutterites. The original ties with the Moravian Anabaptists did not develop into anything significant because the Polish Brethren did not appreciate their strictly communal life.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Polish Brethren, constituting as mentioned, only about one percent of the Polish population in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were left to grow completely on their own, unable to establish any united front with either the Polish Anabaptists or Polish Hussites.<sup>4</sup>

The thesis is comprised of five chronologically organized chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter One portrays the historical setting of sixteenth-century Poland. The origins of the Polish Brethren will be traced in Chapter Two. Chapter Three focuses on the reaction of Catholics and Magisterial Protestants to the Polish Brethren's radical theological and sociopolitical doctrines. Chapter Four, meanwhile, analyzes phases of struggle between the Polish Brethren and their opponents and the many forms of antagonism initiated by the Catholics and Protestants alike against their common enemy. Lastly, Chapter Five deals with the banishment of the Polish Brethren from Poland in 1658.

The period on which I will focus (1565-98) was deliberately chosen. It encompasses roughly the first half of the Polish Brethren's existence

in Poland. Chapter Five, however, will deal with their banishment. This is done specifically in order to illustrate the predictable fate of these radicals. This thesis thus examines the evolutionary stages of the antitrinitarian movement in Poland, known otherwise as the pre-Socinian phase. The cut-off date of 1598 was chosen as the year when Faustus Socinus' doctrines triumphed over others and became incorporated into the Racovian Catechism (1605), named after the town of Rakow, a stronghold of the Polish Brethren. The pre-Socinian phase is thus important because it saw the development of the Polish Brethren's radical doctrines. Socinus consolidated and modified the radical theological and sociopolitical program of the Brethren. Yet it is important to realize that the radicalism that was nurtured by the Brethren from the very start, was responsible for the antagonism they experienced throughout their existence in Poland, and precipitated their tragic fate culminating with their banishment. After the formulation of the Racovian Catechism, there were no drastic doctrinal changes in the Church of the Polish Brethren. Rationalistic Unitarianism, as encompassed in the Catechism, became the uniform doctrine of the Polish Brethren. Hence, the major focus of the thesis will centre on the pre-Socinian phase of Polish Unitarianism. Chapter Five will thus serve as an epilogue.

With regards to name, the members of the Polish antitrinitarian movement are most commonly known as the Polish Brethren. The movement is sometimes also referred to as the Minor Reformed church in contrast to the Major Reformed Church or Calvinism. Furthermore, the terms Arian,

Unitarian or Socinian can also be used. The Polish Brethren however themselves wished only to be called "Christians." But because the movement is most popularly known as that of the Polish Brethren, this name will be used consistently throughout the thesis, although references to synonymous titles also appear.

As mentioned, the Polish Brethren were part of the Radical Reformation, in contrast to the Magisterial Reformation. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the term "Protestant" spread as a designation for those denominations comprising the entire Magisterial Reformation, and finally even those of the Radical Reformation. All "Protestants" rejected the papacy, and the majority of them shared certain broad beliefs and policies, such as justification by faith, the symbolic value of sacraments, the bible as sole authority in matters of faith, and the rejection of saintly cults and relics. But the generic term "Protestant" is justified more by convenience than by any definite unity among the numerous denominations comprising both the Magisterial and Radical Reformations. For the purpose of this thesis therefore, the representatives of the Radical Reformation will be addressed by their individual names (e.g., Moravian Anabaptists, Mennonites, Polish Brethren) and will be recognized as separate and distinct from the Magisterial Reformers. And the term "Protestant" will be reserved for the Magisterial Reformers (e.g., Lutherans, Calvinists). This usage has been purposely adopted so as to portray more easily and clearly the conflicting relationships between the various religious denominations and therefore better illustrate the important distinctions between the Magisterial Reformers and the Radical Reformers, such as the Polish Brethren.



It is hoped that this present study will contribute to our knowledge of the Polish Reformation in general, and to an understanding of the Polish Brethren in particular. The attempt to reassess and reveal the full historical importance of the Polish Brethren has produced of late a number of important works by Polish scholars such as Janusz Tazbir, Zbigniew Ogonowski, and Jerzy Misiurek, as well as by the American George Williams.

Janusz Tazbir and Zbigniew Ogonowski have produced many works that discuss the Polish Brethren's relations with the state. They also emphasized the Brethren's role as precursors to the Enlightenment. Jerzy Misiurek has contributed greatly to the exposition of Brethren Christology. Misiurek concluded that the Polish Brethren were responsible for a sixteenth-century renaissance in the field of Christology. George Williams has collected and researched documents of various genre, which are illustrative of the history, life and thought of the Polish Brethren. Dealing also with Faustus Socinus, Williams has shown how Socinus had profoundly shaped the Brethren movement. Thus, these latest works not only have documented more completely the history and thought of the Polish Brethren, but have also provided new interpretations of the life and legend of the Polish Brethren based on recently discovered documents, including the personal letters of Faustus Socinus. These latest works have especially encouraged this present study concerning the Polish Brethren and their findings have answered a number of questions of historical worth.

But other questions have as yet been allowed to remain in the shadow of earlier research. Very interesting is the latest research of the aforementioned scholars that deals with the relations between the Polish Brethren and the Polish state. Once again, the idea of religious toleration colours the issue. It is the aim of my study to specifically examine the reaction of Catholics and Protestants to the radicalism of the Polish Brethren against the background of Church-State relations. This latest research, including this present thesis, will hopefully encourage others to continue in a field that promises for a long time to come to yield much interesting material for future study.

## Notes to Preface

<sup>1</sup>Scriptores Rerum Polonicorum, XXI (1899), 339.

<sup>2</sup>Lech Szczucki, Wokół Dziejów i Tradycji Arianizmu (Warszawa: PWN, 1971), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Stanisław Kot, "A Treatise Against the Communists of Moravia," Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society, XI (1957), 90.

<sup>4</sup>Wacław Uraban, "Losy Braci Polskich od Założenia Rakowa do Wygnania z Polski," ORP, I (1956), 130.

## CHAPTER ONE

### SETTING

Since the tenth century, Poland has belonged to the realm of the Church of Rome and thus has participated in the achievements as well as the crises of Roman Catholicism. Poland, for example, experienced a significant Reformation, but the Counter-Reformation was by and large successful in restoring Roman Catholicism as the official religion of the state. However, the absence of religious civil wars was a distinguishing characteristic of both the Polish Reformation and Counter-Reformation.<sup>1</sup>

The Reformation in Poland also differed in other respects from that which occurred in Germany, Switzerland or England. In socioeconomic terms, the dominating social group, the szlachta, or nobility, molded the Reformation in Poland to its own ends. The nobility in Poland were far numerous than elsewhere in Europe. The country also had, as a consequence, a weak and decentralized government. Therefore, it was easier for the Polish nobility to exploit the Reformation for their own political and economic gains. Furthermore, sixteenth-century Poland accommodated many national minorities, and although there was an unbroken presence of the Roman Catholic Church there was, religious nonconformity, heterodoxy, and sectarianism. Quite predictable then, many of the Reformation's religious expressions, radical as well as moderate, found sympathy in Poland. Poland's Reformation immediately saw growth therefore of a variety of reformist groups, both Magisterial and Radical

in nature. By examining the socioeconomic and political basis of the Reformation in Poland, one sheds light upon the mechanics that make the Reformation in Poland unique in many ways.

The political history of Poland in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was dominated by the rule of the Jagiellonian dynasty (1386-1572) and its effort to preserve the Union of Krevo (1385) and the Union of Lublin (1569) that saw the unification of the Kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania. During the period of the Jagiellonian dynasty, Poland reached its peak politically, militarily, and culturally. Under Jagiellonian rule, especially under Sigismund I (1506-48), Poland experienced its Golden Age. By the act of Krevo (1385), a dynastic union was effected between Poland and Lithuania. The alliance between these two kingdoms began in 1386 when Jadwiga (1386-99), who was elected queen by the Polish aristocracy, married Ladislas Jagiello, Grand Duke of Lithuania.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the two Kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania were united by marriage. This however was only a personal, dynastic union, and both states would continue to carry out their own external objectives. Both countries had been major European powers before the royal marriage, and for a time afterwards, under the Union, taken together they ranked second to none in military might.<sup>3</sup> Although the Union was unstable at times because of unfavourably disposed groups in Lithuania who were particularly hostile to the interpretation given to the Union by some Polish lords to the effect that the Grand Duchy had been incorporated into Poland, the Union did produce important cultural and social consequences. Queen Jadwiga, was especially interested in education and made significant contributions from her treasures to the University of

Cracow, renamed, after her death, the Jagiellonian University.

With the help of Lithuania, the Poles sought to halt the German Drang nach Osten, represented especially by the Teutonic Knights.<sup>4</sup> In 1410, Ladislas Jagiello, or Ladislas II (1386-1434), defeated the Teutonic Knights at the great "Battle of Grunwald," or Tannenberg, which was followed by the First Treaty of Torun (1411).<sup>5</sup> Ladislas' son, Casimir IV (1447-92), completed the subjugation of the Order in further battles, which ended with the Second Treaty of Torun (1466). Casimir IV also signed an alliance with Bohemia, securing yet another ally and thereby further strengthening the Commonwealth. Thus Poland grew into a large empire, which by the late fifteenth century threatened to become the greatest power in eastern Europe.<sup>6</sup>

While Christopher Columbus was discovering the New World, the Jagiellonian dynasty was at the peak of its power. Great tasks however awaited the Polish monarch at the turn of the sixteenth century, as Humanism and the Reformation made significant inroads into Poland.

Sigismund I, The Great (1506-48) was a conservative in politics. He relied heavily on the nobility, especially on the great magnates. In foreign affairs he was sympathetic to the Hapsburg rule because of their role as Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire and as protectors of the Universal Church. In religious affairs he punished heretics with severity. Not an advocate of the principle of religious toleration, Sigismund was nevertheless reported to have remarked to a court philosopher, "Please permit me, sir, to be King of both sheep and goats."<sup>7</sup> Sigismund was also recognized as Poland's first modern ruler. He married the Italian Princess Bona Sforza, who brought the art and



architecture of the Italian Renaissance to the court at Cracow.

Furthermore, at this time there emerged a renewed interest in the Polish language, and the country began to produce its first great writers, such as the novelist Mikolaj Rej and the poet Jan Kochanowski. Also, it was during Sigismund I's reign that the great astronomer Nicholas Copernicus (Mikolaj Kopernik) flourished.

Renaissance Humanism, which involved, among other things, classical learning and the re-evaluation of scriptures, was evident in Poland already in the fifteenth century, and continued to manifest itself through the medium of the Church. Humanism represented a shift from the medieval view of the world as an adjunct to God's creation and fostered a new emphasis on the study of man and the world as objects in themselves. Polish humanists, outside their classical studies, also came to stress human interests and ideals. Concerned with individual liberty and equality of man before the state, the Polish humanists raised the important question of the enserfed peasantry. As a cultural-intellectual trend concerned with an education favouring classical studies and as a philosophy or attitude that placed mankind and human values and welfare at the centre of consciousness, humanism influenced the gradual evolution of politics in the direction of elective kingship and parliamentary rule within the state.<sup>8</sup> Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski was a prominent Polish thinker who expressed humanist ideals with respect to the state and human rights in his celebrated work On the Emendation of the Republic (1554).<sup>9</sup> Respected also by King Sigismund I's successor, Sigismund II Augustus, Modrzewski was commissioned by the latter to write a summary work on the growing tradition of antitrinitarianism in Poland.

Modrzewski's Sylvia (1565) was an important historical work on the roots of the Polish Brethren.<sup>10</sup> Many Polish humanists thus adopted an individualistic and moralistic approach to religion. They often criticized scholasticism, the synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian revelation in medieval European thought, and were favourably disposed towards the new theological and political expressions of the Reformation in Poland.<sup>11</sup>

Sigismund I, called the Great and The Old (the latter because of his accession to the throne at a relatively advanced age) was succeeded by his son, Sigismund II Augustus (1548-72) who died without an heir and was thus the last of the Jagiellonians. Under his rule, the royal Union of Lublin (1569) was sealed. Sigismund Augustus was sympathetic to the progressive movements of the age, including Protestant theology and royal parliamentarianism. The Polish Brethren placed their hopes in him, as did other adherents of the Reformation. Sigismund Augustus was in communication by letter with Melanchthon and Calvin. And although he did not abandon Catholicism during his reign, Protestantism in Poland reached its zenith. The King also frequently sided with members of the lower classes who were battling against the privileges of the bishops and magnates. Yet he did not tolerate violence in either religion or politics, and thus refused categorically to be drawn into religious disputes between Reformers and Counter-Reformers in Poland. As a proponent of religious toleration, Sigismund Augustus became known in the midst of the Reformation for his famous statement, "I am not King over your consciences."<sup>12</sup>

In related religious issues, pressure by Protestant groups and individual Catholic bishops was brought to bear on the King to take the initiative in the matter of establishing a National Church. Many bishops and nobles favoured the idea of forming a National Church which would be independent of the supervision and exactions of the See of Rome. They hoped that their dream of a self-governing National Church emphasizing the Polish language in liturgy instead of Latin could be accomplished peacefully and legally through formal Church reform and in full agreement with the papacy. Sigismund Augustus eventually entered into negotiations with Rome on the subject. Yet once the proposal for a National Church was rejected by Rome, Sigismund did not further attempt to pressure the papacy with renewed suggestions about creating a National Church.

The death of Sigismund Augustus brought to a close the great Jagiellonian dynasty. Poland had reached its Golden Age in the sixteenth century when its artists, writers, mathematicians and scientists flourished. From a religious perspective, prior to the Reformation, Poland under the Jagiellonians was initially occupied with the Hussite problem emanating from neighboring Bohemia, and later by the menace of the Teutonic Knights. In both cases, the Renaissance popes followed a decidedly anti-Polish position. The popes refused Hussite reforms in Poland, such as the use of the national language in liturgy and the taking of the Eucharist in both forms, wine and bread, but at the same time, they supported the Teutonic Knights in their campaign of "converting" the "barbarians" of Poland and Lithuania. However, on the eve of the outbreak of the Reformation, the Jagiellonian dynasty carried still on a pro-Church policy in its internal relations with the Church

hierarchy. Even so, the dynasty's relations with the See of Rome was beginning to experience strains precipitated by the Poles' vision of a National Church as well as by their tradition of religious toleration. It thus remained for the Vasa line of Kings and the Jesuits at the end of the sixteenth century to return the country to its traditional policy of loyalty to Rome as laid down by the prior Piast dynasty. As the Counter-Reformation grew stronger, Catholic antagonism towards the Polish Brethren intensified, an antagonism which was matched by that emanating from the Magisterial Protestant camp. Thus, the Brethren suffered at the hands of both Catholics and Protestants.

From a political perspective, the Jagiellonians brought Poland's borders to within two hundred miles of Moscow, an area that included Kiev and considerable territory in the Ukraine. However, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, formidable because of its size, began to lose its effectiveness in the sixteenth century because of internal political strife. This strife was precipitated by the conflict between the strong noble class and the weak and decentralized government. The crown was weakened by such procedures as the liberum veto and by the elective kingship. The nobility, meanwhile, exploited the weak and decentralized government, thereby enhancing its own political and economic power.

Under the Jagiellonians, the nobility in general became increasingly powerful. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Poland grew increasingly wealthy and developed an important foreign trade. Grain became the major item of export, over which the nobility had almost complete monopoly.<sup>13</sup> Profits from the grain trade made the nobility very wealthy. Both the greater and lesser nobility participated in the

Sejm, or National Diet. The nobility exercised their political strength in legislative measures, as in 1510 when the constitutional act Nihil Novi<sup>14</sup> decreed that no new law could be passed without the Sejm's consent. Furthermore, according to the liberum veto<sup>15</sup>, any member of the Sejm could theoretically veto any measure proposed during the legislative sessions.

At the same time, the situation of the peasantry was steadily worsening in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Polish Brethren, just as they had condemned the corruption of the Sejm and called for the renunciation of public offices, condemned the exploitation of the peasantry by the upper classes. This attack on feudalism made the Brethren very unpopular in the Catholic and Protestant camps, but the antitrinitarians did not refrain from their attack on feudalism. The Polish Brethren called for renewed human rights and championed the principle of legal equality for both landlord and peasant-serf including the release of peasants from serfdom. Believing in the maxim that one should only live off the work performed by one's own hands (St. Paul), the Brethren were determined to return in their daily life to the communal lifestyle of the early Christians. Nevertheless, the enormous power of the magnates, which was nourished at the expense of the peasantry, made for a vital feudal society in Poland. As a consequence, serfdom had been legalized in the sixteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

The nobility, in their reform programs, directly challenged the jurisdiction and strength of the clergy. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Church in Poland was very powerful economically and politically.<sup>17</sup> Although the szlachta normally undertook struggles

against the clergy on behalf of their own narrow interests, at times they did nevertheless strive for the good of all Polish society. For example, the nobility attempted to curb the exploitative privileges of the clergy in Poland; to persuade the clergy to participate in the military defense of the nation, at least in the form of monetary support for defense purposes; and to withhold the outflow of money from Poland to Rome in the form of papal annates. With reference to the latter, the Polish Brethren supported the nobility in their aim to make Poland independent of papal influence, but opposed them on the issue of military defense. As pacifists, the Polish Brethren abstained from military action and declined to use arms in defense of either individual security or that of the nation.

The reform efforts of the nobility did not produce major results. The clergy were too inflexible to accept many sociopolitical compromises. Furthermore, the Church nourished its own strength. Each bishop was concurrently a senator in the Polish Senate, which was the monarch's counsel and included both bishops and magnates.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the Church administration was both very well organized and wealthy. Furthermore, support from Rome contributed to the powerful position of the Church in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Poland.<sup>19</sup> In such circumstances, the nobility became increasingly sympathetic to the new religious principles flowing in from Germany and Bohemia. However, such noblemen as the Polish Brethren Niemojewski, who was so overwhelmed by a new spirit in life that he renounced all his vast possessions and judicial post in order to pursue the communal lifestyle of the primitive Christianity, were far and few between. The nobility exploited the maxims of the Reformation for their own political and economic ends. The



Polish Brethren movement itself therefore remained relatively plebeian. Only a few nobles were willing to succumb to the Brethren's utopian doctrines.

