

ARTICLES AND DISSERTATIONS

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JOHN FOXE'S *RERUM IN ECCLESIA GESTARUM* [...] *COMMENTARII* IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY POLISH TRANSLATION

Abstract

This paper is devoted to the Polish translation of John Foxe's famous *Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum* on Christian martyrs, authored by a Calvinist writer, printer and composer Cyprian Bazylik. His monumental *Historyja o srogim prześladowaniu Kościoła Bożego* (1567) was compiled from the works of John Foxe, Jean Crespin and Heinrich Pantaleon, supplemented with Jan van Utenhove's account of the thrilling odyssey of the members of the London's Foreign Church led by Jan Łaski. The author aimed at creation of a complete account of the persecuted Church throughout Europe, starting from John Wycliff to 1563. *Historyja* is the most significant witness of the impact of Foxe's theological thought and ideas on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Keywords: John Foxe, Cyprian Bazylik, martyrology, Calvinism, translation, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

Słowa kluczowe: John Foxe, Cyprian Bazylik, martyrologia, kalwinizm, tłumaczenie, Rzeczpospolita polsko-litewska

Confessional identity is a function of various and complex factors that, apart from cultural and religious memory, also consist in the unique experience of one's own faith as responsive and dynamic, defined often times in opposition or even in conflict with others. Therefore, the martyrological literature seemed a tool useful in creating "new"

and fully committed Christians. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the dynamic development of this type of writing was determined not only by an undeniable growth in the number of the martyrs to the cause of faith, but also — and this is of the utmost importance here — was caused by noticing (so to speak) the persuasive role of martyrdom as such. *Sanguis martyrum semen Christianorum*.

At least 5 000 Christians of various denominations were killed for their faith in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Western Europe (Gregory, 2001, p. 6). However, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth did not participate in these atrocities. That is why Cyprian Bazylik, a Calvinist writer, could neither find nor include in his work even a single name or story of a Polish martyr in his monumental *Historija o srogim prześladowaniu Kościoła Bożego, w której są wypisane sprawy onych męczenników, którzy, poczynszy od Wiklefa i Husa, aż do tego naszego wieku w niemieckiej ziemi, we Francyje, Anglije, Flandryje, we włoskiej ziemi, w Hiszpaniye i w inszych ziemiach prawdę ewangeliję świętę krwią swą zapieczętownali* [*History of the Harsh Persecution of the God's Church containing stories of those martyrs, who, starting from Wycliff and Hus, till our day... sealed the sacred truth of Gospel with their blood*], published in Brest in 1567. This lack of native martyrs seemed, however, a sort of rhetorical deficit and one that could be compensated for by referring to the experiences of other nations, significant in their scope and severity.

Cyprian Bazylik (1535 – ca. 1600), or Cyprian of Sieradz (Ciprianus Siradiensis) as he was initially known, was born a burgher. His career progressed mostly thanks to the patronage of Duke Mikołaj Radziwiłł the Black and then — after his death — to Albert (Olbrycht) Łaski, nephew of John à Lasco (Jan Łaski), the voyvod of Sieradz (cf. Kot, 1936; Kot, 1956; Górski, 1949; Barycz, 1971, p. 679-699). In 1557, Cyprian's accomplishments attracted the attention of Jacobus Heraclides Basilicus — a carpet-bagger and a humanist, more than likely Charles V's political agent, who claimed to be a descendent of Heracles as well as a prince of two Greek islands, and was fated to become the ruler [*bospodar*] of Moldavia, not without military support from the above-mentioned Albert Łaski (Stoy, 1992; Czamańska, 1999). During his stay in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Jacobus, in recognition of Cyprian's achievements in liberal arts, formally included him in his heraldic family, and granted him his own last name: Basilicus (Polish form: Bazylik). Ten years later, in the year of publishing *Historija o srogim prześladowaniu Kościoła Bożego*, Cyprian Bazylik was already a well-known composer and a recognised author of occasional poems and religious hymns, but the martyrology was his first literary work of size and of significance. Starting from around 1563, he replaced Stanisław Murmelius as the head of Radziwiłł's famous printing house in Brest (Lithuania), working mostly for the benefit of the Calvinist community

(Kawecka-Gryczowa, Korotajowa and Krajewski, 1969, p. 66, 190). The later years of Bazylik's life brought us his other significant translations.¹

