

Polish Protestants: Ecumenism in a Dual Diaspora

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In strictly numerical terms, Polish Protestants constitute a tiny minority¹ within an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic population. But as with all minority communities, numbers alone do not adequately reflect the significance of the Protestant element in Poland's cultural and religious heritage. Their own religious tradition encompasses periods of intensely creative expansion, emergent ecumenism and disintegrating decline. Since the Second World War, Poland's scattered Protestant community has struggled to maintain a constructive equilibrium in a paradoxical and volatile state, living in diaspora between Catholic nation and socialist state.

Of course, there can be no doubt, as British historian Norman Davies has recently reiterated, ". . . that the Roman Catholic Church embodies the most ancient and the most exalted ideals of traditional Polish life across the centuries . . ."² Events in recent years such as the election of a Polish Pope, two spectacular papal visits to his troubled homeland, and the Church's advisory-mediating role in Solidarity's drive for social renewal have thrust Polish Catholicism to the forefront of world-wide attention. "Examples of how far the Church has taken over the emotional, cultural and to some extent even the public life of the Polish people can be found everywhere."³

However, Poland's present cultural and national homogeneity represents a radical departure from the past. Though Catholics were always in the majority, the Church was never able to monopolise national life. During the crucial sixteenth century, ". . . the Roman Catholics formed the largest single religious group, but accounted for barely half of the total population".⁴ Substantial communities of Orthodox Russians, Lutheran Germans, Moravian Brethren, Dutch Mennonites, Muslim Tartars and pagan Lithuanians made Poland one of Europe's most ethnically and confessionally diverse states. Poland's somewhat contradictory reputation as medieval Christendom's "bulwark" against the infidel and as a "haven of toleration" for persecuted religious dissenters is not com-

patible with interpretations of Polish cultural traditions which disregard or exclude minority elements. Even apart from the sharply divergent interpretations of Polish church history represented by Count Valerian Krasiński⁵ and German Protestants, balanced historical enquiry tends to confirm that "the exact measure of Poland's Catholicity, and of her Toleration, is not easily calculated".⁶

Affirmation of the profound integration of Catholicism and Polish national identity can itself be interpreted in different ways. When this refers to the formative and sustaining influence Catholicism has exerted so pervasively on Polish cultural identity, there is much to recommend it. It is particularly painful for Polish Protestants, however, when this is interpreted to mean that one cannot be an authentic Pole without being Catholic. In a controversial essay, the renowned intellectual and social critic Jan Józef Lipski has recently taken issue with this common exclusivist conception, which omits the non-Catholic elements of national tradition and alienates Poles who are not Catholics. Starting with the example of the Reformation, he asserts that

there is no lack of Protestants among our national heroes, no lack of Protestant ministers among our Polish activists. It is true that the Catholic Church played a great part in the perseverance of "Polishness", particularly after partitions in the Prussian part of Poland and the distant borderlands of the Russian part of Poland. But in the Cieszyn areas of Silesia and in Mazuria, "Polishness" was fostered by the Evangelical Church and its ministers. The final act in this heroic drama was the martyrdom of the unflinching Protestant ministers and activists during the Hitlerite occupation.⁷ The contribution of Polish Protestants to Polish culture and to the struggle for independence is so great that all attempts to exclude them from our Polish national community must provoke sharp opposition.⁸

The specific contributions of the Protestant Reformation to Polish culture are many and varied, in spite of its relatively short-lived brilliance. As a movement which stressed the fundamental importance of the Bible, it encouraged the printing and distribution of Bibles in the Polish language. Religious literature based on Lutheran and Calvinist doctrine was widely distributed. The ensuing theological dialogue with Catholicism eclipsed Latin as the language of literary discourse, created a new theological terminology in Polish and significantly enriched its vocabulary. The effects of this development went far beyond the bounds of religious literature. Mikołaj Rey, the "Father of Polish Literature", was a Protestant, whose work was infused with Lutheran ideas.⁹ Another Protestant, Piotr Statoriusz, published the first Polish grammar in 1568.¹⁰

Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Polish Reformation was in the

development of education.¹¹ One of the first books published in Polish in the sixteenth century was a translation of Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*, which was the most popular primer in many Evangelical schools, and even in some Catholic schools.¹² The Polish Brethren established an important education and publishing community at Raków, near Kielce, whose progressive programme included a vigorous emphasis on ethical instruction, civil obligations and physical exercise.¹³ The Czech Brethren also established numerous schools, the most notable of which was at Leszno, where children from all social classes, including girls, were taught.