The Reformation, as the nobility had hoped, brought at least a temporary check to the exploitation of Polish society by the Church. But it also weakened the supremacy of the magnates and brought forth many social reforms crucial to the Polish state, such as the formation of a paid national army. The Reformation also stimulated the development of Polish language, literature and national consciousness. The nobility, though, while seeking national reforms, were also concerned about advancing their own class privileges. Hence, even during the Reformation period, not all Protestant reformers spoke out against the plight of the enserfed peasantry. Individuals like Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, who proposed a series of radical sociopolitical reforms, were few in number. Radical socioreligious reforms, like those proposed by the Polish Brethren in the sixteenth century, were very unpopular among the majority of the nobility. Thus it was up to the Polish Brethren, as representatives of the Radical Reformation in Poland, to set into motion more radical sociopolitical and religious reforms. Their radicalism as well as their humanitarianism sought to soften the hard lot of the peasantry and to mitigate the rigors of penal law. These initial aims of the Polish Brethren served as pillars for true social reform in Poland.

The end of the Jagiellonian rule marked the beginnings of the political decline of Poland. After the death of Sigismund Augustus, a system of elective kingship was introduced. This did not mean that the people at large voted; only the nobles did. And because of the

traditional enmity between the upper and lower nobility, it became the general custom to elect to the throne a member of some foreign noble family. Through this method, as sponsored by the powerful magnate Jan Zamojski,<sup>20</sup> the Polish nobility aimed at safeguarding their privileges, and their agreements with the Kings strictly limited the latter's power. It was during this period of elective kingship that the Polish Brethren experienced growing persecution, despite the ascendancy of reputable figures to the throne like Stefan Bathory.

The first Polish King to be elected (1573) was Henry of Valois, who in a few months returned to France where he became Henry III. Henry of Valois had been King of Poland for four months when he received the news of his brother's, Charles IX's, death. He fled from Cracow on June 18, 1574 to take possession of the French crown. In the previous year, tolerance in Poland had been extended to all religious groups and was legally recognized by the Confederation of Warsaw. This Confederation established constitutional equality for all religions in Poland, thus guaranteeing religious freedom.<sup>21</sup> Poland was the most tolerant European country in the sixteenth century and was called the "refuge of heretics".<sup>22</sup> There is no doubt that Polish religious tolerance was influenced by the political freedoms which the nobility exacted from the monarch. But despite the general tolerant atmosphere which then distinguished Poland from her neighbours, toleration was not complete and Protestants and Catholics made common cause in persecuting both privately and publicly the Polish Brethren whose sociopolitical and religious radicalism antagonized both camps. Religious toleration was therefore not absolute.

Henry of Valois, who himself accepted the provisions of the Confederation of Warsaw only very reluctantly, was succeeded as King by the Hungarian Stefan Bathory (1575-86), who successfully fought Russian Czar Ivan The Terrible for control of Livonia. His goal, unfulfilled because of early death, was the unification of Poland, Muscovy, and Transylvania. In religious matters, Bathory encouraged the Jesuits.

The Jesuits were introduced into Poland in 1565 by Poland's Primate of the Roman Catholic Church, Cardinal Stanislaw Hosius, who himself led an energetic campaign of preaching against Polish Protestants, both Magisterial and Radical. He published polemical writings in defence of Roman Catholicism. In 1564 he succeeded in having the Polish State and Church approve the decrees of Trent. In order to facilitate their implementation, Hosius encouraged the coming of the Jesuits to Poland.

The Society of Jesus, popularly known as the Jesuits, were the most important Roman Catholic Order to be established in the sixteenth century and became a decisive instrument of the Counter-Reformation. The Jesuits did not confine themselves to monasteries, but lived in missions and colleges, and dedicated much of their efforts to teaching.

By the time of the outbreak of the Thirty Years War, Poland was ruled by the Swedish prince Sigismund III (1586-1632) from the Vasa dynasty. Known as the "Jesuit King", Sigismund was but a symbol of the tragic fate of the Polish Brethren.

The Vasa family ruled Sweden (1532-1654) and Poland (1588-1668). Established in Sweden by King Gustavus I, it gained the Polish throne through the marriage of Swedish King John III to the sister of Polish King Sigismund II Augustus. Their son, a Catholic became (1587) Polish

King Sigismund III. When he attempted to assume the Swedish throne however, the Protestant Swedes ousted him and installed his uncle Charles IX (1599). Thereafter the two Vasa branches fought frequently for domination. In Poland, the ruling line ended with the abdication of King John II Casimir in 1668. During his reign in 1658, the Polish Brethren were banished from Poland.

John II Casimir's reign coincided with the "Deluge" of Poland which referred to the incessant warfare with the Cossacks, Russians, and Swedes. In 1655, Charles IX of Sweden nearly overran Poland. On April 1, 1656, John Casimir knelt before an image of the Virgin Mary in a Lwow cathedral and dedicated Poland to her as its Queen in return for what had seemed as Her miraculous intervention at Czestochowa, during the Swedish siege in November and December 1655. Moreover, the King vowed to improve the situation of the serfs who had proved themselves so valiant in the national cause. Three months later, John II Casimir was urged by the Jesuit Mikolaj Cichowski to make a further vow to purify Poland by banishing the Polish Brethren who denied the deity of the Son of the Virgin, the "Queen of Poland". "The Decree of Banishment was the fulfillment of the second vow and resulted in the uncompromising banishment of the Polish Brethren in 1658."<sup>23</sup>

Hence, the existence of the Polish Brethren in Poland spanned nearly one hundred years during which time they added a noteworthy page to Poland's history. The Brethren's very emergence demonstrated that the Church in Poland in the sixteenth century was as ripe for reformation as any in Europe. The birth of the Polish Brethren was accomplished during the reign of the last of the Jagiellonians, Sigismund II Augustus (1548-72). His reign saw the Polish Reformation at its height. The

critical time of the death of Sigismund Augustus in 1572 found adherents of the various Protestant denominations geographically widely spread in the Polish realm, but not very deeply rooted in the Polish people, compromised by advanced freethinkers, and beset by their mutual antagonisms.

The Polish Brethren were the most radical denomination in the Polish Reformation. They became the major target of attack by Magisterial Protestantism and the strong militant Counter-Reformation alike. They were too extreme for their times. The Counter-Reformation, with the backing of the state, was finally successful in ousting the Polish Brethren from Poland in 1658, but not before the Brethren made their mark on Polish history.

The Vasa Kings of Poland were particular proponents of the Counter-Reformation. The Counter-Reformation was successful in Poland because Poland's Reformation rested too exclusively on the privileged upper class rather than on the following and support of the majority of the people. Secondly, the Polish Reformation lacked the strength of deep inner conviction regarding the significance of the Reformation conception. Lastly, the Polish Reformation movement lacked internal unity. The radical Polish Brethren were accused by Magisterial Protestants for having destroyed any potential unified front. Chapter Two will trace the origins of the Polish Brethren and the evolution of their radical religious and sociopolitical doctrines. It was the Brethren's radicalism that stopped them from joining into a unified Reformationist front, as it was responsible for precipitating any antagonisms directed against them.

## Notes to Chapter One

- <sup>1</sup>Joseph Lecler, Toleration and the Reformation (London: Longmans, 1961), vol. 2, p. 106.
25. <sup>2</sup>Pawel Jasienica, Polska Jagiellonow (Warszawa: PIW, 1983), p.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 68.
105. <sup>4</sup>Stanislaw Kuczynski, Wielka Wojna (Warszawa: WHON, 1980), p.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 77.
- <sup>6</sup>Jasienica, op. cit., p. 417.
- <sup>7</sup>Norman Davies, God's Playground (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), vol. 1, p. 145.
197. <sup>8</sup>Janusz Tazbir, Zarys Historii Polski (Warszawa: PIW, 1980), p.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 199
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 200.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 199.
- <sup>12</sup>Lawrence Biondi, Poland's Church State Relations, (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1981), p. 70.
- <sup>13</sup>Alexander Gieysztor, History of Poland (Warszawa: PWN, 1979), p. 145.
- <sup>14</sup>Julian Bardach, Historia Panstwa i Prawa Polskiego (Warsawa: PWN, 1979), p. 226.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 228.
- <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 206.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 212.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 104.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 213.
- <sup>20</sup>Gieysztor, op. cit., p. 163.
- <sup>21</sup>Lecler, op. cit., p. 486.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup>George Williams, Polish Brethren (New York: Scholars, 1980), p. 496.



## CHAPTER TWO

### ORIGINS

The Reformation in Western Christianity during the first half of the sixteenth century ended the absolute supremacy of Rome and the papacy, and saw the rise and consolidation of new creeds and national Churches. The desire and need for reform had been felt much earlier. Wycliffe and Hus were important precursors of the movement that was to assault the hierarchical character of the Church a century later. But many of the causes of the Reformation, both religious and sociopolitical, crystallized in the fifteenth century. There was dissatisfaction in ecclesiastical offices, and dismay at the growing worldliness of Rome. Furthermore, the lower classes were becoming increasingly hostile towards the Church on account of the heavy burden of ecclesiastical fees. Thus the religious and moral condition of the Church added new dimensions to economic and social conflicts.

The Church in Poland needed reform no less than in most other European countries, and the Reformation found fertile soil in Poland too. The relatively rapid spread of the Reformation in Poland is to be explained by many factors, including the country's geopolitical setting, its economy, the shortcomings and abuses of its clergy, the dispute between the nobility and the Church over ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and, last, but not least, the impact of both Renaissance and secular humanism.

Because of its geographic position, Poland inevitably came into contact with the religious upheavals of its neighbours. Its first contact with a movement for religious reform was with the Hussites of

Bohemia. Headed by Jan Hus (1369-1415), who became the movement's martyr, the Hussites revolted in the fifteenth century not only against the Roman Catholic hierarchy but also against Germanic domination. This movement appealed to the Poles who then were engaged in their own crucial national struggle with the Germanic Teutonic Knights. Eventually, the Poles were supported on the battlefield of Grunwald (1410) by a group of Bohemian auxiliaries under the command of later Hussite leader Jan Zizka (d. 1424) of Trocnov.<sup>1</sup> The bonds between Hussites and Poles, did not become cemented, however, for Poland's bishops, as representatives of the movement for lawful and internal reform of the Church wielded great authority at the Council of Constance (1415). Accommodating the motives of the Council, the Polish bishops turned down the Bohemian project of a union between the two kingdoms of Bohemia and Poland and the establishment of a common national Church. Consequently Hussitism in Poland was suppressed.

Less than one hundred years later, new religious doctrines passed across Poland's borders again - this time from Germany where Luther's Reformation flourished. Luther had challenged the sale of indulgences and the authority of the Church to remit sins, as outlined in his 95 theses of 1517. Luther's break with the Roman Catholic Church culminated in 1520 when he published his three famous treatises. The first, To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, called upon the German princes to reform the Church on their own initiative. It attacked the celibacy of the clergy, pilgrimages, the veneration of saints, religious orders, and the authority of the pope. The second treatise, On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, rejected the old sacramental system, upholding only baptism and the Eucharist. The third treatise, On the Liberty of

the Christian Man, elaborated on the liberation of the Christian by inner faith as opposed to the obligation to perform good works. Thus Luther (1483-1546) and Lutheranism arose in Germany in protest against the corruption of the Church, and this movement soon began to gain ground in Poland. It was the young nobles and sons of the gentry who attended foreign universities in Germany who brought home the new doctrines.<sup>2</sup>

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Poland grew wealthy and developed into an important foreign trade centre. The established class of German burghers, who were relatively well disposed to the ideas of Luther, also played an important role in spreading Lutheran doctrines, especially in such cities as Gdansk (Danzig) and Torun (Thorn).<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the Grandmaster of the Teutonic Order, who became the first duke of Prussia (1525-68) upon his conversion to Lutheranism, secularized the territory of the Teutonic Order into a duchy. Consequently Königsberg developed rapidly as a Protestant Centre from which the new teaching was channelled into Poland.<sup>4</sup> The Polish Brethren, though much more radical in their doctrines, evolved directly from the spirit of Luther's Reformation and were especially respectful of his rationalistic approach in his teachings on Christ. Luther challenged the traditional Church terminology, like the term homousios. This Greek term, means "of like nature" while homoiousios means "of different nature."<sup>5</sup> Luther also taught that the term "Trinity" is not found in the scriptures but is a man-created image. The Polish Brethren acclaimed Luther's use of the term "God" in the place of "Trinity".<sup>6</sup>

Shortly after Luther began his campaign in Germany, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) instituted his reform movement in Switzerland. The Swiss movement was far more radical than Luther's, going still further in

search of liturgical simplicity and denying the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Polish Brethren applauded Zwingli's attack on the sale of indulgences, celibacy, and Church fasts, just as they had applauded Luther's. Zwingli's rationalism, his belief that the fundamental truths of Christian faith can be deduced by reason alone, was also acclaimed by the Brethren, who respected Zwingli's biblical exegesis and his emphasis of spreading the word of God as found in the scriptures unencumbered by centuries of theological distortion.

Much more influential however, among Poles in general, was Calvinism.<sup>7</sup> Calvinists shared with Lutherans a doctrinal emphasis on original sin and justification by faith, but they differed in their belief in absolute predestination. With regard to the sacraments, Calvin (1509-674) believed them to be merely symbolic. Calvinism was more inclined to regulate social life and control manners. In this respect, Calvinism responded to the spiritual needs of the nascent Polish commercial class. Calvin's teachings had a bearing on the consolidation of ethics among the rising capitalist class in Poland.

The more radical Calvinism turned out to be most popular in Poland. Calvinism crystallized itself firmly in the eastern provinces of Poland soon after Sigismund II Augustus ascended the throne, in 1548, as the last of the Jagiellonians. It was the spirit of the Calvinist doctrines and that of the Moravian Brethren that were met with greater sympathy than the "German creeds".

Calvinism was accepted by many Polish lords and members of the titled aristocracy.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to Lutheranism which was limited to urban centres, Calvinism spread to the estates of the Polish nobles and influenced the rural population as well. And it was the Calvinists from

whom the Polish Brethren evolved. Thus the early Protestants in Poland fell into four groups: Lutherans, Calvinists or Reformed, Moravian Brethren or the Hussite Unitas Fratrum, and Polish Brethren or Minor Reformed Church.

Poland's increased domestic and foreign trade during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, its growing wealth and the stratification of its social classes, were important factors in its Reformation. The Reformation that penetrated Poland soon after its outbreak in Germany made inroads especially among the nobility and the merchant class where there was a considerable German element. Most importantly the fate of the Reformation in Poland was in the hands of the Polish nobility. It was they who brought about change in the religious life of Poland.<sup>9</sup> The nobility in Poland enjoyed a rather exceptional position in that they constituted a much larger percentage of the population than in any other European country - about half a million in the sixteenth century, or about 8-10% of the whole population.<sup>10</sup>

Calvinism found greater sympathy among the Polish nobility than either Lutheranism or the doctrines of the Polish Brethren. A contemporary reformer Jerome Filipowski, wrote, "We looked for the religious denomination with doctrines that best taught the truths of Christianity, so as to join its people."<sup>11</sup> Not doubting the sincerity of individual nobles in their quest for Church reform, Calvinism proved attractive not entirely on account of its theology, but also owing to its sociopolitical doctrines and organization. Calvin admitted the right of opposition against royal authority which persecuted the true faith, though such opposition was to be exercised not by individuals but by their lawful representatives. In Poland, clauses meant to deter royal disregard of restrictive covenants were included in

the articles imposed on the elective kings by the nobility (e.g., at the election of King Henry of Valois) and referred to as the clause of "on the impartiality of obedience" (de non praestanda obedientia).<sup>12</sup>

Thus, Calvin's idea of a theocracy had a dynamism that was appealing to the Polish nobility. Furthermore, Calvinist austerity appealed as well to the rising middle class of Poland which was experiencing commercial expansionism. Calvinism also combined with the national interests and sentiments of the Poles. Moreover, it became involved in the political struggles of the time between the nobility and government. Calvinism, as a form of Christianity, filled the nobility's psychological and sociopolitical needs. These two needs were more important to them than the actual Calvinist dogmas of predestination and grace. Therefore, in Poland, with reference to the nobility, it was ironical that the religion which most appealed to the upper classes was one that held man to be unfree and incapable of doing good by one's own efforts. The nobility either reformed this doctrine radically, or rejected predestination all together.

Hence, the Reformation had secured itself among the nobility during the reign of Sigismund Augustus, which also showed that the Reformation in Poland was not only religious and/or ecclesiastical but also social and political in nature.

Undoubtedly the abuses, economic and moral, of the lower clergy precipitated the need for reforms, but most damaging to the old system of the Church in Poland, as elsewhere in Western Christendom, was the impact of Renaissance humanism. Humanists favored neo-Platonism over both Aristotelianism, which was a synthesis of Aristotelian rationalism and Christian thought, and scholasticism which was concerned with reconciling

faith and reason. Humanists thus challenged scholasticism and the traditional theology, while at the same time underlining the individual's right to judge matters of faith for himself. Humanism was also linked to Classics, to Greek and Roman models in art, literature, and thought. One of the major results of Renaissance humanism was an intensive search for and study of ancient manuscripts. Thus humanism favoured classical studies over medieval scholasticism. It embodied also a highly developed historical and textual criticism. Thus, the new scholarship of humanism, with its highly developed sense of criticism, and a better examination of biblical and patristic sources, revealed gaps in traditional dogma and so contributed to the growth of the Reformation movement.<sup>13</sup> Humanism thus represented a shift away from the medieval concept of the world as an adjunct to God's creation and fostered a new emphasis on the study of man and the world as objects in themselves.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, many Polish nobles attended foreign universities in Italy as well as Germany. Imbued with the new spirit of humanism, the sons of the nobility were eager to revolt against the old medieval system which involved man's submission to Church authority. Poles, like others, criticized such fundamental practices of the medieval Church as the veneration of saints and relics or the sale of indulgences. They found these practices incompatible with the biblical sources as revealed by the new critical approach of humanism. The Polish humanist Bernard of Lublin wrote in 1515 that "the human mind can never be held back in its search for truth."<sup>14</sup>

The most influential of the humanists on the Reformation in Poland was Erasmus of Rotterdam. Erasmus downgraded superficial differences of doctrine and observance, and shifted the emphasis from matters of dogma

to ethics. Humanists like him also recognized the role of reason as the arbiter in matters of faith, proclaimed moderation, and a conciliatory approach to opponents. Moreover, most crucial was the influence of books such as Erasmus' Praise of Folly (1511) and the satires of the Epistolae Obscurorum Vivorum (1515), or Letters of Obscure Men.