The Sandomierz Consensus of 1570, which united Lutherans, Calvinists and Bohemian Brethren in a pledge of solidarity as a barrier against the surging Jesuit-led Counter-reformation, can be considered a forerunner of the contemporary ecumenical movement. Along with the Confederation of Warsaw, which guaranteed freedom of worship to the gentry in terms unthinkable anywhere else in Europe, it represents the peak of the Polish Reformation's constructive impetus. The Polish Reformation also produced individuals of international stature, including the theologian Jan Laski, and the Polish Brethren leader Szymon Budny, called "the best Hebrew scholar of the century".¹⁴

The radical Calvinist sectarians, called Polish Brethren, contributed to Polish culture through their progressive social and political ideology. They took an active interest in the plight of the peasantry, and appealed to the gentry to treat them with humanitarian decency, and even release them from servitude. They held that Christians should not hold public office, and many were resolute pacifists. Some took to wearing wooden swords at their sides as a sign of their disdain for those who used weapons.¹⁵

There is therefore no need for a contemporary polemic for or against the Protestant dimension of Poland's cultural tradition. Neither, however, can the constructive significance of sixteenth century Polish Catholicism, which also evoked strong spiritual values, be underestimated. It was rather the spiritual struggle sparked by the Reformation, relatively unmarred by violent militancy in Poland's tolerant atmosphere, which unleashed the creative forces needed to usher in a new age. This essential characteristic of the Polish Reformation suggests a compelling historical paradigm of directly practical relevance for contemporary inter-confessional relations in Poland.

Polish Protestants Today — Ecumenism

Although overwhelmingly Catholic, Poland is nonetheless a multi-confessional country, with over thirty churches, religious associations and societies represented in addition to the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁶ The

majority of Protestants belong to the five churches affiliated to the Polish Ecumenical Council (PEC), along with the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the Polish National Catholic Church,* and the Old Catholic Church of the Mariavites. The central unifying theme of Polish Protestant church life and experience since the end of the Second World War has been ecumenical encounter, dialogue, and cooperation. This activity has been confined primarily to the churches of the PEC, but in recent years has included increasingly significant contacts with the Roman Catholic Church.

By the end of the war, Poland's confessional composition was considerably altered. The annihilation of millions of Jews left few survivors. Most of the Orthodox, Baptist and Pentecostal believers lived in the eastern areas which were annexed by the Soviet Union. The emigration of German Lutherans, both forced and voluntary, severely drained the Church's already limited resources. Moreover, the re-establishment of Poland's sovereignty under a Marxist-oriented government placed the churches in a new social and political situation. Polish Protestants found themselves ill-prepared to face the changes.

In the first post-war period, all the churches were engaged in the fundamental rebuilding tasks of locating scattered members, reconstructing destroyed church buildings, restoring organisational structures and training new leaders. An important aspect of this process was obtaining legal recognition in the new political system, based on the principle of separation of Church and State, and the equality of all religious confessions under the law. The settling of this question, which had caused Protestants so much frustration before the war,¹⁷ had a significant psychological effect in the churches, and helps to clarify the positive attitude they took towards the socialist government. The theological traditions and the historical experiences of the Protestant churches which joined the PEC further illustrate this process of adaptation and the development of a *modus vivendi* with the socialist State.

The Evangelical-Augsburg Church (Lutheran)

The historiography of Polish Lutheranism has not yet been treated comprehensively. Before such a project can be carried out, there is still much work to be done in the registration and publication of archival sources, which were heavily damaged during the last war.¹⁸ The spread of Lutheranism in sixteenth century Poland was confined largely to the cities with their German populations. The Polish Reformation's main weaknesses were its failure to make a significant doctrinal impact on the Polish peasantry, together with a chronic lack of unity. These factors contributed greatly to its decline in the face of the fierce Jesuit-led Counter-

*An old Catholic Church, i.e. composed of Catholics who at various times and places have separated from Rome — *Ed.*

reformation.¹⁹ During Poland's wars with Lutheran Sweden, many of the Protestant nobility were forced to convert to Catholicism to prove their patriotic loyalty. It was not until an influx of German colonists brought a pietist renewal in the later eighteenth and nineteenth century that Lutheranism regained some of its former vigour.

The fate of Lutherans during the period of Polish partitions in the late eighteenth century depended on which of the partitioning powers — Russia, Prussia or Austria — they lived under. Political, religious, cultural and economic conditions in the three areas varied considerably. As a result, there were seven separate Evangelical churches within the borders of the resurrected Polish Republic in 1918. Attempts to overcome the disunity of this inherited situation were further exacerbated by national and political differences, which disrupted church life throughout much of the inter-war period. It was, paradoxically, the destruction and upheaval of the Second World War which finally created a unified Lutheran Church in Poland. The membership of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church was reduced from over 500,000 in 1939 to just over 200,000 in 1945.²⁰

In connection with the rebuilding and reconstruction of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church after the war, the Lutheran leaders devoted considerable energy towards adapting to the new social and political situation. It was not until 1950 that a Synod could be called which elected a permanent leadership and finalised the Church's diocesan structure. All worship services of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church in Poland are conducted in Polish. As a result of the demographic changes after the war, the Lutheran Church is nationally unified and exclusively Polish in character.²¹ The few non-Polish congregations are not organisationally part of the Polish Evangelical-Augsburg Church, though they are served pastorally by the Union.

The constant loss of membership due to emigration, especially heavy since the Polish-German Treaty of 1970 and the family reunification programme, following the signing of the Helsinki Agreements in 1975, has had an unsettling and destabilising effect on the Church, according to church leaders. This complex problem, due largely to social, political, economic and ethnic, rather than religious, factors, has drained church membership to a level around 70,000. Poland's Lutheran Bishop has called it a "cross and an open sore on the body of our Church . . ." ²² Moreover, there is some indication that many of those who emigrate do not maintain their church affiliation and become, in effect, "de-Christianised" within a few years.²³

However, there are also hopeful signs of growth. A concerted effort has been made to expand work with children and young adults, principally through Sunday Schools and religious instruction classes. Confirmation instruction is also provided by pastors throughout the country.

Publishing is an important means of fostering fellowship among widely-scattered members, as well as a form of outreach. The fortnightly church publication *Zwiastun* (The Herald), has a circulation of over nine thousand and is an important forum of Lutheran ideas. Books and an annual Evangelical calendar are also published. Lutheran scholars were responsible for the new Polish Bible translation published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in Warsaw in 1966 and 1975.

The Evangelical-Augsburg Church was a founding member of the Polish Ecumenical Council, and since its inception in 1946 has made an important contribution to Polish ecumenical institutions, including the Christian Theological Academy (ChAT). Relations with the Evangelical-Reformed Church are especially close, and though several attempts to unite the two churches have fallen short of the mark, the institution of shared ministry, inter-communion and mutually-recognised baptism was established in 1970 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Sandomierz Consensus.

Ecumenical contacts with the Roman Catholic Church have been much more problematic. Though some progress has been made since the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, the forcible occupation of several Lutheran churches in Mazuria by Roman Catholics during the past decade has strained Lutheran-Roman Catholic relations even further. Attempts to negotiate the sale or long-term lease of disused Lutheran church buildings in the region have so far failed to resolve the situation. This problem is not unrelated to the drastic reduction in the number of Lutherans in the area due to emigration, and a mutually satisfactory solution should eventually be possible if further complicating factors are kept to a minimum.

As a member of the Lutheran World Federation, the World Council of Churches and the Christian Peace Conference, the Evangelical-Augsburg Church maintains active links with the international Christian community. Aware of their limitations, and at the same time conscious of their calling, Polish Lutherans are committed to their nation and determined to be Salt and Light in Poland. In the words of their Bishop: "We are a minority, but we want to be a dynamic and creative minority".²⁴

The Evangelical-Reformed Church

Along with the Evangelical-Augsburg Church, the Evangelical-Reformed Church is heir to the rich tradition of the sixteenth century Reformation in Poland. Calvinism proved more attractive to the Polish gentry than Lutheranism, perhaps in part because of its non-German identity, and the influential role of the laity in church affairs.²⁵ But Polish Calvinism, even more than Lutheranism, exhibited the two primary

weaknesses of the Polish Reformation: an exclusive identification as the “religion of the lords”, and chronic disunity. In spite of its later decline, Polish Calvinism produced many renowned writers and theologians, including Jan Laski (Johannes a Lasco, 1499-1560), called the “Father of the Polish Reformed Church”.²⁶

Between the First and Second World Wars, there were two separate Reformed Churches in Poland, with a combined membership of about 30,000. In both churches, the Second Helvetic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism* served as the basic confessional documents.²⁷ The Church was so completely destroyed during the Second World War that its very survival was in question. Apart from a few retired clergymen, there were no Reformed pastors to begin the task of rebuilding the Church, and membership had been reduced to just a few thousand. But in spite of great difficulties, the Church was re-established after the war, rising like a “Phoenix from the ashes”.²⁸ Synods have been meeting regularly since 1949, and the Church presently numbers about 4,500 members. Active engagement in ecumenical cooperation has characterised Reformed church life since it participated in the formation of the PEC immediately following the end of the war. The church’s monthly journal *Jednota* (Unity), is dedicated to “Polish Evangelicalism and Ecumenism”, and is probably the most useful source of ecumenical news in Poland. The Evangelical-Reformed Church is represented in the World Council of Churches through the PEC, and is a member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches with headquarters in Geneva.