A strong humanistic undercurrent in Polish Protestantism and the general spiritual climate of Poland were especially favourable to the diffusion of Erasmian ideas. An impressive number of Poles, like the great Polish Reformation leader, Jan Laski (Jan Lasco, 1499-1560), visited and corresponded with Erasmus.<sup>15</sup> Erasmian thought would play an important role in the early stages of the antitrinitarian movement in Poland.

The beginnings of Polish religious radicalism is directly related to the growth of antitrinitarianism and the emergence of the Polish Brethren in the first half of the sixteenth century. The earliest stages of Polish antitrinitarianism unfolded during the secret meetings of some twelve humanists at the home of a learned Cracow bookseller, Andrzej Trzecieski.<sup>16</sup> These humanists discussed the thought and works of Erasmus, the antitrinitarian views of Michael Servetus, Laelius Socinus and Bernardo Ochino, as well as the Catholic teachings on the Trinity. Certain members from the Cracow royal court, under the protection of Queen Bona Sforza, also participated in these meetings which were directed by the Queen's confessor, Francesco Lismanino, a Franciscan. Royal officials and learned men made their contributions to these meetings, like Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski. Modrzewski was later asked by King Sigismund Augustus to write a treatise on the Trinity and discuss the factional disputes surrounding it. Consequently, this work evolved as a historical landmark which traced the roots of the Polish Brethren.



The secret meetings in Cracow thus saw the participation of Italian humanists who had taken refuge in Poland. The origins of antitrinitarianism in Poland were strongly influenced by Italian humanists. And although the Polish Reformation had connections with Luther and Wittenberg, as well as with Calvin and Geneva, and later with the Moravian Anabaptist community, the antitrinitarian movement evolved directly from the influences of Italian rationalism and humanism. The Polish Brethren recognized the contributions of Erasmus to their movement, but other Italian precursors like Lismanino, Ochino, Alciati, Gribaldi and Faustus Socinus' uncle, Laelius Socinus, were recognized by the Polish Brethren as their more distinct precursors.

Another figure who played an important role in the genesis of the Polish Brethren was Peter Statorius, a specialist in grammar. His importance as a teacher is related to the great learning centre of Pinczow, a Protestant community of great consequence in the Reformation movement in Poland. Pinczow came to play a very important role as a Reformation centre for attracting learned men. In 1550 the aristocrat Mikolaj Olesnicki founded a school in Pinczow in an abandoned monastery. Under the protection of the Reformed Church, the school grew famous for learning.<sup>17</sup> Attracting notable scholars from all over Poland and beyond, and religious exiles from as far as Italy, the Pinczow school made great contributions to the Calvinist Church and later to the antitrinitarian movement as well. Pinczow became not only the major centre for the early synods of the Major Reformed Church, and later of the Minor Reformed Church or Polish Brethren, but also boasted the first

Protestant press in Poland.<sup>18</sup>

Under Statorius (d. 1591), who served as rector of the Pinczow school in 1561, this centre of learning fostered the spread of Reformation ideals. Here scholars made the first Protestant translation of the Bible into Polish. A Roman Catholic translation into Polish was later accomplished by the Jesuit Jacob Wujek. Statorius was responsible for the Protestant translation and himself took an active hand in the translation. As a scholar of the new critical science of philology, Statorius also produced the first system of Polish grammar. The school under his direction acquired a distinct Arian flavour and in fact established itself as the first Arian, or antitrinitarian school in Poland.<sup>20</sup>

Another notable figure in the genesis of Polish antitrinitarianism was Francesco Stancaro from Mantua.<sup>21</sup> In 1549 he was called to Poland to take the chair of Hebrew at the University of Cracow. Removed in 1551 for teaching non-Catholic interpretations, he was invited by Duke Albrecht of Prussia to be professor of theology at Konigsberg. Stancaro polemicized on the topic of the Trinity, as recorded in his work De Trinitate et mediatore Domino nostro Jesu Christo (The Trinity and the Mediation of Our Lord Jesus Christ) (1562). This work, presented Stancaro's radical interpretations of the nature of Christ.

Michael Servetus (1511-53), a Spanish physician, was also a major influence upon the evolution of the Polish Brethren.<sup>22</sup> In 1531 he published De trinitatis erroribus libri VII (On the Error of the Trinity) in which he challenged the accepted definition of the Holy Trinity. This work caused him to be recognized as the first European proponent of antitrinitarianism during the Reformation.<sup>23</sup> Although Servetus had

no direct contact with Polish Arians or Brethren, his teachings made their way to Poland through the intercession of Biandrata, Gentile, Alciati, and other Italian humanist-antitrinitarians. Piotr of Goniadz, a native Pole and one of the founders of the Polish Brethren, especially propagated Servetus' views. When, in 1556 Piotr expressed his views during a Calvinist Synod at Secemin, he was accused of spreading the "Servetus heresy". This was the first recorded public denial of the dogma of the Trinity in Poland.<sup>24</sup>

Piotr of Goniadz (1530-71) studied in Cracow under Francesco Stancaro, as well as in Padua where he received a doctorate in philosophy. In Padua he might have met Gribaldi. His studies took place during the period of Servetus' trial and execution in Geneva. It was in Italy that Piotr of Goniadz first heard of Servetus and became familiar with his teachings. Imbued with the spirit of Italian humanism and the radical religious views of Servetus, Piotr left Italy in 1555 and made his way back to Poland to spread the new religious and sociopolitical ideologies of the West. En route to his homeland, Piotr of Goniadz visited the Moravian Anabaptists.

In Poland, Piotr appeared wearing a wooden sword at his side rather than a real weapon as worn by the nobility. In a speech at the Secemin Synod (1556), Piotr of Goniadz spoke of himself as one "known throughout the whole country only because he refuses to wear arms and instead wears a wooden sword according to the anti-military customs of the Moravian Anabaptists."<sup>25</sup> At this Calvinist Synod, Piotr also demanded the abolishment of capital punishment, prohibition of carrying any weapons and war itself, equal rights for all classes, and the renouncement of personal belongings. In the realm of religion he recognized the holy

scriptures as the only source for faith, the sole authority in religious affairs. Denouncing the teachings on the Trinity, Piotr expressed his approval of such Protestant principles as justification by faith and the usage of sacraments strictly as symbols.

Peter's position made a deep impression on those gathered at Secemin, whom he encouraged to seek the truth as outlined in the scriptures. The delegates to the synod attempted to persuade Piotr to modify his radical stance but, he would not. Consequently, he was excommunicated later that year at the Calvinist Synod of Pinczow. Piotr moved on to Podlasie and Lithuania where he spread his antitrinitarian concepts. Rather than relent, he went on to expound both antitrinitarian and Anabaptist views such as the issue of infant baptism. The Polish Brethren would later accept Piotr's teaching that adult baptism, rather than infant baptism, is the proper conduct of a true believing Christian. Hence, it was through individuals such as Piotr of Goniadz that the new and radical doctrines of the Polish Brethren began to take shape.

Piotr had set off in Poland an entire chain of debates and polemics on the dogma of the Trinity. These took place during successive Calvinist synods in the mid-sixteenth century, despite Jan Laski's fervent attempts to maintain Protestant unity in Poland. The debates on Christology (that aspect of theology concerned with defining the limits of the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ) were especially heated. During the 1559 and 1560 meetings, the Reformed Church decided to burn the works of Stancaro, condemned his teachings on Christ, and ordered him to be silent on the matter of his radical view on Christ's role as intercessor. In 1561, during the January Synod of Pinczow, a sudden debate evolved centered around Peter Statorius' challenge that the Holy

Spirit is not God and therefore not a member of the Trinity but simply a gift from God. This synod, especially with its major antitrinitarian feelings, portrayed itself as de facto the first Arian Synod.<sup>26</sup>

Later that year the Cracow Synod also emerged strongly tainted with antitrinitarian views. The number of Arian advocates enlarged steadily and came to include such notable individuals as Grzegorz Pawel, Marcin Czechowic and Szymon Budny.

Marcin Czechowic (1532-1613) was an especially valuable member of the Polish Brethren. He represented the plebeian voice of the antitrinitarian movement in Poland. The importance of his role took on new meaning as Czechowic engaged continuously in polemics with the Brethren's opponents. Together with Niemojewski, Czechowic championed the radical sociopolitical policies of the Polish Brethren.

The breach between the Calvinists and the growing antitrinitarian faction widened even more after the Cracow Synod of 1561. Stanislaw Sarnicki (1532-97), a Calvinist polemicist and Elder of the Cracow community, led the continually declining conservatives. Grzegorz Pawel (d. 1591) emerged as the leader of the stronger radical wing, or the future Minor Reformed Church. Sarnicki considered the conflict to be one over radically different theological principles, which also included questions pertaining to freedom, reason and tolerance. He was convinced of his religious beliefs and succeeded in fortifying the strength of the conservatives. Grzegorz Pawel, on the other hand, was just as convinced about his liberal theology that was initially nurtured by Piotr of Goniadz in 1556 and by the Italian Biandrata. Grzegorz Pawel turned out to be a very successful leader of the Minor Reformed Church, popularly known at the time as the Polish Brethren. His influence was definitely

felt from the time of Biandrata's and Lismanino's departure from Poland in 1563 to the advent of Faustus Socinus' arrival in Poland in 1579. Hence, under his guidance, the following resolution was adopted by the radicals in 1563 at the Synod at Mordy:

Although we have been unable on account of some weaker brethren wholly to reject the word Trinity, yet we have for the most part abandoned the present misuse of it, so that now being man's word and not God's it is by man less valued than formerly.<sup>27</sup>

Thus it was at the Mordy Synod that the Arian-minded officially came to declare their doctrines, while the Calvinists maintained their own teachings at their own separate Synod at Cracow.

The growing rift between the two Protestant factions was accented later, in 1563, at Pinczow where many of the lesser nobility and many prominent theologians and rhetoricians joined Grzegorz's side. A definite split was imminent in the Reformed Church, especially after the proclamations at Mordy began to settle in. It was arranged that any outstanding socioreligious questions would be debated at the upcoming conference in Piotrkow. The debates took place between January 1st and April 30th, 1565. The two factions however could not come to terms. The Calvinists broke off the debate without giving notice and refused to hold any further debates with the representative of Grzegorz's radical wing.<sup>28</sup> From the split at Piotrkow (1565), which was recognized as final and complete, the antitrinitarians, or Polish Brethren, emerged as a separate Church, officially recognized at the time as the Minor Reformed Church. The Polish Brethren thereafter maintained their own organization and held their own Synods. The outcome of the Piotrkow

conference was reported to King Sigismund Augustus with whose consent it had been held. The nascent Polish Brethren community would have but a century of existence in Poland.

The split of the Reformed Church in Poland into the Major and Minor branches had a great impact on both the Polish Reformation in general and on the antitrinitarian movement in particular. The schism at Piotrkow brought to an end that which was already initiated by the Calvinist Elder Sarnicki in 1563 and his secessionist "orthodox" synods. The separation from the orthodox Calvinists however heralded positive development for the antitrinitarian movement. The Polish Brethren, a name denoting their communal lifestyle modelled after the Apostolic Church, contributed a new religious system whose doctrines embraced relatively radical sociopolitical and religious doctrines. The schism however meant that the Reformation in Poland underwent fragmentation, so that the Protestant cause in general was weakened.

From the moment of its establishment, in 1565, the Minor Reformed Church sought to crystallize its socioreligious doctrines. The Polish Brethren disputed among themselves the orthodoxy of their acquired doctrines. The first such dispute took place already in the first year of their existence and centered around the question of Anabaptism, whose major advocate was Piotr of Goniadz. Their first separate meeting, at Brzezín (1565), was the first assembly in which the Polish Brethren came together to consolidate their common ends. It was at this time that the Brethren attempted to make their doctrines explicit. In reference to baptism and other sacraments, Piotr of Goniadz upheld the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and argued that sacraments are not necessary for salvation but are mere symbols. Baptism according to him was only a

symbol of one's membership in the Christian body.<sup>29</sup> Grzegorz Pawel and Marcin Czechowic also saw in the sacraments only symbols of God's grace, baptism being viewed as a symbol of Christ's passion. The celebration of the Eucharist was considered by many Brethren as idolatrous. During these disputes even the most extremist Brethren voiced their views, which were usually chiliastic or Messianic in nature. Hence, it was up to Faustus Socinus, whose moderate counsel ultimately prevailed, to consolidate Brethren theology.

Apart from criticizing the sacraments, the Polish Brethren universally accepted the principle of justification by faith, arguing that because of Christ's death on the cross, God does not recall man's sins. Christ's passion and man's faith in Christ as the Son of God cleanses man from sin and thus he does not need the system of sacraments for his salvation.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, those who have faith, have it on account of being predestined to have it, and this faith should be confessed before being baptized. Hence, the question of baptism was a fundamental one in the Brethren's theology and the strong implications for adult baptism came to be fully discussed at the Brzezín and Wegrow Synods of 1565.<sup>31</sup> Eventually it was formulated that adult baptism by immersion was to be the form of baptism in the Minor Reformed Church.

Yet what turned out to be in further synods a more incessant dispute concerned the figure of Christ and Christology with its strong emphasis on the Trinity. These disputes resulted in the temporary fragmentation of the Polish Brethren into the Tritheist, Ditheist and Unitarian factions. The Brethren finally arrived at a uniform theological and sociopolitical program under the counsel of Socinus.



Tritheism condemned the use of the words Holy Trinity and proclaimed faith separately in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Characterizing the beginnings of the antitrinitarian movement in Poland, Stanislaw Lubieniecki (1623-75), a historian of the Reformation, wrote, "There were many Tritheists who denied the use of the words Holy Trinity. They worshipped individually the three figures of God."<sup>32</sup>

Tritheism was antischolastic and challenged the terminology of Roman Catholic scholasticism. Its advocates, like Piotr of Goniadz and Grzegorz Pawel, believed only in that representation of the three figures of God as outlined in the holy scriptures.<sup>33</sup> The Italian humanists Gribaldi and Gentile contributed greatly to the crystallization of the Tritheist doctrine.<sup>34</sup> Hoping to maintain some basic structure of monotheism, Gentile accepted subordinationism which emphasized that the true God is God the Father. This theory was accepted by the Tritheist Polish Brethren, though in time it proved unsatisfactory.

The Tritheists' main leader was Grzegorz Pawel who during a meeting in Balica in 1562 openly challenged the dogma of the Trinity. A year later he formulated his creed as follows: "From the unity of nature They are three; yet because of Their divinity, They will never be one, but always three."<sup>35</sup> Emphasizing the absolute distinction of the three Gods in the Trinity, Grzegorz Pawel pointed to the bible for proof. Thus the Tritheists claimed that the teachings on the Holy Trinity were based on such words as essence, existence, persona, and trinity, all of which are not found in the scriptures. Other prominent advocates of Tritheism were Marcin Czechowic and Jan Niemojewski. Tritheism however proved to be theologically unsatisfactory for it could not explain the relation between God the Father, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Tritheism

therefore gave way to a new theoretical doctrine called Ditheism.

Ditheism recognized God the Father and God the Son but not God the Holy Spirit. God the Son originated from God the Father before time itself, that is, Christ was preexistent. Christ, the Son of God, was however viewed as being of lower status than the Father, and He must therefore receive everything from God the Father.<sup>37</sup>

Ditheism evolved in Poland in the mid-sixteenth century as a reaction to the rising popularity of Unitarianism. However, many of the Polish Brethren found it difficult to accept that Christ was preexistent. The natural step thus for the Ditheist Polish Brethren was an acceptance of the doctrine of Unitarianism. Many former Tritheist, and then Ditheist Brethren, finally turned to Unitarianism. Ditheist Brethren like Jan Niemojewski and Marcin Czechowic became Unitarian by 1569. The Brethren Ditheists who converted to Unitarianism helped to form the Unitarian majority in the community of the Polish Brethren. This was also interpreted as an attempt by the Polish Brethren to arrive at a uniform theological system.<sup>38</sup> Hence, they arrived at Unitarianism by moving initially from Tritheism and Ditheism and ultimately to Unitarianism.

The advocates of Unitarianism, like the Ditheists, denied the third person of the Trinity, and thus recognized the Holy Spirit only as God-given to help the individual on his path to salvation. Furthermore, they argued that the Ditheist teaching about the preexistence of Christ had no backing in the scriptures. Thus, the Unitarian Brethren believed that God the Father is the one true God while the figure of Christ is but

a historic one. Jesus Christ fulfilled the role bestowed upon Him by God the Father in His plan of man's salvation.

Unitarianism in regards to Tritheism and Ditheism is but a step forward in the direction of theological naturalism. Although all factions recognized the sole authority of the scriptures, it turned out that their interpretations were quite different and yielded different conclusions. Essentially however, Unitarianism as a doctrine proved to be most sound, and it bestowed uniformity upon the Brethren's theological system.

The first Unitarians in Poland were the Italians Biandrata and Alciati. They in particular initiated in the community of the Polish Brethren discussions about the preexistence of Christ.<sup>39</sup> Visiting Hungary, Biandrata (1515-88) in a letter to Grzegorz Pawel in 1565 denounced the conflicts with the Anabaptists over social issues and urged the Polish Brethren to concern themselves instead with Christology.<sup>40</sup> Grzegorz Pawel even as a Tritheist Brethren came to question the divinity of Christ, and in a discussion with Stansilaw Sarnicki during the Synod of Piotrkow (1565) came out distinctly in support of Unitarianism.<sup>41</sup>

Unitarianism itself was not a homogenous movement. Grzegorz Pawel, Marcin Czechowic and Jan Niemojewski supported the adoration of Christ, while Szymon Budny, for example and the Judaizers recognized only the human nature of Christ and consequently considered the worship of Christ as idolatrous. The Judaizers esteemed the Old Testament and its teachings as of greater authority than the New Testament. Their most influential leader was the well educated Szymon Budny (1533-93) and thus they were also called Budnaeans. Budny was a significant character in

the history of Polish Unitarianism, being head of its most radical wing.<sup>42</sup> Since Judaizers opposed the worship of Christ, they were also called Nonadorants. Their certain quasi-Jewish views were imported, it seems, from Hungary, but they were also influenced by the large Jewish population in Poland itself. The Judaizers had in the end comparatively few adherents in Poland however. They were more numerous in Transylvania, Lithuania and Russia.<sup>43</sup> It might thus be suprising to find so few Judaizers in Poland, considering that Jews there were numerous, wealthy, influential and scholarly.<sup>44</sup> It would seem probable that not a few Christians would be influenced by them and hold Old Testament and Jewish traditions more highly than their own. Fusing Judaism with rationalistic tendencies, the Judaizers also tended to lean towards atheism, and this perhaps made them unpopular among the Poles. In any case, the radicalism of the Judaizers was the last doctrinal controversy of any importance before the coming of Faustus Socinus, who would consolidate Polish Unitarianism.<sup>45</sup> Thus, in the first generation of the Unitarian Polish Brethren, there emerged freethinkers who went beyond non-adoration and the Judaizers to proclaim Deism and even atheism. These extremists were, however, quickly removed from the Unitarian camp.