The Polish Baptist Church

The history of the Baptist Church in Poland can be traced to a series of movements of spiritual awakening which swept through Lutheran communities in the first half of the nineteenth century. A desire for deeper fellowship and personal commitment led to the formation of prayer and Bible-study groups, which found little sympathy among the rationalistic Lutheran clergy. A public ceremony of believers’ baptism which took place in the village of Adamów, near Warsaw, in November 1858 is regarded as the birth of the Polish Baptist Church.

In the period between the two world wars, Polish Baptists were organised in two separate groups: The Federation of Slavic Congregations and the Union of German-speaking Baptist Congregations, with a combined membership of over 17,000.²⁹ The demographic and political upheaval of the war reduced the number of Baptists in Poland to under

*The two basic confessional documents for all Reformed Churches. The Second Helvetic Confession, issued in 1566, was written by J. H. Bullinger and is mainly Calvinist; the Heidelberg Catechism was compiled in 1562 by two Heidelberg theologians, Z. Ursinus and K. Olevian, and others: its theology is basically Calvinist with some Lutheran elements — *Ed.*

2,000. The majority of Slavic Baptists, including Poles, Ukrainians and Russians, were located in the eastern areas which were annexed by the Soviet Union, and therefore outside the boundaries of the Polish People's Republic.

When the war ended, the Baptists were united with the Evangelical Christians, the Resolute Christians and the Free Christians to form the Polish Church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. This union did not prove lasting, however, and in 1947 the other three groups formed the United Evangelical Church. The Polish Church of Christians-Baptists was registered by the State as an autonomous body, and its statute was officially established in 1968. A theological training course was conducted from 1947-50 with twenty-six students, and another two courses were conducted in 1962-68 for sixteen students. Pastors are presently trained in three different ways: 1) in the Church's own Bible school and correspondence course; 2) at the Christian Theological Academy; 3) at the International Baptist Seminary in Rüschnikon, Switzerland.³⁰ The Church also runs an attractive retirement home in Białyłstok which has over fifty residents.

Polish Baptists are actively engaged in publishing, and have already produced an impressive array of devotional and Bible study literature, including a Polish version of William Barclay's New Testament commentary. In addition to their monthly journal *Słowo Prawdy* (Word of Truth), they publish brochures, tracts, song books and scripture calendars. Since the early 1970s, the Church has produced a weekly radio programme called *Głos Prawdy z Warszawy* (The Voice of Truth From Warsaw), which is broadcast through Trans-World Radio in Monte Carlo.

A highlight of post-war Polish Baptist life was the 1978 preaching tour of Poland by the renowned American Baptist evangelist Dr Billy Graham. Graham's visit, the first to Poland by a major western evangelist, enhanced ecumenical cooperation and gave the Polish Protestant community some unaccustomed public recognition. The Roman Catholic Church cooperated by making their churches available, and Graham was received during his visit by the late Primate of Poland, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. Ecumenical prayer and fellowship groups sprang up in the wake of Graham's evangelistic tour, many of which continue to meet. Though the visit's long-term impact is hard to assess, the fact that Graham was invited back to Poland in 1981 to receive an honorary doctorate of theology from the Christian Theological Academy suggests how much the event was appreciated by the Protestant community. In recent years, the Polish Baptist Church has experienced a dramatic increase in growth, and membership is thought to be well over 6,000. Membership in the PEC, the Baptist World Alliance, and the Conference of European Churches provides Polish Baptists with an adequate forum to develop ecumenical and international contacts. Bible-centred

teaching, high moral standards and evangelistic zeal characterise the faith and life of Polish Baptists.

The Methodist Church

Though Methodism was first introduced into Poland at the end of the nineteenth century, it was not until 1921 that the church became engaged in missionary activity. The work originated from an initiative led by the Southern Methodist Church of America.³¹ A committee was formed to supervise the distribution of material aid for those victimised in the First World War. Other projects included a clinic and youth centre in Warsaw, and a school and home for widows in the village of Klarysew just outside the capital. A Bible school was established which was soon training Polish pastors for the Methodist congregations which sprang up across the country.

In spite of years of attempts, the Methodist Church was never able to obtain legal recognition from the state authorities before the Second World War. It was not until 1945, in the socialist Polish People's Republic, that this important milestone was achieved, and the Church's statutes were ratified by the government in 1969. Current membership is about 4,500 with a substantial increase in growth during the past few years. The Methodist monthly *Pielgrzym Polski* (The Polish Pilgrim), has been published since 1926, and recently received praise in an influential Roman Catholic journal for its broad intellectual appeal, its ecumenical spirit, and its solid literary content.³²

One of the most visibly significant aspects of Polish Methodist activity is the Methodist English Language College in Warsaw. Started in 1921, it currently serves over 5,000 students and enjoys a good reputation for the high level of instruction it offers. The Methodist Church is an active partner in the Polish ecumenical movement, and the church's General Superintendent, Witold Benedyktowicz, professor of Systematic Theology at the Christian Theological Academy, was until recently President of the PEC. The Polish Methodist Church is an active member of the World Methodist Council, the Conference of European Churches, and the Christian Peace Conference. As a minority community, Polish Methodists feel a special calling to minister to those in Polish society who find themselves outside the mainstream and are ready to take their Christianity seriously in the context of the Methodist fellowship.³³

The United Evangelical Church

The United Evangelical Church was formed in 1947 by the union of three evangelical groups which had previously been affiliated with the Polish

Baptist Church: The Evangelical Christians, the Free Christians, and the Resolute Christians. In 1953 the Union was expanded with the addition of two other free church groups: the Christians of Evangelical Faith, and the Church of Christ. In 1981 the Free Christians withdrew from the Union and were registered as a separate body. The remaining four churches are associated in the form of a church federation with a consolidated leadership council, but retain varying degrees of autonomy in the training of pastors, worship assemblies and international affiliations.

Two of the four groups which make up the United Evangelical Church (UEC), belong to the Pentecostal tradition: the Resolute Christians, who represent a "modified version of the Mühlheim Movement,* adjusted to Polish conditions",³⁴ and the Christians of Evangelical Faith, a grouping of classical Pentecostalism. Pentecostals make up over sixty percent of the UEC membership, and are probably the fastest growing Protestant group in Poland at the present time. UEC leaders speak of a "tremendous revival" in their churches in the past couple of years, and estimate that membership may have reached 15,000.

In addition to cultivating personal piety among members, an emphasis on spiritual sanctification and the exercise of spiritual gifts, the UEC maintains an openness to new forms of worship and feels particularly called to engage in the proclamation of the Good News to all people. The Church has an active publishing programme which includes a variety of religious materials which are sold throughout the churches. Bibles, devotional books and song books are especially popular. In addition, they publish the monthly *Chrześcijanin* (The Christian), and a bi-annual church calendar. Since 1965 the church has produced a weekly radio programme entitled *Głos Ewangelii z Warszawy* (Voice of the Gospel From Warsaw), which is transmitted from Trans-World Radio in Monte Carlo for Poles at home and abroad. Since 1972, Sunday programmes for children have also been produced for broadcast.³⁵

‡ The UEC is a founding member of the PEC, and is itself an ecumenical federation. As well as membership in the Conference of European Churches and the Polish section of the Christian Peace Conference, UEC representatives attend international Pentecostal conferences, and assemblies of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Moscow. There has been contact between some UEC churches and members of the charismatic renewal movement within the Roman Catholic Church, Oasis, but it is still too early to assess their impact as ecumenical encounters. Since a considerable number of UEC members were resettled in Poland from the eastern territory which was annexed by the Soviet Union, active interest and contact is maintained with evangeli-

*An association of Pentecostal groups in Germany formed in 1909 after they had been excluded from the established evangelical churches; renamed in 1938 the Mühlheim Association of Christian Fellowships — *Ed.*



Metropolitan Vasyl' Lypkivs'ky, who was forced to resign as head of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in 1928, and later died in a Soviet labour camp (*above left*). Metropolitan Andrii Sheptyts'ky, Cardinal Slipy's predecessor as head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, who died in obscure circumstances in 1944 (*above right*). (Both photos taken from the booklet *The Gun and the Faith*, published by the Ukrainian Information Service, London, in 1969).