The Polish Unitarians had a stronghold in the city of Lublin. During the 1560's, many of the recruits to the Polish Brethren came from the burgher class, but under the productive leadership of Jan Niemojewski and Marcin Czechowic, both of whom consolidated the community, many nobles joined the movement.<sup>46</sup> Thus it was at this time, in the crucial first decades of its existence, that the Minor Church was swelled with members of high social rank, culture and learning. Lublin, in

Little Poland, became the leading centre of the Unitarian Polish Brethren and where Niemojewski and Czechowic directed the movement along liberal lines.

Like Czechowic, Niemojewski (1530-98) was a dynamic leader. Originally a Calvinist, Niemojewski later joined the Polish Brethren and became a leading figure who sought to consolidate Unitarian and Anabaptist views. He himself was a descendant of an old gentry family, yet impressed by the conduct of the Polish Brethren and imbued with their spirituality, Niemojewski resigned from the Inowroclaw magistrate and joined the Brethren. Niemojewski therefore renounced his rights to his family estates and sold his own. He did not want to live by the work of others - of serfs. As a protest against bloodshed, he wore a wooden sword, like the other Brethren. Finally, acknowledging the equality of all men, he himself earned his livelihood by physical labour.

Another prominent nobleman who was particularly sympathetic to the Brethren's movement was the magnate Jan Kiszka from Wilno. Kiszka donated property to the Polish Brethren, called synods under his protection, and built schools and printing presses for their cause. Only in 1592, upon Kiszka's death, did antitrinitarianism decline, in particular in Lithuania.<sup>47</sup>

However, the most important centre for the Unitarian Polish Brethren was Rakow, established by the nobleman Jan Sieniński. Near the end of the sixteenth century, Rakow, in Little Poland, maintained a population of about one thousand, most of whom were antitrinitarian.<sup>48</sup> The town in its early days played a very important role in antitrinitarianism as a centre for theological meetings and discussions. It was here that

Unitarianism as a theological system was carefully elaborated and critically analyzed by Faustus Socinus. His contributions were later crystallized in the Racovian Catechism (1605) and the Polish Unitarian movement came to be known as Socinianism.

Faustus Socinus (Fausto Sozzini, 1539-1604) came to Poland in 1579 and proved to be an indispensable figure in its Unitarian movement. He was born in Sienna in 1539 and became a student of logic and law. As a member of the local academy and the court in Florence, Socinus spent twelve years (1563-75) in the service of Isabella de Medici, daughter of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Socinus then moved on to Basle. He first clearly manifested his rejection of Catholicism in a letter of 1563 in which he expressed doubts about the natural and unconditional immortality of the soul. In 1570, Socinus wrote a major work on hermeneutics, The Authority of Holy Scripture, which expressed his religious doctrine. Eight years later (1578), in his treatise on Christology and soteriology, Jesus Christ Servant, Socinus championed antitrinitarian ideas, denying the divinity of Christ and upholding the uniqueness of God.<sup>49</sup> He formulated the view that the ascended Christ, though not divine by nature, was divine by office and might therefore be properly addressed in prayer. Socinus characterized Christ as the ideal man, whose saintly life and love for humanity should be accepted as a model. It was Biandrata who, impressed by his doctrines, invited Socinus to Poland. Socinus arrived in Cracow in June 1579, and ultimately made Poland his permanent home.

The bulk of Socinus' work was written in Poland and is closely linked to the history of the Polish Brethren. In Poland, Socinus consolidated the Arian doctrine, doing away with the remnants of

Catholicism in the theological views of the Polish Brethren.

Socinus' authority among the Polish Brethren quickly grew and his views came to dominate the literature of the movement.<sup>50</sup> Although he was never officially made a regular member because he refused to undergo a second baptism through immersion, Socinus became, in 1596, the de facto leader of the Polish Brethren. That year saw the ultimate triumph of Socinus' Unitarian doctrine as his staunchest opponent, Jan Niemojewski, died, and Marcin Czechowic retired from the leadership. "This meant that rationalist Unitarianism finally triumphed in the Church of the Polish Brethren."<sup>51</sup>

The sociopolitical doctrines and land reforms that had been introduced by the Polish Brethren in the sixteenth century were very radical. These too, however were eventually modified as well as consolidated by Socinus, resulting in that the movement often came to be referred to as Socinianism. For example, Socinus allowed only self-defense so long as it did not go as far as murder or mutilation. Only as a last resort, he did allow a Christian to be present on a battlefield, which implied that Socinus allowed for the defense of one's country. Also Socinus recognized the possession of private property and acknowledged the taking of oaths particularly if these did not involve trifling matters. Thus Socinus modified somewhat the severity of the Brethren's original sociopolitical program. However, he did not relax the strict moral conduct and discipline of the Minor Reformed Church. On the contrary, he fervently urged the observance of discipline and respect of the pronouncements in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5).

The original socioreligious doctrines of the Polish Brethren were strongly influenced by Anabaptism. Under the influence of the Moravian

Anabaptists, the Polish Brethren preached non-resistance to evil, did not submit to state jurisdiction, and declined the wearing and the use of arms, even in their own defence or the defence of the country. The Brethren also attempted to improve the conditions of the serfs and to mitigate the rigors of penal law. Yet their strong opposition to feudalism made them very unpopular among the large szlachta class.<sup>52</sup> As a result of their social views, the Brethren were often accused of attempting to upset a divinely ordained society.

With respect to their advocacy of other social reforms, they proved to be just as radical. They called for their abstention from holding state offices, the taking of oaths, and opposed capital punishment. The Brethren also championed religious toleration. These ideas all found their basis in the Gospel, especially in Matthew 5, or the Sermon on the Mount attributed to Christ. Moreover, the Polish Brethren drew upon the scriptures as an uncompromising source for their moral values and ethics. They attempted to live at peace with themselves and with others. In fact, they sought fellowship with all Christians. They drew on the truths of the Scriptures and attempted to live righteous, and honest lives, as proposed by their Lord, Jesus Christ.

The beginnings of social radicalism are linked to Piotr of Goniadz who appeared in Cracow wearing a wooden sword at his side in protest to Christians who wore weapons. He also believed that Christians should not hold public office and "should disregard the magistrate openly for Christians may recognize only one King ... crowned with a crown of thorns."<sup>53</sup> Other Anabaptist social issues raised by the early Polish Brethren Church included the project to emancipate serfs. Grzegorz Pawel, Jan Niemojewski and Marcin Czechowic stipulated the



following:

... and it is required of ministers that they resign ministries in which they had prospered by the labour of others, and so that they can win their bread by their own hands. It is also improper for the nobility to eat bread that was raised by the sweat of their poor serfs; the nobility should work themselves. Furthermore, it is improper to live in estates which were given to one's ancestors for their participation in war and the shedding of man's blood. One should only sell such estates and distribute the riches to the poor.<sup>54</sup>

In matters concerning war, the principle that love conquers evil was cited. Even in relation to one's enemies, war and the shedding of blood were utterly rejected. It is not proper for Christians to wage war, even if they are directed by their superiors, for a Christian has nothing to protect or lose in this world. Moreover, the Polish Brethren proclaimed that authority comes from God, but neither Christ nor the apostles assigned anyone to office, nor had they dispensed weapons for the punishment of wrongdoers. Furthermore, although the state as an institution is not innately wrong, the Christian community forms a new and much more superior organization.<sup>55</sup> Hence the Polish Brethren advocated social reforms along the lines of a new moral system.

The Polish Brethren's sociopolitical policies were debated and discussed among themselves. In their synods of 1578, Niemojewski's and Czechowic' radical plebeian social program triumphed. The program was based on strict radical Anabaptist views, and was the official one of the Polish Brethren until Socinus modified some of its more extreme radical formulations. Thus the ferment over both religious and sociopolitical doctrines was largely resolved by Socinus upon his arrival to Poland.

In general, Socinus supported the fundamental ideas of the Anabaptists, although he considerably moderated many of them. He clarified the conditions for proper Christian conduct. Thus under severe conditions, Socinus did allow for participation in war, the taking of oaths, and the possession of property. Hence he defended the Polish Brethren on the issues of war and political authority, yet he recognized certain conditions that would justify self-defense, for example. Socinus therefore did not completely advocate absolute passivity before an aggressor, nor strict non-resistance to evil. Also, he did not advocate an unconditional refusal to take oaths, but rather bound the Christian to obedience to the state. Nor did he advocate the issue of strict poverty and the redistribution of wealth. Such moderation did not automatically gain support among the Polish Brethren. He was staunchly challenged by the more radical Czechowic and Niemojewski who felt that Socinus was succumbing to the pressure of a corrupt society. Eventually though, Socinus' treatises on sociopolitical issues became more popular with the younger generation of the Polish Brethren. The younger generation realized that moderation was necessary in order to survive the militant Counter-Reformation. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, synods were increasingly discussing Socinus' views, most of which were fully accepted in total in 1598.<sup>56</sup> That year Niemojewski died, and Socinus' other chief opponent, Czechowic, lost his prestige and popularity as leader of the Brethren's radical wing. Tradition thus honors Socinus for his role in the ultimate formulation and consolidation of the Polish Brethren's doctrines. Hence, although Socinus never officially became a member of the Minor Reformed Church because he opposed baptism by immersion and would not confirm his infant baptism

with an adult one, he did nevertheless become the de facto leader of the Polish Brethren by virtue of his doctrinal input. His policies were incorporated into the Racovian Catechism of 1605 and, as his biographer, Samuel Przykowski, wrote in 1631, "Socinus removed a heap of superstitions in matters that were for faith of indifferent importance, such as undue stress on poor clothing, or the prohibition against accepting offices ..."57 It was under Socinus' rationalist influence that the Polish Brethren movement increased in strength.

It should be emphasized, however, that the Polish Brethren, despite their original impulse from Italian antitrinitarians (Gentile, Ochino, Alciati and Laelius Socinus), developed into an indigenous Polish movement conditioned by Poland's unique societal features and its own specific needs for Church reform. The importance of the nobility in Poland and the tradition of religious toleration were two such features that allowed for the evolution of the radical Polish Brethren. Thus, in the first years of their existence, the Polish Brethren moved from Tritheism through Ditheism finally to arrive at their rationalistic doctrine of Unitarianism.

The distinctive religious doctrine of the Polish Brethren was the denial of the dogma of the Trinity. They recognized one divine God, God the Father alone, and denied godhood to the Son Jesus Christ, or to the Holy Spirit. The Brethren simply revered Jesus Christ as a human being. They did believe nevertheless, in His supernatural birth, His miracles, His resurrection, and His ascension. They also believed that Jesus received revelations from God the Father. The Polish Brethren also followed the bible as their strict authority and standard for their Christian conduct.

The Polish Brethren's radical sociopolitical ideology was similarly grounded in their literal interpretation of holy scripture. Associated with their radical theological and sociopolitical doctrines are certain Anabaptist ideas, such as the rejection of infant baptism and the practice of believer's, or adult baptism. The strict internal discipline of the Anabaptists and their moral conduct served as a model for the Polish Brethren, who also attempted to live according to the pattern of the New Testament, or Apostolic Christian community. Endeavouring to return to a more primitive Christianity, the Polish Brethren accepted Anabaptist concepts of pacifism and nonresistance to evil. Their movement, therefore, embodied many elements of social protest, combined with an elitist intellectual leadership that enjoyed a large following from the lower classes. Not surprisingly, thanks to their strict moralistic and utopian way of life, the Polish Brethren were attacked by other religious groups.

As stated, with Socinus' arrival in Poland in 1579, the Brethren's antitrinitarian movement soon crystallized. Socinus championed antitrinitarian ideas, denied the divinity of Christ and upheld the oneness of God. He rejected the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, believing that salvation was obtainable by conscientious following of Christ's teaching and virtuous living. Furthermore, Socinus also rejected therefore the doctrine of Atonement. And under his guidance the Brethren held that baptism was only a symbol of admission into the Christian community, and that the Lord's supper was a mere memorial. Socinus also crystallized the sociopolitical doctrines of the Polish Brethren. His doctrines were generally adopted by the Church of the Polish Brethren, whose followers thereafter came to be called Socinians.

Chapter Three will focus on the reaction of Catholics and Magisterial Protestants to the Polish Brethren's radical theological and sociopolitical doctrines.

## Notes to Chapter Two

- <sup>1</sup>Davies, op. cit., p. 122.
- <sup>2</sup>Bolesław Kumor, Historia Kościoła (Lublin: KUL, 1984), vol. V, p. 112.
- <sup>3</sup>Jan Gierowski, Historia Polski (Warszawa: PWN, 1983), p. 56.
- <sup>4</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup>Kazimierz Grycz-Smilkowski, Bracia Polscy-Arianie-Unitarianie (Kraków: Zarys Dziejow Nauki, 1948), p. 6.
- <sup>6</sup>Jacob Wujek, O Bostwie Chrystusa, ed. Eugeniusz Dąbrowski (Kraków: PAX, 1949), p. 18.
- <sup>7</sup>Kumor, op. cit., p. 134.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 135.
- <sup>9</sup>Victor Weintraub, "Tolerance and Intolerance in Old Poland," Canadian Slavonic Papers, XIII (1977), 38.
- <sup>10</sup>Wincenty Konopczyński, Modern Poland (London: Veritas, 1958), vol. I, p. 359.
- <sup>11</sup>Henryk Barycz, "U Kolebki Małopolskiego Ruchu Reformacyjnego," ORP I (1956), 25.
- <sup>12</sup>Janusz Tazbir, State Without Stakes (New York: Twayne, 1973), p. 56.
- <sup>13</sup>Grycz-Smilkowski, op. cit., p. 56.
- <sup>14</sup>Bernard of Lublin, Wybrane Pisma, ed., Jan Ziomek (Wrocław: PWN, 1954), vol. I, p. 28.
- <sup>15</sup>Stanisław Lempicki, "Erazm z Rotterdamu," Humanizm i Reformacja w Polsce (Warszawa: PWN, 1959), pp. 109-34.
- <sup>16</sup>Andrzej Frycz-Modrzewski, Sylviae, ed. Kazimierz Kumemicki (Warszawa: PIW, 1960), p. 81.
- <sup>17</sup>Stanisław Lubiniecki, Historia Reformacji Polskiej 1685, ed. Edward Brusche (Warszawa: Warszawski Uniwersytet, 1939), p. 33.
- <sup>18</sup>Jan Łukaszewicz, Historia Szkół w Polsce (Poznań: n. p., 1849), p. 47.
- <sup>19</sup>Ludwig Chmaj, Bracia Polscy, Ludzie, Idee, Wpływy. (Warszawa: PWN, 1957), p. 44.

- <sup>20</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup>Henryk Barycz, "List do Stancara," ORP, XIX (1974) 165-171.
- <sup>22</sup>Marek Wajsblum, "Polscy Dyteisci," RP, V, Nos. 17-18 (1929), 47-8.
- <sup>23</sup>Zbigniew Ogonowski, Arianie Polscy (Warszawa: WP, 1952), p. 56.
- <sup>24</sup>Lubieniecki, op. cit., p. 118.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 112.
- <sup>26</sup>Stanisław Zachorowski, "Najstarsze Synody Arian Polskich," RP, I (1921), 217.
- <sup>27</sup>Lubieniecki, op. cit., 167.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., 205.
- <sup>29</sup>Piotr z Goniadz, Doktryna Chrztu 1570, ed. Konrad Gorski (Warszawa: PWN, 1962) Book E, pp. 2-3.
- <sup>30</sup>Piotr z Goniadz, O Zanurzeniu 1570, ed. Konrad Gorski (Warszawa: PWN, 1962), Book F, pp. 4-6.
- <sup>31</sup>Wajsblum, op. cit., p. 50.
- <sup>32</sup>Lubieniecki, op. cit., p. 234.
- <sup>33</sup>Piotr Z Goniadz, "O Roznicach," Studia nad Dziejami Literatury Antytrynitariskij w XVI wieku, ed. Konrad Gorski (Krakow: Polska Akademia Umiejetnosci, 1949), p. 110.
- <sup>34</sup>Oskar Bartel, "Grzegorz Pawel z Brzezina," RP, V, Nos. 17-18 (1928), 30.
- <sup>35</sup>Grzegorz Pawel, "Wyklad o Sw. Pawle," Grzegorz Pawel z Brzezina, ed. Konrad Gorski (Krakow: no. p., 1929), p. 2.
- <sup>36</sup>Wajsblum, op. cit., p. 51.
- <sup>37</sup>Lubieniecki, op. cit., p. 220.
- <sup>38</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup>Christopher Sandius, Bibliotheca Antitrinitariorum, ed. Jacob Dabrowski (Warszawa: PWN, 1967), p. 21.
- <sup>40</sup>Konrad Gorski, "Gregorz Pawel Jako Tlumacz Biandrata i Fausta Socyna," RP, IV (1926), 9.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>42</sup>Stanisław Kot, "Budny," Słownik Biograficzny (Kraków: no. p., 1937), vol. 3, pp. 96-9.

<sup>43</sup>Earl Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 349.

<sup>44</sup>Wacław Sobieski, "Żydowska Propaganda," Przegląd Historyczny Narodowy, XXI (1921), 24-42.

<sup>45</sup>Wilbur, op. cit., p. 349.