Baptismal candidates for membership of the United Evangelical Church in Poland, in their Warsaw church, September 1972 (*right*).



A pastor for the United Evangelical Church in Poland is ordained in Bydgoszcz in September 1972 (*left*). See article on Polish Protestants on pp. 295-309. (Both photos courtesy of Keston College).



Vadim Shcheglov with his family (*above*). Shcheglov, formerly the secretary and now the overseas representative (since his emigration earlier this year) of the Moscow-based Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in the USSR, describes the Committee's work on pp. 332-34.



Frs Alfonskas Svarinkas (*left*) and Sigitas Tamkevičius (*below left*), both arrested earlier this year. They are two of the five founder-members of the Catholic Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights, based in Lithuania, and are the first Lithuanian priests to be arrested for ten years.



During Fr Svarinkas's trial, parishioners who attempted to attend were barred from the courtroom (*below left*). (*All photos courtesy of Keston College.*)



cal Christians there. The dynamic vitality of the UEC provides ample evidence of a significant movement of evangelistic revival within Poland today.

The Polish Ecumenical Council and the Shape of Polish Ecumenism

Clandestine ecumenical encounters began to take place in Poland during the Second World War. At the end of 1942 a provisional Ecumenical Council was established, but it was not until 1946 that the Polish Ecumenical Council (PEC) was officially founded. Post-war ecumenical cooperation was motivated to a considerable extent by the non-Roman Catholic Churches' realisation that they had lost many members as a result of the war and the redrawing of Poland's boundaries. Moreover, whereas Roman Catholics had represented just sixty-five per cent of Poland's total population before the war, they comprised over ninety per cent of the population in the People's Republic. Ecumenical solidarity and the prompt settlement of legal recognition within the new social and political system helped enable the minority churches to begin the difficult task of rebuilding.

The primary thrust of ecumenical cooperation in the first five years after the war was directed towards the practical problems of church construction and the distribution of material aid. The periodical *Kościół Powszechny* (The Universal Church) appeared as the official publication of the PEC. From 1950-57, however, the council's activity was seriously affected by the political situation in the country, and misunderstandings among some member groups further destabilised the situation within the council.³⁶ In 1957 the PEC was able to resume its activities, and in 1967 its statutes were ratified.

The eight member churches of the PEC are: The Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, The Evangelical-Augsburg Church, The Polish Catholic Church, The Old Catholic Church of the Mariavites, the United Evangelical Church, the Polish Baptist Church and the Methodist Church. In 1973 the Polish branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society became an associate member of the council. The goal of the PEC, according to its statute, is "to cultivate mutual understanding and fraternal relations between the member churches of the PEC".³⁷ Any church may become a member of the PEC, which "confesses according to the Scripture that God is one in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that Jesus is our God and Saviour".³⁸ There has been much progress in ecumenical cooperation among the PEC member churches, but apart from the UEC, there has been no uniting of churches. Though intercommunion and the sharing of ministers has been established between the Polish-Catholic and Mariavite churches, as well as between Lutheran and Reformed, all attempts at actual unification have so far proved unsuccessful.

Perhaps the most significant manifestation of Polish ecumenical cooperation is the Christian Theological Academy (ChAT). When the Department of Evangelical Theology of Warsaw University resumed its activity at the end of the war in 1945, it was not only members of the two evangelical churches who attended, but those of free churches as well, and even some Old Catholics. When Polish universities were "secularised" in 1954, the Department of Evangelical Theology became ChAT. It contained an Evangelical and an Old Catholic section. A third section was added in 1957 when the Orthodox Church joined. Students from nine different denominations have studied there. ChAT is therefore not only an institution of theological education, but an important forum for ecumenical discussion and dialogue which enriches the religious life of Poland's minority churches.

Another fruitful area of ecumenical cooperation has been Bible translation and distribution. Though the new translation published in 1966 and 1975 was made by Lutheran scholars, it was submitted to all the churches for review. An ecumenical commission is currently working on a modern-language edition of the New Testament based on the model of the "Good News for Modern Man" translation. The work of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Poland began in 1816. When the society resumed its activity after the Second World War, the transformed confessional situation in Poland led to increased ecumenical cooperation in the distribution of Scriptures among the non-Roman Catholic churches. In 1949 a new Polish translation of the Bible was begun, since the version then in use in most of the churches was already over three hundred years old. In 1966 the New Testament was published in the new translation, and in 1975 the entire Bible. A new Catholic translation, the "Millennium Bible", which appeared in 1965, represents a "biblical renewal of Polish Catholicism . . .".³⁹ A colour illustrated edition of the New Testament which appeared in 1978-79 was very popular, and its two editions quickly sold out. The production of portions of the Bible on cassette for the visually handicapped has also received overwhelmingly positive response. The past few years have seen a tremendous increase in the demand for Bibles in Poland, mostly from Catholics. In spite of the difficult economic and social conditions of recent years, which have led to an acute paper shortage, the Bible Society was still able to sell over a hundred thousand Bibles last year, and replenished paper stocks have given rise to hopes of an even greater circulation this year.

Since January 1982 the member churches of PEC, along with the Adventists and Jews, have had the opportunity of broadcasting their religious services on Polish radio. On the first and third Sunday of each month, 30-40 minutes is available for religious broadcasting. Each church has a turn three or four times a year. This is an ecumenical endeavour, both in the coordination of the project, and by virtue of the fact that

members listen to the broadcasts of other churches. This opportunity was made possible on the basis of the agreements signed at Gdańsk in August 1980 between the government and Solidarity, which initially applied to Roman Catholic masses.

Alongside the ecumenical activity which takes place among the member churches of the PEC, much valuable progress has been achieved in relations with the Roman Catholic Church. The mandate for this activity is clear. "There is no doubt that in Poland there is a growing consciousness that without the Roman Catholic Church our ecumenism cannot be complete."⁴⁰ An important first step in establishing ecumenical relations between the PEC and the Roman Catholic Church was the setting up of a Mixed Commission in 1974. Its original purpose was to coordinate preparations for the international Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, but it developed into a forum for discussion of other practical ecumenical concerns. In 1977, a Sub-Commission for Dialogue was created to discuss the WCC document from Accra on baptism. A second round of talks was conducted to deal with the problem of mixed marriages. Though there has been some progress, it is evident that in this regard the parties are still at the beginning of the road.

A new phase of ecumenical relations began with the appointment of the new Polish Primate, Archbishop Glemp. A large PEC delegation attended his inauguration ceremony, and on the following day he received an official PEC delegation. Several weeks later the Primate visited the offices of the PEC in Warsaw, the first Primate to do so. Another landmark came when Archbishop Glemp delivered a sermon in the Orthodox Church in Warsaw in the service which closed the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 1982. In light of the long history of suspicion and mutual recrimination which have characterised ecumenical relations in Poland, these events can be considered true milestones.

Two symposia organised last year by the Catholic Theological Academy of Warsaw also represent hopeful signs. Both were intended to bring together Catholic and Protestant theologians to discuss Martin Luther's thought as the subject of ecumenical reflection. One Catholic scholar stated at the conclusion of the conference: "We, the Catholics of today, need not fear Luther; we had feared him but we did not know why".⁴¹ An ecumenical worship and prayer service was also held in the course of the conference. Finally, the flow of material aid to Poland from Christian organisations abroad for distribution by the PEC seems also to have produced some positive developments in ecumenical relations. Since aid was often given strictly on the basis of need, without reference to confession, Poles who might not have met otherwise have come into contact with each other across confessional lines. Such contacts are especially significant when they involve lay people. Where old barriers of mistrust and antagonism have been broken down and been replaced by

ties of goodwill and thanksgiving, there are grounds for hope that future generations of Poles need not be burdened with the hurts and resentments inherited from the past.

Conclusions

The experiences of Polish Protestants since the Second World War in the midst of a Catholic nation and a socialist State have been shaped by a variety of factors, and may be interpreted in various ways. The attainment of legal recognition and equal status under the law with the dominant Roman Catholic Church were unprecedented for the majority of Poland's Protestants and psychologically very significant. Any social or political movement, therefore, which appears to be moving in the direction of increased influence and control of Polish culture and public policy by the Roman Catholic Church will be regarded with uneasiness and concern by most Polish Protestants.

Signs of increasing spiritual and intellectual vitality in the Protestant Churches are persistent and clear. There are still many problems to be overcome — material, social and theological. The theological task presents perhaps the greatest challenge for the future, and the greatest potential. Catholic theologians and Marxists have shown more interest in contemporary Protestant theology and theologians than Polish Protestants have.⁴² It is time, one prominent Protestant spokesman has said, for us to emerge from “. . . the ghetto, which we have built around ourselves”.⁴³ When that happens, Polish Protestants will be able both to reflect constructively on the meaning of their own experience in a dual diaspora, and enter into dialogue as authentic partners with their Catholic and Marxist neighbours, thereby unleashing the same creative forces which helped transform sixteenth century Poland into a model of religious toleration and vibrant Christian faith.