<sup>46</sup>Stanisław Tworek, "Wkład Szlachty w Rozwój Ideologiczny Zboru Arińskiego w Lublinie w XVI Wieku," ORP, VII (1962), 131-155.

<sup>47</sup>Oskar Lewicki, "Socjanizm na Rusi," RP, II (1922), 204.

<sup>48</sup>Janusa Tazbir, "Miejsce Rakowa w Ruchu Arjańskim," Wokół Dziejów i Tradycji Arianizmu (Warszawa: PWN, 1971), p. 44.

<sup>49</sup>Ludwig Chmaj, "Działalność Fausta Socyna w Polskim Ruchu Unitariańskim," Archiwum Historii Filozofii i Myśli Społecznej, VI (1960), 27.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Zbigniew Ogonowski, "Faustus Socinus," Shapers of Religious Traditions in Germany, Switzerland and Poland 1560-1600, ed. Julia Raitt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 197.

<sup>52</sup>Zbigniew Ogonowski, Socynianizm Polski (Warszawa: WP, 1960), p. 27.

<sup>53</sup>Nicholas Ljubovich, Beginnings of the Catholic Reaction in Poland (Warszawa: no. p., 1890), p. 146.

<sup>54</sup>Marcin Czechowicz, Rozmowy Chrystiański 1575, ed. Lech Szuzucki (Warszawa: PWN, 1979), p. 78.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>56</sup>Jan Dziegielewska, Stosunek Arian Do Państwa Polskiego (Warszawa: PWN, 1959), p. 7.

<sup>57</sup>Stanisław Kot, Socinianism in Poland (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 116-7.



## CHAPTER THREE

### COLLISION

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Minor Reformed Church, or the Polish Brethren, reached its maturity, especially under the leadership of Faustus Socinus. As the inner harmony of the Church had strengthened by 1585, the Polish Brethren developed their leading characteristics. They developed a body of socioreligious doctrine on a purely scriptural basis. Besides their acceptance of the principles of reason, freedom, and tolerance, they had clearly rejected the Trinity and the eternal divinity of Christ. Yet having given Jesus Christ a special rank as one whose human nature approximated the divine, the Brethren proposed that Christ's teachings were to be accepted literally and followed strictly. Minor doctrinal issues were left to free discussion, but much emphasis was placed upon Christology and a Christian's conduct, both private and in relation to others and to the state. The Polish Brethren thus focused upon theological as well as social issues, and were the first Church in Poland's Reformation to interrelate religion with vital social issues.<sup>1</sup> Their program of radical social change through the application of radical religious teachings to the functioning of man in society was a characteristic feature of the Polish Brethren.

The Polish Brethren felt that a reform of religious conceptions could precipitate changes in man's social relations, and in the organization of society. Believing in one Christian family, democracy dictated that membership in the Minor Reformed Church be extended to all social classes. Moreover, while the Brethren were intensely loyal to the

nation of Poland, their sociopolitical convictions, such as abstinence from military service, laid them open to charges of disloyalty. Isolated more or less from the dominant religious and political trends of their time, the Polish Brethren devoted themselves even more to their spiritual cause. This in turn stimulated a decisive reaction from the Magisterial Protestants and Catholics alike.

In the theological doctrines of the Polish Brethren, the rejection of the dogma of Trinity rested directly upon the issue of the person of Christ and His relation to God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Both Catholics and the Magisterial Protestants rejected the Christological teachings of the Polish Brethren.<sup>3</sup> Josias Simler, a Swiss Calvinist theologian, devoted much energy in debating the Brethren's views. In aiming to prove the eternity of Jesus Christ as God's Son, Simler utilized both the Old and New Testaments as sources. Sarnicki, as leader of the Reformed Church in Poland in the mid-sixteenth century, also attacked the Brethren's Christological teachings, especially during the synods, as did Lutheran Bishop Jan Wigand. Other major Calvinist theologians who polemicized with the Polish Brethren over the question of the nature of Christ, were Grzegorz of Zarnow, Pawel Gilowski, and Andrzej Wolan. These polemicists argued that the Christological doctrine of the Polish Brethren led to atheism, and was related to Islam, Judaism, and Anabaptism.

Lutherans and Calvinists utilized the Christological teachings of Luther and Calvin respectively in their debates with the Polish Brethren. Luther and Calvin both accepted the Chalcedon dogma concerning the nature

of Christ. They accepted the view that Christ was both man and God. Catholic polemicists elaborated even more strongly upon the Christological decisions of the early Church Councils, especially the Council of Chalcedon (451) that condemned monophysitism, or the belief that there is only one nature, the divine, in the person of Christ. References were also made to Church Fathers, and great medieval theologians like Thomas Aquinas.

By using the New Testament, Catholic polemicists elaborated the dogma of Christ's human as well as divine nature which were united into one as the incarnated Logos (John 1:14). The Catholic theologians were especially successful in securing their Christological teachings in the sixteenth century for they catered to the Poles' traditional feelings on the subject. Upholding traditional theological definitions on the nature of Christ, the Catholics were consequently responsible in large part for giving direction to theological thought in post-Tridentine Poland.<sup>4</sup>

What is characteristic about all these Christological debates is that Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics alike, as well as their common enemy, the Polish Brethren, used basically the same biblical sources to support their theological arguments. In the debate concerning the eternity of Christ, the Son of God, the Protestant polemicists, whether Lutheran or Calvinist, consistently used New Testament sources, especially John's gospel. Josias Simler, Jan Wigand and Grzegorz of Zarnow, emphasized that Christ Himself taught about His eternity and pre-existence as the Son of God, claiming existence before Abraham (John 8:58), descent from heaven onto earth (John 6:50) and His glory before the creation of earth (John 17:5). Grzegorz of Zarnow and the Lutheran Bishop Wigand claimed that through exegesis one can clearly conclude that

the Son is one with the Father for everything was called to life through the Father and His Son. And Christ spoke of His "coming from the Father".

The problem of Christ's pre-existence was also debated by Tritheists, Ditheists, as well as by the Unitarian Polish Brethren. Piotr of Goniadz explained that the person of Christ as Son of God and the Redeemer is the basis of all Christianity.<sup>5</sup> But together with other Ditheist Brethren, he argued against the eternal divinity of Christ and His natural sonship from God. As Ditheists, they accepted His sonship from God only in the form of adoption. It was the Tritheist Brethren who emphasized the pre-eminence of God the Father, while the Unitarian Brethren clearly rejected the pre-existence of Christ and thus rejected His divinity.

The Calvinists rejected the claims of the Polish Brethren. The Calvinist pedagogue and Elder, Erasmus Gliczner, criticized the Tritheist view and together with other prominent Calvinist theologians and polemicists like Grzegorz of Zarnow, argued that God is the Father from whom the eternal and pre-existent God the Son derived.<sup>6</sup>

Jan Wigand from the Lutheran camp, meanwhile, clearly rejected Grzegorz Pawel's charge that "three persons and one make four".<sup>7</sup> Arguing for the Trinity, Wigand proposed that God is one and His nature is not beyond the Trinity but is encompassed within it. Thus, in the words of Wigand, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God. Furthermore, Wigand denounced the accusation of the Polish Brethren that Christ is not the pre-existent Son of God just because the bible is not explicit in this case. Wigand and Gliczner went on to claim the contrary, claiming that Old Testament Psalms 2 and 7, and various New Testament verses speak of Christ's eternal sonship.

In general, majority Protestant opinion was that the Polish Brethren abused the exegesis of scripture, that they interpreted biblical verses in isolation and out of context, and according to their own standards.<sup>8</sup> This question of biblical interpretation, of course, was not a new one in the history of Christianity.

The Catholics, in their polemics over Christological issues with the Polish Brethren, likewise made great use of biblical sources, but also stressed the views of the Church Fathers. Some Catholic theologians of the Reformation era conceded that many scriptural passages are difficult to comprehend and thus they justified the role of the Church as the authentic and divinely inspired authority in the interpretation of scripture.<sup>9</sup>

In the Catholic camp, the Jesuits took the lead in debating with the Polish Brethren. Powodowski, Smiglecki and Wujek expounded the fourth gospel in order to show the meaning of Logos. The Brethren interpreted Logos allegorically, while the Catholics emphasized the literal sense of John's gospel. Through exegesis, the Catholics argued that John denoted that the Word already was ... and that God had the Word abiding with Him ... (John 1:1-2). Thus Christ was pre-existent and eternal as He came from His Father. Powodowski especially analyzed the prologue of the fourth gospel after which he was convinced about Christ's eternal sonship from God the Father.<sup>10</sup> As further proof for Christ's pre-existence and eternity, Powodowski quoted, as did the majority of Protestants, Jesus' own words about his existence before Abraham (John 8:58).

The Jesuit theologians in their polemics also argued against the inconsistency in the Christological teachings of the Polish Brethren. In their debates, the Brethren pointed out that Christ did not create the

world, nor did He share in the creation with His Father. Moreover, through His birth, Christ redeemed the world; a redemption that was fulfilled only after Christ's resurrection. As a corollary, the Brethren taught that the world was redeemed by a man who became God's Son only after His resurrection. According to the Polish Catholic theologians, this interpretation was inconsistent with the teachings of the New Testament.<sup>11</sup>

Thus Protestant and Catholics alike in their polemics with the Polish Brethren emphasized that Jesus Christ, as God's Son, assumed in entirety God's nature, including the pre-existence and eternity of God. Such a conclusion was supported by their respective interpretations of evidence in biblical and patristic sources.

In traditional theological interpretations, the issue of Christ's conception and birth is considered as the incarnation of God's Son. Dogmas stem from this basic premise, many of which were challenged by the Polish Brethren. Ditheist, Tritheist and Unitarian Polish Brethren debated Christ's conception and birth from Mary, but even among themselves the Polish Brethren had difficulty at arriving at a uniform doctrine. What Ditheist and Tritheist Brethren did agree upon however, was that the incarnation of God's Son involved a transformation of nature, from the divine into the human.<sup>12</sup> In other words, Jesus Christ was God who became man after His birth from Mary. The Unitarians however rejected the notion of Christ's pre-existence as God and thus also his divinity. To them, Jesus became a Son of God only after His birth from Mary, all of which was acknowledged in His resurrection.<sup>13</sup>

The Brethren Czechowic and Niemojewski elucidated the uniqueness of Christ's conception; one that was accomplished through the intervention

of the Holy Spirit. The relatively more radical Polish Brethren, like Szymon Budny and the Budnaeans, claimed that Christ's natural father was Joseph.<sup>14</sup>

Such propositions again brought the Protestants and Catholics into dispute with the Polish Brethren. The Calvinist theologian Grzegorz of Zarnow attempted to prove that at the moment of Jesus' conception, or incarnation, there was a union in Christ of the two natures of the divine and human. The Lutheran Jan Wigand also taught, in accordance with the decrees of Chalcedon, about the union of two natures in Christ.<sup>15</sup>

The Catholic response to the claims of the Polish Brethren was voiced by the Jesuits Powodowski and Wujek, among other prominent theologians. It also stressed the Catholic conviction that a union of the divine and human took place in Mary's womb before the actual birth of Christ occurred.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, it was improper and even a heresy, to separate or isolate the divine from the human in Christ.

The Protestant and Catholic theologians and polemicists who emphasized the union of the two natures in Christ in Mary's womb, had one major goal in mind. They wanted to justify the status of Christ's divinity as the Son of God. It was specifically this premise that the Polish Brethren rejected.

In the era under discussion (1565-98), the Polish Brethren variously interpreted Christ's divinity or His divine sonship. Their interpretations ranged from considering Christ as God's own true Son who submitted to His Father, to considering Christ as one who was only later advanced to the status of God's Son.<sup>18</sup>

Grzegorz of Zarnow spent considerable time in preparing a Calvinist defense of Christ's divine status. With reference to St. Paul's Letter

to the Corinthians I (8:4-6), Grzegorz of Zarnow pointed out to the Polish Brethren that Christ, because of His human nature, was a truly human being, just as, because of His divine nature, He was also truly God.<sup>19</sup> Upon such premises, Grzegorz further argued that it was wrong to believe that Christ was "made" God, as the Brethren proposed. Another prominent Calvinist scholar, Josias Simler, in his exegesis of the gospels, emphasized the unity of the two natures in Christ.<sup>20</sup> These polemics were directed against prominent Polish Brethren theologians such as Czechowic, Niemojewski, Grzegorz Pawel and Szymon Budny.

The Lutheran Wigand especially polemicized with Czechowic about certain New Testament proofs for the two natures in Christ. Wigand maintained that Christ in His divine nature was perfect, while in His human nature he matured through the years. But because of His divinity, the authenticity of His humanness stemmed from God.<sup>21</sup>

The fundamental truths in the Catholic teachings concerning the sonship of Christ, have their proof, according to Catholic theologians, in the New Testament. In the opinion of these scholars, there is abundant evidence for the authentic sonship of Christ and his divine, as well as human, nature. Because of this claim, sixteenth-century Polish Catholic polemicists felt confident and were eager to engage in debates with the Polish Brethren, who themselves strictly used biblical sources in support of their Christological teachings.

Catholic polemicists pointed out that there are numerous passages in the bible that are difficult for the individual to comprehend. As a result, the necessity of a rational Church authority in the interpretation of biblical texts is justified.<sup>22</sup> In support of such a premise, Catholic theologians freely argued that both the Old and New



Testaments consistently provided evidence that Christ is a true God co-existent with His Father, and who through incarnation was adorned with human nature.

On numerous occasions, the Jesuit Powodowski polemicized on these Christological issues with Czechowic, one of the chief representatives of the Brethren's theology. Thus this basic dogma in Christianity concerning the status and sonship of Christ was elucidated anew by Polish Magisterial Protestants and Catholics in the sixteenth century. Basing their arguments upon holy scriptures, and other traditions, the Protestants and Catholics claimed that Christ was not God's Son by adoption, but was His true Son who bore the same divine nature as His God the Father. Moreover, they illustrated Christ's sonship and the dogma of Christ's divinity through the exegesis of texts that specifically dealt with God's own revelations about Jesus. Polish Protestant and Catholic polemicists of the sixteenth century concluded therefore that Christ's divinity was authentic and not a figment of man's religious emotions.

The Brethren were quite interested in the redemptive intercession of Christ, for the central principle in the Brethren's teachings on the redemption of man was their own vision of Christ as Intercessor and High Priest. Practically all the theologians in the Polish Brethren's community were active in exploring this principle, and they keenly made use of St. Paul's premise that Christ was Mediator between God and Man (Timothy II, 2:5). But even among themselves, the various branches of Ditheists, Tritheists, and Unitarians could not agree whether Christ was a mediator as a God or as a man. They also differed on the interpretation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross in the redemptive plan of the world.

In the polemics between the Polish Brethren and the Protestants and Catholics, the latter two groups accented Christ's passion and death. The Lutherans taught, in accordance with some of the Brethren, that Christ as God accepted the body of a man so that through His passion and death He could redeem every man.<sup>23</sup> He became the Lamb of God, a sacrifice, in order to take away the sins of the world. Without Christ as mediator, man could not attain salvation. Furthermore, the Lutherans emphasized the fact of Christ's passion and death for man's own sins. However, the Lutherans fervently disagreed with the Brethren's doctrine that Christ died on the cross as a man. This was, as expounded by Gilowski, merely illogical and implausible, for the sacrifice of a mere man on a cross could have little or no redemptive or salvatory value.<sup>24</sup>

The Calvinists also attempted to prove to the Polish Brethren, including Faustus Socinus, that the one authentic sacrifice for man and his sins was achieved in the death on the cross of Christ who was both a true God and a true man. According to the Calvinists, the Polish Brethren deprived Christ of his divinity, and Faustus Socinus disposed of Christ's role as redeemer.<sup>25</sup>

Powodowski and others from the Catholic camp also countered the Brethren's views on Christ's role as intercessor and the importance of His death. The Catholic theologians argued that Christ was able to accomplish the salvation of man because He encompassed the human nature along with the divine. Yet his divinity is immortal. That is why Christ died willingly in His humanity, just as He resurrected in His own right, so man would be freed from eternal death.<sup>26</sup>

Hence, the sixteenth-century Polish theologians' treatment of Christ's redemptive role and his humanness, was a consequence of necessity. All religious groups participating in such discussions fostered an important evolution in the field of Christology in Poland at this time. Their contributions to the theology on Christ's salvatory and redemptive role in the history of mankind were especially prominent.

The Brethren's consideration of Christ's role in mankind paralleled their view about the rightful veneration deserved by Christ. Again, the various branches in the Minor Church differed in their views, at least until Faustus Socinus unified them on the issue of worshipping Christ. Because of their understanding of Christ, as simply a human-being, the Unitarians fundamentally opposed the adoration of the person of Christ, believing it to be sacrilegious.

The Ditheist and Tritheist Polish Brethren related the veneration of Christ to God Himself. Piotr of Goniadz elaborated the status of Christ as being one with the Father, which made it appropriate to worship His Son. In this respect, the Unitarians in general endorsed the veneration of Christ as Son of God, although the more radical members, calling themselves Non-adorants or Judaizers, opposed such an activity.

In agreement with general Christian teachings, the Unitarians taught that Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and thus they worshipped Christ in prayer only as a special mediator between God and man. The Nonadorants proclaimed that Christ was not a pre-existent God and not divine in nature, but only the natural Son of God. Thus any veneration of Christ in Himself was sacrilegious, and a discredit to God. This view was supported by other Judaizers outside of Poland who also dismissed the person of Christ and who respected the Old Testament more than the New.<sup>27</sup>

In their polemics with the Polish Brethren over the proper worship of Christ, Protestants and Catholics alike sought biblical support in their claim that Christ deserved veneration just as did God the Father. The central argument used by both the Protestant and Catholic theologians was that the status of Christ as God justified the worship of Him. In such ways, these polemicists directed attention to two basic premises that underlay the proper veneration of Christ. That is, they elucidated the necessity to recognize Christ's divinity and the worship of Him. Consequently, these Protestant and Catholic polemicists endorsed the two natures of Christ as accomplished in the incarnation of the Word. Polemicizing with the Polish Brethren would not however see an end in the sixteenth century. The Polish Brethren, as the first religious community in Poland to connect religion with vital social problems through a reform in religious conceptions, would continue to be the focus of fervent attack by other religious groups up until their banishment from Poland in the mid-seventeenth century.