‡ ¹Roman Catholics make up over ninety per cent of the total population of almost 36 million. Polish Protestants number some one hundred thousand members, or roughly three tenths of one percent.

²Norman Davies, *God's Playground*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, Vol. 2, p. 225.

³Alexander Tomský, *Catholic Poland*, Keston: Keston College, 1982, p. 3.

⁴Davies, Vol. 1, p. 166.

⁵Count Valerian Krasiński, *Historical Sketch of the Rise, Progress and Decline of the Reformation in Poland*. London: 1838, Vols. 1-2.

⁶Davies, Vol. 1, p. 160.

⁷Bishop Julius Bursche, head of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church between the wars, died in a Nazi concentration camp, as did fifteen other Lutheran pastors.

⁸Jan Józef Lipski, “Two Fatherlands — Two Patriotisms”, in *Survey* (London) Vol. 26, No. 3 (116), Summer 1982, part 1, p. 173; first appeared in Polish in *Kultura* (Paris), No. 10/409, October 1981.

⁹Janusz Narzyński, “Zur Geschichte des Luthertums in Polen vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert”, in Gerhard Bassarak, ed., *Ökumene in Polen*. Berlin (GDR): Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1982, p. 70.

¹⁰Oskar Bartel, *Protestantyzm w Polsce*. Warsaw: Zwiastun, 1963, p. 13.

¹¹The opinion, for example, of Gastpary in Ks. dr W. Gastpary, *Historia Kościoła w Polsce*, Warsaw: Chrześcijańska Akademia Teologiczna, 1979, p. 118.

¹²Narzyński, p. 72.

¹³Gastpary, p. 120.

¹⁴Davies, Vol. 1, p. 191.

¹⁵Gastpary, p. 107.

¹⁶Besides the Roman Catholics and those Protestants affiliated with the Polish Ecumenical Council, there are Orthodox, Old Catholics, Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, Jews, Karaites, Mormons, Christian Scientists, Unitarians and other smaller groups.

¹⁷Article 114 of the March (1921) Constitution of the Second Republic, had accorded the Roman Catholic Church a "dominant position among the religions enjoying equal rights in the State".

¹⁸Narzyński, p. 49.

¹⁹Cf. Davies's discussion of this question, Vol. 1, pp. 197ff.

²⁰Narzyński, p. 91.

²¹Janusz Narzyński, "Evangelisch-Augsburgische Kirche in Polen", in Rene Leudesdorff, *Ökumene in Polen*, Frankfurt: 1972, p. 26.

²²Narzyński (Bassarak), p. 95.

²³*Otskirchliche Information*, June 1979, p. 6.

²⁴Narzyński (Bassarak), p. 100.

²⁵Gastpary, pp. 102-3.

²⁶Jan Niewieczyża, "Die Evangelisch-reformierte Kirche in Polen", in Leudesdorff, p. 384.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁸Cf. the article describing the rebuilding of the Reformed congregation in Warsaw, by Wanda Trandowska, "Feniks z popiołów", in *Jednota*, Nos. 7-8, 1976, p. 25.

²⁹Mieczysław Kwiecień, "Die Freikirchen in Polen", in Bassarak, p. 107. Kneifel quotes a somewhat lower figure in Kneifel, Eduard, *Geschichte der Evangelisch-Augsburgischen Kirche in Polen*, Niedermarschacht über Winsen/Luhe: 1962, p. 251.

³⁰Zdzisław Pawlik, "Die Polnische Kirche der Christen-Baptisten", in Leudesdorff, p. 41.

³¹Kwiecień, p. 110.

³²See the article entitled "Więcej niż ekumenizm", by G.P., in *Więz* 1 (styczeń) 1983, pp. 121-2.

³³Witold Benedyktowicz, "Die Methodistische Kirche in Polen", in Leudesdorff, p. 37.

³⁴Kwiecień (Leudesdorff), p. 37.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁶Karol Karski, in Bassarak, p. 141.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 142.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹Barbara Enholc-Narzyńska, in Bassarak, p. 177.

⁴⁰*ChSS Information Bulletin*, No. 12, December 1982, p. 4.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴²According to Karol Karski in "Protestantische Theologie in Blockwinkel polnischer Marxisten und Katholiken", in Moltmann/Stöhr, eds., *Begegnung mit Polen*, Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1974, pp. 159ff.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 159.