Aside from the attack on their theological radicalism, the Brethren were also harassed because of their sociopolitical radicalism. The Polish Brethren were especially concerned about practical sociopolitical changes that affected man directly. They were especially concerned about proper Christian conduct, ethics, and man's relation to society. As the Polish Brethren devised their social program, it became clear that their radicalism would not find favour with the Magisterial Reformers such as the Lutherans and Calvinists, or with the Counter-Reformers, the Catholics. Consequently, as the Brethren worked at consolidating their own harmony, other religious groups in sixteenth-century Poland were taking measures designed to bring about the destruction of the Minor Church.

The Polish Brethren attempted to live their lives based on the literal implementation of the bible.<sup>28</sup> Their social program reflected especially the ethics of Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5). Hence, the Brethren earnestly attempted to put the social and moral teachings of Jesus Christ into practice, both in their personal and civic relations. In particular, the practical dictates of the Sermon were considered by the Polish Brethren as the true guide for a Christian and for true Christian conduct. The Beatitudes commanded toleration of one's enemies; pacifism; non-resistance to evil, and provided declarations on what makes man blessed. The Beatitudes also dictated the renouncement of personal wealth and possession of goods; the emancipation of serfs; and the refusal to take oaths. As the Polish Brethren's social movement began to express itself, the hostility of the Catholics and Protestants towards it increasingly became bitter and undisguised.

With the growing Catholic reaction, hostile sentiments towards the Polish Brethren became explicit. The Counter-Reformation was led by Cardinal Hosius, papal nuncios, and the Jesuits. It was the Jesuit Powodowski who was best known for his opposition to both the theology and social program of the Polish Brethren.<sup>30</sup>

In debate with the Polish Brethren, Powodowski's political and social views were best described in his work Pozycja (Position). By citing numerous biblical as well as historical arguments, Powodowski created analogies between contemporary situations and biblical ones. He concluded that just as Israel was punished by God for its unfaithfulness to the one true God, so too Poland was being punished by God for her toleration of heretical groups like the Polish Brethren.<sup>31</sup> Hence,

the main reason for Poland's political and social problems was its toleration of religious reformers who swept over Poland almost immediately as soon as the Reformation movement had begun.

In reference to the Brethren's views on Church-State relations, on the taking of oaths, and military service, Powodowski reduced his argument to a simple one as he criticized the Brethren for their disloyalty to the Polish state and accused them of a lack of patriotism. The Jesuit successively proclaimed that both temporal and divine rule derive from God and thus are interrelated and interdependent. Consequently, Powodowski could not keep himself from labelling the Polish Brethren as the number one enemy of the Republic of Poland.<sup>32</sup>

Powodowski was especially irritated by the Brethren's charge that the Catholic Church was too worldly. He defended the Church's holdings as he explored the clergy's many services and contributions to Poland and her citizens. He justified the Church's possessions of material goods as a reward for its services. Powodowski however, criticized the nobility of Poland, many of whom had been converted to the Reformation movement, for mismanaging their own funds as well as those of the State.

Powodowski, as did other Catholic polemicists, agreed with the Brethren on the exploitation of the serfs by the feudal system. Powodowski denounced the exploitation of the enserfed peasantry and called for the equality of all men before the state. This was one of the more positive Catholic proclamations in the realm of sociopolitical issues. Furthermore, Powodowski criticized in general the moral and ethical life of the majority of Poles. But whether Powodowski admitted it or not, it was the Polish Brethren that represented great intellectual and moral values in sixteenth-century Poland.<sup>33</sup>

The Brethren profoundly considered the commands of Christian ethics and attempted in all strictness to conform their lives to them. Thus even the Jesuits found that they could not criticize the moral conduct of the Polish Brethren.

In a sense, the Catholics were not unhappy about the radicalism of the Brethren's theology and sociopolitical program, hoping that the Brethren, because of their various radical doctrines, would discredit the entire Reformation movement in the eyes of the nobility. Moreover, the Catholics perceived that the Brethren were also passionately attacked for their radicalism by the Magisterial Protestants. Hence, the Catholics resolved that a divided opposition meant peace for the Roman Catholic Church (bellum haereticorum pax est Ecclesia).<sup>34</sup> This was one of the reasons for the success of the Counter-Reformation in Poland as it preferred to let Protestantism go its own way of sectarian disintegration.

Thus, the Lutherans and Calvinists also attacked the radical sociopolitical views of the Polish Brethren. They even urged the Catholics to join them. The Magisterial Protestants sought to crush the Brethren politically, as well as by theological argument.<sup>35</sup>

The Lutherans criticized the Polish Brethren's sociopolitical ideology as utopian because the latter's social and political ideas were developed strictly on a religious base derived too exclusively from the Sermon on the Mount. Consequently, as the Lutherans argued, the Polish Brethren were driven into ideological and religious isolation.<sup>36</sup>

Wigand and other Lutheran polemicists, as products of the Magisterial Reformation, especially deplored the Anabaptist views of the Brethren, most of which were anti-feudal. The Polish Brethren's ideology

was considered by the Lutherans to be a major danger to the existing social and political structure of the Republic of Poland.<sup>37</sup> Again, the Polish Brethren were criticized for being disloyal to the State. In fact, both Calvinists and Lutherans were afraid that the Brethren would undermine the orthodoxy of the Magisterial Reformation. The Lutherans were especially concerned about the Brethren's potential of humiliating their Reformation, as well as endangering the nobility class in Poland and abroad.

The Calvinists recognized that the community of the Polish Brethren was a disciplined one and one based on the New Testament model. Nevertheless, because of theological and sociopolitical differences, the Calvinists also attacked the Polish Brethren. Calvinists like Beza, described the Polish Brethren as Poland's doom.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the Calvinist reaction against the Minor Church that gathered force as early as 1564 under Tretius and Sarnicki continued to sustain itself throughout the sixteenth century. The Brethren's resistance to the linking together of Church and State was denounced by the Calvinists who experimented with the idea of theocracy. Thus, in their polemics with the Minor Church, the representatives of the Major Church examined thoroughly the sociopolitical questions raised by the Brethren. Attempts were made, through biblical exegesis, to answer the Brethren's questions on obedience to the state and obedience to Christ. The Brethren questioned whether obedience to Christ might require Christians to be disloyal to the state, and whether it was Christian for a follower of Christ to engage in warfare, to hold public office, or to hold estates.<sup>39</sup>

The Calvinists bitterly opposed the sociopolitical program of the Brethren, especially since they lost many of their most able and



competent leaders to the Minor Church after the schism in 1565. Consequently, the best intellectual and polemical program that the Calvinists initially designed was but a deliberate campaign of accusations.<sup>40</sup> They accused the Brethren of political, religious and moral misbehavior. The Minor Church was attacked for its apparent desire to undermine the social and political order of the Republic of Poland; for being anti-feudal; for being revolutionary Anabaptists; for being blasphemous and atheistic; and for being unorthodox in its religiosity and morality.<sup>41</sup>

It was becoming increasingly clear, then, that the Protestants, having failed to overcome their opponents by methods of persuasion, polemics, and debate, might resort to more forceful methods and might urge the Catholics to join them in this struggle against a common enemy. The opponents of the Polish Brethren took advantage of their predominance in the Sejm and their influence with high officials, and adopted a policy of persecution by the civil powers. Government edicts, slanderous public forum debates, censorship, and physical harassment would all be part of the campaign mounted in the final third of the sixteenth century. The persecution continued through the initial decades of the seventeenth century until the Brethren were forced into exile in 1658.

Thus, the Catholics and Magisterial Protestants were quick in attacking the radical theological and sociopolitical doctrines of the Polish Brethren. The former were especially eager to defend their own traditional concepts in the face of the challenge presented to them by the Christological views of the Polish Brethren. Furthermore, the Catholics and Protestants were antagonistic towards the scripturally inspired sociopolitical policies of the Brethren. Most importantly, the Catholics and Protestants of Poland were concerned about the Polish

Brethren's anti-feudal position and what seemed to be their goal to disturb a divinely ordained society. Chapter Four will discuss the confrontation of the Polish Brethren with their opponents.

### Notes to Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup>Walerian Krasinski, Walki Religijne w Polsce (Ohio: Paryski, 1840), p. 178.

<sup>2</sup>Jerzy Misiurek, Chrystologia Braci Polskich (Lublin: KUL, 1983), p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Janusz Tazbir, Stanislaw Lubieniecki (Warszawa: PWN, 1961), p. 308.

<sup>4</sup>Zdislaw Peszkowski, Polonia Semper Fidelis (Michigan: Orchard Lake, 1985), p. 84.

<sup>5</sup>Lubieniecki, op. cit., p. 114.

<sup>6</sup>Misiurek, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 55

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 62

<sup>12</sup>Lubieniecki, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>13</sup>Jerzy Misiurek, Spory Chrystologiczne w Polsce (Lublin: KUL, 1984), p. 39.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>17</sup>Jerzy Misiurek, "Obrona Boskiej Godnosci Chrystusa w Polskiej Teologii Katolickiej w XVI wieku," Czestochowskie Studia Teologiczne, VII (1979), 206.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>19</sup>Misiurek, Spory Chrystologiczne, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>20</sup>Misiurek, Chrystologia Braci Polskich, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

- 22<sup>Misiurek, Obrona Boskiej Godności Chrystusa, op. cit., p. 210.</sup>
- 23<sup>Misiurek, Chrystologia Braci Polskich, op. cit., p. 121.</sup>
- 24<sup>Misiurek, Spory Chrystologiczne, op. cit., p. 120.</sup>
- 25<sup>Misiurek, Chrystologia Braci Polskich, op. cit., p. 149.</sup>
- 26<sup>Misiurek, Obrona Boskiej Godności Chrystusowej, op. cit., p. 212.</sup>
- 27<sup>Sandius, op. cit., p. 34.</sup>
- 28<sup>George Williams, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 25.</sup>
- 29<sup>Konrad Gorski, Studia Nad Dziejami Polskiej Literatury Antytrinitarskiej, op. cit., p. 6.</sup>
- 30<sup>Andrzej Bruckner, Polscy Roznowiercy (Warszawa: PIW, 1962), p. 185.</sup>
- 31<sup>Hieromin Powodowski, Wybrane Pisma, ed. Wawrzyniec Biondi (Kraków: PAX, 1968), p. 16.</sup>
- 32<sup>Ibid., p. 32.</sup>
- 33<sup>Stanisław Kot, Socinianism in Poland, op. cit., p. 97.</sup>
- 34<sup>Jan Kwiecinski, Bracia-Człowiek-Arianie (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 1961), p. 28.</sup>
- 35<sup>Ibid., p. 27.</sup>
- 36<sup>Zdzisław Nietyszka, Sesja Arianska Instytutu Śląskiego w Opolu (Opole: Wydawnictwo Ople, 1963), p. 11.</sup>
- 37<sup>Stanisław Piwko, "Polityczne Aspekty Ksiąg Trzech Andrzeja Frycza Modrzewskiego," Wokół Dziejów i Tradycji Arianizmu (Warszawa: PWN, 1971), p. 130.</sup>
- 38<sup>Bruckner, op. cit., p. 83.</sup>
- 39<sup>Jan Plokarz, "Jan Niemojewski i Arianie," RP, II, Nos. 5-6 (L922), 78.</sup>
- 40<sup>Ibid., p. 79.</sup>
- 41<sup>Ibid., p. 78.</sup>

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONFRONTATION

The radical political and socioreligious ideology of the Polish Brethren brought much opposition from Catholics as well as from Lutherans and Calvinists. The latter especially wanted the Brethren suppressed by secular or civil power and counted on the support of the Catholics in this matter. Because the Magisterial Reformers failed to overwhelm the Radical Reformers by polemical disputation, and perceiving the Polish Brethren to be steadily gaining strength and influence, in the final third of the sixteenth century the Calvinists and Lutherans were the first to resort to more forceful methods. To this end, they willingly joined with the Catholics.

In the meanwhile, in the initial decades of their existence, the Polish Brethren continued to proclaim humanitarian postulates. They continued advocating the necessary reform of Polish feudal society. They were consistently anti-feudal. Moreover, being antischolastic, the Polish Brethren opposed the traditional method of studying authoritative writings by applying dialectic to decide among alternative answers. The Brethren adopted a humanistic and critical style in their study of literature. Focusing on the original works of Christianity, the New Testament, the Brethren devoted themselves to the rational investigation of the pure teachings of Christianity as encompassed solely by the scriptures. Hence their individualistic and moralistic approach to the study of the New Testament, their rationalism in conduct, and their freedom in thought and tolerance in judgement were but enduring stimulants for the ever growing antagonism towards them. In fact,

throughout their one hundred years of formal existence in Poland, the Brethren were constantly opposed by one group or another. It is the aim of this chapter to outline the main periods of antagonism towards the Polish Brethren and the different ways this antagonism was expressed by their opponents.

There were three distinct phases of opposition to the Polish Brethren: the first ranged from the genesis of the Brethren to the mid-1570's; the second ended at about the turn of the sixteenth century; and the third ended with the banishment of the Polish Brethren from Poland in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of the present study however, only the first two phases will be discussed in any detail. The third period will be summarized.

During the 1560's and 1570's the Polish Brethren strongly expressed their sociopolitical and religious radicalism. Determined to overcome feudalism and what they considered as scholastic misinterpretations of the Christian faith, they looked for guidance to the New Testament in this quest. As a consequence, they came into disagreement not only with the Society of Jesus (established in Poland in 1565) and the Counter-Reformation generally, but also the Calvinists and, to a lesser degree, the Lutherans.

Calvinist and Lutheran theologians, such as Sarnicki and Wigand respectively, ardently attacked the radical dogmas and policies of the Polish Brethren.<sup>2</sup> The Calvinists especially set up a deliberate campaign of accusations during which they accused the Brethren of undermining the social and political order of the Republic of Poland and the loyalty of the individual social classes to the State. Other major charges brought against the Brethren were that they were akin to

revolutionary Anabaptists of the style of Thomas Munzer (1490-1525) who led rebellious peasants against their lords, and that their blasphemies led to atheism.

In 1563 the Calvinist reaction began to gain strength as Calvinist theologians were bent on crushing the movement of the Polish Brethren right in its very roots. Sarnicki urged King Sigismund II Augustus to threaten the Polish Brethren with the death sentence as prescribed by a long and obsolete decree of 1424, or by the old heresy laws encompassed in the Volumina Legum<sup>3</sup> (Volumes on Law) which were basic collective works on Polish law that ranged back to the fourteenth century. However, the King refused to comply with the Calvinist wish. Then, on Christmas Day of that same year, an outbreak of skirmishes took place in Cracow between Calvinists and Polish Brethren returning from their respective Christmas services. This time the King took the Calvinists' side and had Grzegorz Pawel's Tabula de Trinitate (On the Trinity) burned in the Cracow Main Square. He subsequently also forbade the printing of any further antitrinitarian books in Cracow.<sup>4</sup> Already in the previous year, in 1562, the Calvinists had declared Grzegorz Pawel's work heretical because of its Tritheistic emphasis on the three persons in the Trinity at the expense of the unity in the One Divine Being, or God. Grzegorz Pawel himself had reported that a Calvinist official in Cracow had planned his arrest but was unable to track him down.<sup>5</sup>

In 1564, the Calvinists took still more energetic steps in their struggle with the Polish Brethren. Taking advantage of their own political representation in different government branches, especially in the Sejm, the Calvinists advised King Sigismund Augustus to issue a royal edict that would banish the Brethren from Poland.<sup>6</sup> Already at the Sejm

of Warsaw (April 1564), Tretius, a Calvinist Elder, received a promise from the King that at least foreign antitrinitarians would be banished.<sup>7</sup> And in May 1564, a project to banish foreign antitrinitarians was drawn up. This plan however was strictly opposed by both Cardinal Hosius and by the papal nuncio, Cardinal Commendone, both ecclesiastical statesmen of profound ability. Their opposition to the King's aim was part of the Catholic plan to keep the various Reformers unsatisfied and divided among themselves.

Commendone was the representative of the pope at the Wawel court and his main task was to get King Sigismund Augustus to accept and ratify the decrees of the lately adjourned Council of Trent (1545-63). Commendone had worked very closely on this endoresement with Cardinal Stanislaw Hosius (Hozjusz) of Poland, who himself had twice served as President of the Tridentine Council. As a deeply devoted member of the Church of Rome, Hosius presided over the implementation of the first phase of the Counter-Reformation in Poland, and thereafter has been duly recognized by Catholic Church historians in Poland as the savior of Catholicism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.<sup>8</sup>

Under Hosius the Counter-Reformation did indeed gather force. The Cardinal founded seminaries and colleges for the training of future priests. As the force behind the Catholic movement was to stem the tide of Protestantism, Hosius brought the Jesuits to Poland in 1565. Together with them, he rallied wavering bishops, clergy and princes to the cause of the Counter-Reformation. Hosius also convoked synods for the planning of Unified Catholic action against Protestantism, and wrote many polemical works directed at the opposition. A constant flow of correspondence with leading personalities of the Roman Catholic Church



helped to gain him esteem and prestige in the realm. In his principal theological work, Confessio Catholicae fidei Christiana ( A Confession of the Christian Catholic Faith) (1553), Hosius articulated his stance as protector of the Church in Poland. To this end, he counselled and practiced a combination of rigorous re-Catholicization and internal Catholic reform. Hosius tightened up the hierarchy of the Church in Poland and took measures to control the abuses of the clergy. He also took measures to raise the intellectual level of the priests, including the setting up of numerous seminaries for them. All of this cast a dim light on the future of the Polish Brethren, who in the meantime, quite remarkably, were temporarily growing stronger despite all the efforts of their persecutors.

In August 1564, Tretius again renewed Calvinist efforts to have the Polish Brethren banished from Poland by royal edict. Hosius and Commendone again opposed their efforts, perceiving the eventual danger of disposing of the Calvinists' main rivals. Hence, to prevent a stronger Calvinist camp, Hosius opposed the banishment of the Polish Brethren at this time. The exile of only the latter, he declared, would imply approval of the remaining Protestant groups, both Magisterial and Radical.<sup>10</sup> Thus Hosius opted for a plan that would banish all of the Protestant groups in their entirety. But since such a measure was unlikely to win Royal approval, Hosius conceded, hoping meanwhile that internecine struggles would keep the Protestant opposition from focusing its criticism on the See of Rome. In other words, Hosius upheld the motto Bellum haereticorum pax est ecclesiae ("war among the heretics means peace for the Church".)

A royal edict, however, was issued on August 7, 1564. The Edict of Parczow decreed that:

...all foreign apostates from the Universal Christian Faith, who because of their new religion found refuge in Poland and who now practice their new religious doctrines in Poland either privately or publicly, or in rhetoric or written form, be proscribed from the realm by the time of the feast of St. Michael (Oct. 1). If those who we proscribe through the legal strength of this edict are seen individually or in groups thereafter, they should be punished by death just like any other criminals.<sup>11</sup>

An appendix specifically cautioned against "people of lower status who let themselves be led astray by new and foreign teachings."<sup>12</sup>

When attempts to enforce the Parczow Edict failed (e.g. ; against foreigners like the Moravian Brethren), and when the King encountered further opposition, especially from numerous foreigners of Great Poland, the Edict was amended so as to apply only to foreign antitrinitarians.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence, the two Italian antitrinitarians, Alciati and Gentile, who had been influential on the movement of the Polish Brethren, obeyed the Edict and left Poland. In general, however, the Edict was ineffective. Still, the Polish Brethren accepted it as being symbolic of caution.

King Sigismund Augustus dispelled any lingering hope of convening a National Diet to discuss the establishment of a National Church, when, in 1564, he accepted the decrees of the Tridentine Council. The Protestants were thus compelled into forming a union among themselves for the sake of preserving their very existence in Poland. The major Protestant groups in Poland were the Lutherans, Calvinists, and Moravian Brethren. There were also small communities of Mennonites and Arminians. A union was agreed upon, but the Polish Brethren were excluded because of their socioreligious and political radicalism.<sup>14</sup> They were, moreover,

attacked in numerous polemical works.

The Union, called the Sandomierz Union (April 1570) after the place where it was signed, was yet another act that isolated the Polish Brethren both religiously and politically. It was signed at a general synod by Poland's three major Protestant denominations: Lutherans, Reformed or Calvinists, and the Moravian Brethren. The Sandomierz Union proved to be less successful than hoped for, however, as the participating denominations could only agree to make common cause against Catholics and the Polish Brethren.

In the years following the Sandomierz Union, the King on several occasions issued orders to certain governors instructing them to expel religious reformers from their cities. These orders were directed particularly at the Polish Brethren, who had already been denied the right of conducting public worship in such cities as Lublin, Cracow, Nowy Sacz and Poznan. Such orders however were in the end mostly ineffective since on many occasions the governors ignored the royal instructions. The governors in general wanted the Polish Brethren out of their cities, but, as members of the nobility, they would not tolerate any violence against fellow nobles and thus largely ignored royal instructions so that fellow nobles would not suffer the penalties prescribed by law. Members of the nobility therefore, even antitrinitarian nobility, enjoyed certain immunities. Yet with the growing Catholic Counter-Reformation, in time it became more and more difficult for the Polish Brethren to escape the attacks and restrictions made upon them.

The last quarter of the sixteenth century marked the second era of struggle for the Polish Brethren. During this time the Catholics joined the Magisterial Protestants in waging a common campaign of persecution

against the Polish Brethren. Thus besides the ongoing attacks from Calvinists and Lutherans, the Polish Brethren now began to experience the full force of the Counter-Reformation. It was Jesuits such as Powodowski and later Skarga who led the Catholic offensive that charged the Brethren with the stereotypical accusations of being revolutionary Anabaptists, blasphemers who propagated atheism, and traitors to the Republic of Poland. Powodowski produced numerous polemical works against Protestants generally, many of which were directed specifically against the Polish Brethren. Powodowski, like other Catholic polemicists, also attacked the compact of the Warsaw Confederation (1573) which granted a degree of religious freedom to all religious groups in Poland unmatched in Europe at the time.<sup>15</sup> As the greatest expression of religious tolerance in Poland thus far, the resolutions of the Confederation also embraced the Polish Brethren. Thus legal freedom of religion was guaranteed by the Warsaw Confederation and extended even to the most radical group in Poland, the Polish Brethren, who were guaranteed freedom of conscience and the free practice of their religion. The compact of the Warsaw Confederation also implied that the state could not use its powers to force or induce a person to adopt a particular religion or to prevent or dissuade him from following that religious belief which his conscience required him to follow.

#### Equality of Rights for Protestants

(From the Act of the General Confederation of Warsaw)

(1573)

We, the Spiritual and Temporal Counsellors, the Nobility and the other Estates of the one and indivisible Republic, from Old and New Poland, from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, etc. - and from the Cities of the Crown declare: "... Whereas there is a great dissidence in affairs of the Christian

Religion within our Country, and to prevent any sedition for this reason among the people - such as we clearly perceive in other descendants, for perpetuity, under oath and pledging our faith, honor and consciences; that we who are dissidentes de religione will keep peace between ourselves, and neither shed blood on account of differences of faith or kinds of churches, nor punish one another by confiscation of goods, deprivation of honour, imprisonment, or exile ..." 16

The majority of Catholics in essence never really accepted the Confederation's resolutions, as exemplified by their celebrated denouncement of it at the Piotrkow Synod (1574).<sup>17</sup>

Quite rightly, the Polish Brethren could not rely on the protection extended to them by the Warsaw Confederation, even though its resolutions were taken seriously by the Crown and were reiterated in the monarch's coronation oath. So, although the Brethren generally enjoyed an outward peace during the reign of King Stefan Bathory (1576-86), there were still isolated acts of antagonism towards them. Religious tolerance was not absolute. These sporadic acts of persecution soon gave way to more organized ones. In 1578, the papal nuncio Vincent Laureo advised Bathory to order the Brethren to leave their place of residence near Poznan. The King finally issued such an order three years later.<sup>18</sup> In 1583, Bathory, seeking to curb the spread of antitrinitarianism once again, attacked the Brethren's stronghold in Lublin. This time he forbade them to build any buildings that would in any way further their cause. Concurrently, Bathory recommended that the citizens of the city frustrate any form of Polish Brethren propaganda.<sup>19</sup>

Religious disturbances continued through the 1580's and 1590's as the masses were systematically incited, usually by the Jesuits, to confront the Polish Brethren. In churches, schools and Catholic

liturgical services, the faithful were often urged to drive the Polish Brethren from urban centres. As one Jesuit, Christopher Piasecki, cried, "The city council does nothing, then you, the people, must set on fire and turn to ashes the heretic temples of the Polish Brethren."<sup>20</sup>

Fires set by Catholic arsonists took place as early as 1577 when Brethren Alexander Rodecki's printing shops in Cracow were burnt down by Catholic students of the Jagiellonian University. The students not only hindered the fire-fighters, but tossed books back into the fire. In 1585, also in Cracow, a mob of about 700 ransacked, looted and burned down a major temple of the Polish Brethren, and horsewhipped its minister. The Polish Brethren rebuilt their house of worship only to be routed again by another mob in 1591. This time the Brethren did not rebuild.<sup>21</sup> And under the new monarch, King Sigismund III, known as the Jesuit King because of his great sympathy towards the Counter-Reformation and the Jesuits, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Protestants to build their places of worship. All that the Brethren could do was to call for the endorsement of the resolutions of the Warsaw Confederation. These calls however, predictably failed.

The militant Counter-Reformation at around the end of the sixteenth century compelled the Polish Brethren to leave such centres as Jaslo, Pinczow, Chmielnik, Szczepierzyn, among other towns. They made their way to other centres which were governed by sympathetic Protestant governors or by more tolerant Catholic ones. Personal harassment of members of the Brethren community was also frequent. These incidents were especially initiated by fanatical Catholic organizations, like the Corpus Christi Brethren, the Archbrethren of St. Anne, or similar fraternities under Jesuit guidance.<sup>22</sup>

In 1584, in Cracow, the first physical attack on Faustus Socinus took place.<sup>23</sup> Four years later he was again brutally attacked. Lying weak and sick in bed, he was dragged out of his home and taken to the Vistula River to be given an "Anabaptist baptism by immersion". Socinus would have been drowned were it not for the intervention of two Catholic professors, one of whom was Marcin Wadowita from the Cracow Academy, who secured him from the mob.<sup>24</sup> To avoid further attacks, Socinus moved from Cracow to find protection in the countryside.

The growing Counter-Reformation now began to move its focus from the urban centres to the rural ones. The most popular method employed by Counter-Reformers in re-Catholicizing the peasantry was to rally nobility back to the Catholic cause. The Catholic lords would then reimpose Catholicism upon their serfs. Such coercion was not however worth its effort. Although the majority of the enserfed peasantry remained unaffected or indifferent to the Reformation, for it had no more voice in matters of religion than in matters of politics, there was still the minority that staged formal acts of defiance and rebelled against their landlords. In fact these seemingly insignificant skirmishes possessed the potential of exploding into a massive peasant revolt. In the end however, the religion of the peasants on any estate was determined for them by the lord of the manor. The peasants therefore had to accept the religion of their lord. The peasants who did convert to Catholicism because of pressure from their landlords, in most cases, continued to practice Protestantism privately. Thus one of the fatal weaknesses of the Polish Reformation was that it rested too exclusively on the upper classes rather than on the following and support of the people. Nevertheless, the Jesuits found much more resistance among the peasantry

than they expected. In the end, the Counter-Reformation's major successes against the Polish Brethren specifically, and against the Protestants in general, were undoubtedly achieved in the cities. In the cities the Jesuits could focus their efforts on the merchant middle class and on the upper classes. Working with the academic community, the Jesuits were able to spread their Counter-Reformation propaganda much more easily than that in the countryside. They could appeal to the middle and upper class on the intellectual, economic and political levels. The polemical works of the Counter-Reformation expressed a wide spectrum of theological and sociopolitical arguments that were debated by Jesuits in Poland's major municipalities. The Jesuits also staged pompous public debates during which they appealed on the emotional level to urban audiences at large. They reduced Catholicism to religious emotionalism, and called upon Poles' patriotic feelings and Poland's tradition as the "bulwark of Catholicism".

Poland's urban centres in the latter decades of the sixteenth century were the sites of public debate that frequently saw either Calvinists or Catholics in opposition to the Polish Brethren. Initially, it was the Calvinists who debated passionately with the Polish Brethren, but in the late 1570's the Catholics as represented mainly by the Jesuits, also began to participate in public debates. The first Catholic Polish Brethren debate took place in 1579 and featured the Jesuit Powodowski and the Brethren Jan Niemojewski.<sup>25</sup> The debate did not produce any significant results except that it demonstrated the supremacy of the Jesuit's debating skills. The debates focused immediately on the radical theological and sociopolitical ideology of the Polish Brethren. The debates were frequently executed on the Jesuits' terms, which meant



the use of the Latin language and scholastic methods of debate. For these reasons, and because of the fact that the audiences were growing more and more sympathetic towards the Counter-Reformation, Niemojewski was visibly beaten in most of the debates in which he participated.<sup>26</sup>

The first of these disputations to attract great attention was held in Lewartow (January 1597), a town north of Lublin. It lasted two days and included four disputants: A Jesuit, a Calvinist, a Lutheran, and a Polish Brethren.<sup>27</sup> The Jesuit defended the Catholic position of the deity of Christ against the Brethren and the dogma of transsubstantiation against the Magisterial Protestants. All sides claimed victory and each published its own account of the debate.<sup>28</sup> During a second interesting disputation that same year an important point was scored by the Polish Brethren. It related to the Brethren's charge that the Catholic Church was elitist. The charge related to a Jesuit who was speaking from a "pulpit so that everyone could hear him. But a Brethren responded by proclaiming that what few people heard him could not understand him anyway."<sup>29</sup>

As stated thus, the disputations were carried out largely according to the demands of the Jesuits, and were thus conducted in Latin and in the usual scholastic manner with appeal to the authority of the scriptures and Church Fathers. The other parties felt that they were compelled to agree to these conditions because of public pressure.<sup>30</sup> It was important for Reformation groups to express their righteousness publicly, including during public debates, and to show their strength by accepting the opportunity for debate with the representatives of the Counter-Reformation. Hence, the Jesuits justified the conditions for

debate for they themselves refused to have "the mysteries of the Universal Catholic faith presented to the common people in a common language."<sup>31</sup> Thus, the debates which could have been a constructive instrument for the intercourse of ideas between the different religious denominations in Poland were instead turned by the Jesuits into a libellous form of attack, especially upon the Polish Brethren. Twelve of such public debates between the Polish Brethren and their opponents have been recorded.<sup>32</sup>

Towards the end of the sixteenth century the Catholic polemics directed against the Polish Brethren became still more demagogic, malicious, and slanderous. The differences between the opposing parties were becoming wider and deeper. The antagonisms consolidated as each party became more convinced of its own particular views. The third and final period of the Polish Brethren's struggle with their various opponents began in the very early 1600's and ended in 1658 with the banishment of the Brethren from Poland.

In the face of growing danger, the Polish Brethren made their first attempts of forming a union with the Calvinists in the years of 1611, 1612, 1617, and 1619.<sup>33</sup> The Calvinists however would have nothing to do with the Polish Brethren who by now were branded as Poland's number one enemy. In fact, the Brethren were less and less tolerated by Poland's population at large who felt that they were a dangerous heretical group. More and more Polish Brethren were being exiled beyond city walls.<sup>34</sup>

In 1627 the Brethren's stronghold of Lublin was destroyed by a mob incited by Jesuit lies that the Polish Brethren had prayed for the

success of Gustavus Adolphus' Swedish forces against Poland.<sup>35</sup> In 1638, Rakow, the capital of the Polish Brethren, was dismembered because of an incident involving a group of young Brethren who had thrown rocks at a nearby roadside crucifix. Some ten years later a decree prescribed that all Brethren schools and printing presses were to be shut down. The printings of antitrinitarian material, its circulation or possession, was to be penalized with the confiscation of property by the Crown and the exile of the party involved.<sup>36</sup>

In the meantime, the Polish Brethren were continuously refused any theological or political union with other Protestant denominations, such as declared during the colloquium charitativum (charitable discussions) held at Torun in 1645. Finally, the banishment of the Polish Brethren was precipitated by the fervent Catholic King John II Casimir's claim that the Polish Brethren had been disloyal to the state during the Swedish deluge in 1655. In the Sejm of 1658, a law was passed banishing the Polish Brethren from Poland. The Brethren were given four years either to convert to Catholicism or leave the country to avoid monetary penalties, imprisonment or even death. Most of the Brethren left for nearby places such as Transylvania, Lithuania, and Moravia, but some went as far as England.

The Polish Brethren expressed their grief in their writings. In 1601, Brethren Hieromin Moskorzowski had already foreseen their tragic fate when he wrote a letter to the King and Senate asking,

Should we who were born and bred in this Kingdom, who have here the memorials of our ancestors, here most precious hostages in our children, here our estates and dwellings, should we have desired to push this Kingdom our dearest land, our children and wives, into such a danger and utter ruin and for such a wicked purpose have abused the name of the immortal God and our Lord Jesus Christ? Even if you

should expel us from the country, you cannot weaken our devotion to the Republic. Wherever we are, we shall not deem that we are driven out by our Lord the King, or by our dearly beloved native land, but only hunted out and driven away by the Jesuits.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, despite Poland's tradition of religious toleration, and despite such resolutions like those adopted at the Confederation of Warsaw (1573), religious toleration was not always complete and absolute. The Polish Brethren in particular were exposed to religious persecution. The Compact of the Confederation of Warsaw, an assembly of the nobility and Roman Catholic Church representatives that met in 1573 during an interregnum, guaranteed religious freedom to all religious groups in Poland and was thus one of the first acts of religious toleration in general European history. Nevertheless, the Polish Brethren were subsequently exposed to persistent persecution. These actions included individual attacks, mob attacks, censorship, royal edicts and libellous disputations. Such an unremitting course of persecution finally culminated in the eventual banishment in 1658 of the Polish Brethren from Poland. Chapter Five will discuss their banishment and subsequent fate.

## Notes to Chapter Four

- <sup>1</sup>Janusz Tazbir, "Walka z Bracmi Polskimi w Dobie Kontr-Reformacji," ORP, (1956), p. 166.
- <sup>2</sup>Janusz Tazbir, "Anty-Arianskie Polemiki w Epoce Reakcji Katolickiej," Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki Polskiej, II (1960), 248.
- <sup>3</sup>Volumina Legum, ed. Maciej Kortowski (Kraków: n.p., 1888), vol. I, p. 38.
- <sup>4</sup>Wilbur, op. cit., p. 319.
- <sup>5</sup>Giovanni Commendone, Pamiętnik z Dawnej Polski (Wilno: n.p., 1842), vol. I, p. 169.
- <sup>6</sup>Stanisław Bodniak, "Sprawa Wygnania Arjan w roku 1566," RP, V, No. 8 (1922), 52-3.
- <sup>7</sup>Wincenty Zakrzewski, Reformacja w Polsce (Lipsk: n.p., 1870), p. 186.
- <sup>8</sup>George Williams, "Cardinal Hosius," Shapers of Religious Traditions in Germany, Switzerland and Poland 1560-1600, ed. Julia Raitt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 157.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 169.
- <sup>10</sup>Ljubovich, op. cit., p. 57.
- <sup>11</sup>Giovanni Ancate, Complete Laws of the Catholic Faith (Wilno: n.p., 1819), pp. 71-7.
- <sup>12</sup>Zakrzewski, op. cit., pp. 271-4.
- <sup>13</sup>Stanilaus Hosius, Opera Omnia (Koln: n.p., 1584), p. 219.
- <sup>14</sup>Oskar Halecki, Unia Sandomierska 1570 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1915), pp. 328-30.
- <sup>15</sup>Tazbir, State Without Stakes, op. cit., p. 90.
- <sup>16</sup>Mark Kridl, Democratic Heritage of Poland (London: Unwin Limited, 1944), p. 22.
- <sup>17</sup>Sandius, op. cit., p. 83.
- <sup>18</sup>Henryk Barycz, Archiwa Komisji Historycznej (Kraków: n.p., 1939), vol. III, p. 425.

<sup>19</sup>Jozef Riabinin, Historyczne Materialy Miasta Lublin (Lublin: n.p., 1939), pp. 84-5.

<sup>20</sup>Waclaw Sobieski, Nienawisc Wyznaniowe Tlumow za Rzadow Zugmunta III (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1902), p. 109.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-7.

<sup>22</sup>Marek Nowodowski, Encyklopedia Koscielna (Warszawa, Uniwersytet Warszawski, 1905), pp. 551-3.

<sup>23</sup>Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum, ed. Phototyp Varsoviae, (Warszawa: PWN, 1967), vol. I, p. 473.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>25</sup>Stanislaw Kot, "Dysputacje Arian Polskich," RP, VII-VIII, Nos. 25-32 (1935-6), 341.

<sup>26</sup>Andrzej Kossowski, Protestantyzm w Lublinie w XVI i XVII wiekach (Lublin: n.p. 1933), p. 52.

<sup>27</sup>Kot, Dysputacje, op. cit., p. 350.

<sup>28</sup>Grzegorz Piotrowski, Pogrom Lewartowa, ed. Cracoviae (Krakow: Oswiata, 1933), p. 33.

<sup>29</sup>Kot, Dysputacje, op. cit., pp. 321-31.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>31</sup>Misiurek, obrona Boskiej Godnosci Chrystusa, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>32</sup>Stanislaw Szczotka, "Synody Arian Polskich od Zalozenia Rakowa do wygnania z Kraju," RP, VII-VIII, Nos. 25-32 (1935-6), 21-100.

<sup>33</sup>Tadeusz Brabowski, Literatura Arianska w Polsce 1560-1660. (Krakow: n.p., 1908), p. 208.

<sup>34</sup>Stanislaw Zalewski, Jezuici w Polsce (Lwow: Lwowskie Wydawnictwo, 1901), vol. I, p. 423.

<sup>35</sup>Lubieniecki, op. cit., pp. 256-7.

<sup>36</sup>Ludwig Chmaj, Samuel Przypkowski przeciw Stanu Religijnego w wieku XVII (Krakow: Oswiata, 1927), pp. 46-7.

<sup>37</sup>Kot, Socinianism in Poland, Op. cit., p. 137.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### BANISHMENT

The pre-Socinian phase (1562-98) in the history of antitrinitarianism in Poland saw the evolution of the Polish Brethren's radical religious and sociopolitical doctrines. The radicalism developed during this period became the major characteristic of the Polish Brethren. Although it focused on necessary social reforms in Poland, this radicalism paradoxically precipitated the banishment of the Polish Brethren from Poland in 1658. It is the aim of this chapter to analyze this event, and to demonstrate that the radical policies that had been mainly developed in the Polish Brethren's pre-Socinian phase, were chiefly responsible for anti-Brethren sentiment in Poland, culminating in their eventual banishment. Thus the pre-Socinian phase was the crucial period in the history of the Polish Brethren movement in Poland. From a historical perspective, this initial period is important in understanding the movement's later endeavours and Socinianism in general.

Before his death in 1604, Faustus Socinus had moderated the extremist sociopolitical policies of the Polish Brethren and consolidated their Unitarian theology. His work was conditioned by the contemporary environment which forced Socinus to modify Brethren doctrine in the hope of surviving the militant Polish Counter-Reformation. Socinus' modifications were incorporated into the Brethren's Racovian Catechism (1605), which was named after their stronghold of Rakow, in Little Poland. Henceforth, in the Socinian phase of Polish antitrinitarianism, there were only minor doctrinal changes in the rationalistic Unitarianism of the Polish Brethren.

After the ousting of the Polish Brethren from Cracow (1591), and the dissolution of their stronghold in Lublin (1627), Rakow became the new main base of the Brethren. In Rakow they held most of their annual synods, the major theologians lived in Rakow, and Rakow boasted the major learning centre and printing presses of the Polish Brethren. Rakow directed the movement in the spirit of rationalistic Unitarianism as formulated by Faustus Socinus. The twenty years following the publication of the Racovian Catechism, in 1605, saw the Polish Brethren focus strictly on religious issues since they were satisfied with those sociopolitical doctrines that they accepted from Socinus. The Brethren thus felt it was important to the movement that they concentrate on elaborating Unitarianism or Socinianism. Because they devoted themselves to the propagation of their religious view, the Polish Brethren movement, in the eyes of the some Poles, was now considered exclusively a religious movement, and no longer a sociopolitical one subversive of the existing order of Poland. Yet the majority of Poles, including the majority of the nobility, still viewed the Brethren with distrust, for they believed that their radicalism, developed in the sixteenth century would manifest itself again before long. Thus the Polish Brethren were still widely considered as the most radical religious and sociopolitical group in Poland and who posed a potential threat of harming the country's social order and casting its traditional role as a bulwark of Catholicism into disrepute.

A major setback to the movement of the Polish Brethren and a sign of things to come was the dissolution of the Brethren institution in Rakow. In March 1638 some young Brethren were seen throwing stones at a crucifix erected by a roadside bordering Rakow. The crucifix was damaged and witnesses had reported this to the parish priest.<sup>2</sup> The entire episode



was blown out of proportion by zealous Catholics living in the vicinity of Rakow and they presented the case to the King. Catholic fanatics insisted that the case be taken up by the Senate. The Senate eventually decreed that as punishment for this blasphemy, the school in Rakow be dissolved, that the Rakow press be abolished and that the inhabitants of Rakow should leave the town within four weeks of the order. Those who refused were condemned to social disgrace and even death.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, the headquarters of the Polish Brethren was dismembered and its inhabitants were forced to leave. Most Brethren from Rakow moved eastward, to the province of Wolyn (Volhynia), where they experienced relatively greater religious tolerance and could function as antitrinitarians.

Hence, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Counter-Reformation took effective action against the Polish Brethren. The Brethren strongholds in Cracow and Lublin were destroyed in the sixteenth century and Rakow in the seventeenth century. The militant Counter-Reformation continued to be represented chiefly by the Society of Jesus, whose tactics, it seemed, did not stop at anything. It seemed clear that the Jesuits accepted the premise that the end justified their means.

The Polish Brethren were habitually treated as if they were beyond the scope of the law and its protection, and thus they were exposed to unmitigated persecution. Their banishment was long felt in the air.

In the early seventeenth century the Polish Brethren sought alliances with Polish Calvinists, Gdansk Mennonites, and Dutch Arminians, but were unsuccessful in these attempts. These latter denominations were concerned about their own sociopolitical and religious reputations

and did not want to provoke their own persecution by the Counter-Reformation by associating with the Polish Brethren. The Brethren therefore continued to be isolated politically and religiously.<sup>4</sup> True, they received some support in the Sejm from the Ukrainian nobility, but the motives for this support are not clear.<sup>5</sup> One can only speculate that the Ukrainians wanted to promote political and religious confusion by enhancing the cause of the Polish Brethren so that in turn the Ukrainians could make their own gains.

As part of Counter-Reformation propaganda, the Polish Brethren were accused of having ties with the Cossack leader, Bogdan Chmielnicki (1595-1657), who led the rebellion of the Ukrainians against Polish domination in the Ukraine (1648-54). Furthermore, the Brethren were accused of traitorous activity during the Swedish "Deluge" of Poland (1655-60).<sup>6</sup> It was true that the Polish Brethren were sympathetic towards the Swedes because they felt that they could prosper more under Swedish rule. The Swedes were not Catholic which implied that they would be more tolerant of the Polish Brethren. In fact, many nobles sided with the Swedes at this time, feeling that they could exploit the Polish-Swedish war and secure for themselves political and economic gains. Ultimately, the exaggerated collaboration of the Polish Brethren with the Swedes during the war much exaggerated by their foes, served as a pretext for the banishment of the Brethren from Poland. However, the true causes of the tragic fate of the Brethren stemmed largely from the Pre-Socinian phase of Polish antitrinitarianism in the sixteenth century. Aside from their radical theological doctrines the Polish Brethren espoused radical sociopolitical doctrines which emphasized their anti-feudal position. These latter doctrines were considered by the government in Poland as anti-state policies. Thus, during the

destructive war with the Swedes, the Vasa King John II Casimir called for a unified front in Poland. In the eyes of the King such a front implied a unified religious front. The fervent Catholic King and the ever growing rehabilitated Catholic nobility were not to be aggravated any longer by the radicalism of the Polish Brethren. Motivated by both conviction and expediency, the King called for the banishment of the Polish Brethren.

Legislation for the banishment of the Polish Brethren was passed by the Warsaw parliamentary session of 1658, the first after the Swedish invasion of 1655. The Polish Brethren were given a choice of either leaving Poland within the next two years or converting to Catholicism. Those who refused to convert, but stayed in Poland, faced the death penalty.

The Decree of Banishment of Arians or New-Baptized (1658) was the fulfillment of John II Casimir's second vow (July 27, 1656) made before an icon of the Virgin Mary in a Lwow cathedral.<sup>7</sup> The King believed, as did others, that because of Her miraculous intervention at Czestochowa (shrine of the Black Madonna at Jasna Gora) during the Swedish siege in 1655, Poland had successfully held out against the enemy at the fortified monastery. John Casimir therefore dedicated Poland to the Virgin as its "Queen". The vow in July was made to purify Poland of religious dissenters and was specifically aimed at the Polish Brethren who denied the divinity of Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mary, the "Queen of Poland".<sup>8</sup>

Some of the Polish Brethren did leave Poland. They moved to Transylvania, Moravia and Silesia. They also spread into Holland, Germany, France and East Prussia. The diaspora of the Polish Brethren was therefore wide and diffused. The largest group went to Transylvania,

where the antitrinitarian Church continued to function legally. The intellectual elite however made their way to Holland. In 1668, in Amsterdam, they published the Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum. The works published in these two stately volumes captured the spirit of the Polish Brethren. Also in Holland, the Polish Brethren received support and sympathy from the Remonstrants, or Dutch Arminians, who had rejected the Calvinist doctrines of predestination, election and grace. Polish Brethren exiles also gave rise to the Unitarian Church in both England and America. Thus, the organized Polish Brethren movement in Poland disintegrated in the mid-seventeenth century into a diffused movement throughout Europe. The Polish Brethren exiles had begun to settle in the antitrinitarian communities that had been established throughout Europe even before the actual banishment of the Brethren from Poland in 1658. The Polish Brethren set up international committees between the countries to take care of the future exiles from Poland. However, not too many of them came. The smaller congregations of the Polish Brethren in Europe therefore survived for only a short time. Yet, even though the Polish Brethren communities in diaspora began to die out by the end of the seventeenth century, their spirit continued to survive. The stronger communities conducted a vigorous propaganda effort which found sympathy especially in England and Holland. In addition, the harsh anti-Socinian polemics and tracts branding the Polish Brethren as the most heretical of all heretics, only excited curiosity about and interest in this religious denomination.

The Polish Brethren, once expelled from Poland, never received the opportunity to reestablish themselves as a Church. A Roman Catholic priest and also a determined anti-Polish Brethren polemicist, paid an unwitting tribute to that former tolerance of sixteenth-century Poland

that had permitted the emergence of the Polish Brethren. In 1660, he reproached the Polish nobility of former days for their lack of Catholic zeal and patriotism, and charged the kings with:

... welcoming the followers of Servetus and Gentile, and their pupils as venomous as themselves, including Biandrata, Alciati, Socinus, Statorius and other fugitives, vagrants, those banished from their homelands ... They (kings and nobility of Poland) associated with Jews, Turks, heathens, atheists; they accepted Antitrinitarians not only as neighbours and friends, but as kinsmen and brothers.<sup>9</sup>

After 1658, the majority of Polish Brethren did remain in Poland and officially were converted to Catholicism, though many continued to be covert Unitarians. The problem of crypto-Socinianism in Poland continued to exist for at least thirty years after the banishment of the Polish Brethren. Many circumstances contributed to this situation, one of which was the general laxity in the execution of anti-Brethren laws, especially against members of the nobility who always enjoyed certain immunities. Religious tolerance in Poland did not therefore save the Polish Brethren from expulsion, but it did spare the country bloody religious strife that could have been unleashed by the radicalism of the Polish Brethren.

Thus, the causes for banishment of the Polish Brethren were sown already in the original radical ideologies of the Polish Brethren in the sixteenth century. In time, the Brethren came to be faced by the weakening of Poland's tradition of religious toleration and by a strong Catholic Reformation and unrelenting Protestant antagonisms. The Polish Brethren were thus forced into the role of a scapegoat who had to take the blame for Poland's internal political problems and for her crises in foreign affairs.

## Notes to chapter Five

<sup>1</sup>Szczotka, op. cit., pp. 61-72.

<sup>2</sup>Scriptores Rerum Polonicorum, ed. Cracoviae (Krakow: n. p., 1897), vol. XVI, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup>Jagiellonskie Manuskrypty, ed. Komisja Jagiellonczyk (Krakow: UJ, 1923), Book 2274, pp. 50-2.

<sup>4</sup>Szczotka, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>5</sup>Lewicki, op. cit., pp. 223-4.

<sup>6</sup>Wacław Urban, "Losy Braci Polskich od Założenia Rakowa do Wygnania z Polski," ORP I (1956), 125.

<sup>7</sup>Williams, Polish Brethren, op. cit., p. 496.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 497.

<sup>9</sup>Tazbir, op. cit., p. 210.

## CONCLUSION

The Polish Brethren had scarcely more than a hundred years of existence (1565-1658) in the Republic of Poland, yet they still made valuable contributions to Polish culture. However, the Polish Brethren did not live to see the time in which their ideas, principles and methods of thought would begin to exert a more lasting influence on the intellectual life of their country. The Polish Brethren were important proponents of freedom of thought and of the critical spirit of rationalism. Their reason in conduct and faith embraced the great worth of rationalist and humanist traditions. And the Polish Brethren's tolerance in judgement stemmed from their milieu of moral elevation.

This present study, which focuses on the pre-Socinian phase in the history of the Polish Brethren (1565-98), has attempted to demonstrate that owing to the consolidation of their radical religious and sociopolitical formulations the Brethren had helped sow the seeds of their own destruction. It was their uncompromising radicalism that provoked unmitigated antagonism towards them throughout their existence, ultimately bringing about their banishment from Poland. In the later, Socinian phase of their history, the Polish Brethren generally accepted and continued to uphold that radicalism formulated by their predecessors in the sixteenth century. The Socinians of seventeenth century Poland focused their energies on the resolution of only relatively minor doctrinal questions. Hence, only small amendments were made to Faustus Socinus' program which was incorporated into the Racovian Catechism. The Polish Brethren concentrated their efforts on the propagation of their cause. But because they continued to uphold their original radical

doctrines, they came to be branded as dangerous heretics who aimed to destroy both the sociopolitical system and the religious order in Poland, and thus Poland herself.

As it turned out, the relatively short existence of the Polish Brethren was inversely proportional to their input into Polish culture. This input was complemented by their literary, political and philosophical achievements abroad, especially in the Netherlands and England. Having developed their own theology and ethical system over a short period of time, the Polish Brethren produced a host of prominent writers, philosophers and theologians whose influence reached far beyond the frontiers of Poland. The movement of the Polish Brethren played a considerable part in laying down the foundations for modern Unitarianism in England and America. And through their rationalism and humanitarianism, the Polish Brethren influenced the progress of philosophical thought in western Europe and helped prepare the path to the Enlightenment.

The Polish Brethren in exile continued to attack religious intolerance. The treatises of Brethren like those of Jan Crell (1590-1633), Samuel Przypkowski (1592-1670), and Jonas Szlichtyng (1592-1661) advocated full freedom of conscience and condemned the intervention of secular authority in matters of faith. They demonstrated the advantage of religious tolerance as well as its general necessity. Such ideas were well received among the thinkers of the early Enlightenment. For example, in England, John Locke (1632-1704) had copies of books by Crell, Przypkowski and Szlichtyng.<sup>1</sup> Information about the Polish Brethren, or Socinians, was also obtained indirectly by sympathizers or the curious from Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), who presented their views with commendable objectivity in his historical-philosophical dictionary.<sup>2</sup>



The philosophers of the Enlightenment were particularly impressed by the Polish Brethren's doctrine on the freedom of thought and conscience.

In 1769, the philosophe Andre Naigeon wrote in the Encyclopedie:

It is fact that some of the wisest, most learned and enlightened among the Protestants have been lately drawing closer to the Antitrinitarians' views. If we consider also tolerance, we discern the reason for the rapid progress made by Socinianism in our day and for the profound influence it exerts on our minds.<sup>3</sup>

The philosophes also complimented the Polish Brethren on their view that religion should follow the principles of reason. Thus although Socinianism, once expelled from Poland, was never reborn as a Church in the country of its birth, its many ideas came to be accepted by sympathizers among philosophers and theologians of liberal tendencies in western Europe, England and America. Therefore, the historical importance of the Polish Brethren lies in the fact that they were among the harbingers of the Enlightenment.

The radicalism of the Polish Brethren's religious and sociopolitical doctrines was bound to evoke opposition from different religious parties in Poland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. With regard to the reaction of the Catholic and Magisterial Protestants, it is interesting to note that the Protestants tended to be more concerned with the Brethren's radical sociopolitical policies, whereas the Catholics tended to be more concerned with the Brethren's radical theological dogmas. Hence, the Polish Brethren stimulated in Poland not only a renaissance in the field of Christology and a more dynamic and biblical theology, but also promoted more plastic, vital and progressive sociopolitical attitudes. As fervent antitrinitarians, the Polish Brethren were willing to die fighting for their cause - Standis libentius mortui erant.<sup>4</sup> With such determination, they stood not only for vital sociopolitical and religious ideology, but also for the progressive movement towards reason, tolerance, and freedom as the three major ends in religion.

## Notes to Conclusion

<sup>1</sup>Kazimierz Pomian, "Piotr Bayle wobec Socinianizmu," Archiwum Historii, Filozofii, i Myśli Społecznej, VI (1980), 83.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Zbigniew Ogonowski, Socianizm Polski, op. cit., p. 239.

<sup>4</sup>Lubieniecki, op. cit., p. 6.

# APPENDIX I

## LIST OF SYNODS THAT APPEAR IN PRESENT STUDY

Year	Place	Denomination
1556	Secemin	Calvinism
1556	Pinczow	Calvinism
1559	Pinczow	Calvinism
1560	Pinczow	Calvinism
1560	Cracow	Calvinism
1561	Pinczow	Calvinism
1563	Cracow	Calvinism
1563	Mordy	Polish Brethren
1563	Pinczow	Polish Brethren
1565	Brzezín	Polish Brethren
1565	Wegrow	Polish Brethren
1565	Piotrkow	Polish Brethren

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