Bazylik's *History of Harsh Persecution of the God's Church* [...] is a compilation of three long martyrologies printed in the Swiss publishing houses. Two of them were *Actiones et monimenta martyrum* (Geneva, 1560) by Jean Crespin and *Martyrum historia* (Basel, 1563) by Heinrich Pantaleon, but the crucial role was assigned to John Foxe's *Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum* [...] *commentarii* (Basel, 1559), which exerted the greatest influence on the Polish author. This is what he wrote about his own sources:

Though many learned people used to write such histories, both in previous centuries as well as in our lifetime, those who wrote them most sufficiently, collecting from different sources, were: John Foxe the Englishman, Heinrich Pantaleon and Jean Crispin. I made one book of those three, picking from each of them stories according to the order of years — whatever happened in which year and in which place — and translated them into the Polish language, partly fulfilling orders of some highly born lords and partly answering other pious people's requests. (Bazylik, 1567, f. [*****] r.)²

John Foxe was not an unknown personage in the Commonwealth. As a protégé of Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, Foxe had an opportunity to meet John à Lasco, who was also then enjoying her financial support, as early as in the first half of the 1550s. What is more, in later years it was à Lasco, already a spiritual leader of the Calvinists of Małopolska, who sought, quite successfully, a safe place in Samogitia for the Duchess and her second husband Richard Bertie to help them avoid persecution. This story was described in the 1570 *Acts and Monuments*, where Foxe also mentioned his Polish acquaintance (cf. Cross 1990; Franklin Harkrider, 2008, p. 110). During that time, John Foxe began to enjoy some recognition in the Commonwealth, and it was no surprise that Polish Antitrinitarians pinned their hopes on him to promote their ideas. One of their leading theologians, Szymon Budny, in a letter to Foxe dated from

¹ *Historija o żywocie i znacnych sprawach Jerzego Kastryjota, którego pospolicie Szekanderbergiem zowią* [...], C. Bazylik, Brześć 1569, contains translation of two works by Marin Barletti: *De vita, moribus ac rebus praecipue adversus Turcas gestis, Georgii Castrioti* [...] (1508-1510) and *De obsidione Scodrensi* (1504). *Historija spraw Atyle, króla węgierskiego* [...], M. Wirzbięta, Kraków 1574 is a translation of Miklós Oláh's *Attila, sine de rebus, bello paceque ab eo gestis* (1537). *O poprawie Rzeczypospolitej księgi czwarte* [...], J. Karcan, Łosk 1577 is a translation of Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski's *De republica emendanda* (1551).

² Polish text: „Aczkolwiek takowe historyje pisalo wiele osób uczonych tak przed onemi dawnemi czasy, jako i za naszej pamięci, ale między inszemi, z drugich zebrawszy, nadostateczniej pisali: Jan Foxus Angielczyk, Henryk Pantaleon a Jan Crispin, z których troich ksiąg uczynilem ja jedne księgi, wybierając z każdego z nich historyje wedle porządku lat — którego się roku co i na którym mieściu dzialo — i przelożyłem je na polski język, czyniąc dosyć w tej mierze częścią zleceniu niektórych wielkiego stanu ludzi, częścią prośbie ludzi inszych pobożnych”.

the 4 May 1574, which was most probably delivered to the addressee by an English merchant, Ralph Rutter, presented his views on the divinity of both Christ and the Holy Ghost (Kot, 1935, p. 111; Kot, 1935-1936, p. 219-221). The letter is preserved as a manuscript in the Bodleian Library. Then in 1583, Foxe, in his composition entitled *De Christo gratis iustificante contra Osorianum iustitiam, caeterosque eiusdem inhaerentis iustitiae patronos, Stanislaum Hosium, amica et modesta defensio* engaged himself in a polemic with the most influential (yet late at the time) Polish Catholic theologian, cardinal Stanislaus Hosius. *The History* by Bazylik remains the only Polish translation of Foxe's work.

Although the English edition of Foxe's martyrology was already available in 1563, the Polish writer was still using the Latin version. His choice should be of no surprise since until the second half of the eighteenth century there was no Polish translation of any English vernacular writings. An extraordinary exception seems to be a translation of Henry Montagu's moralistic treaty, *Manchester al Mondo. Contemplatio mortis & immortalitatis* (1631) made by Wiktoryn Eutanazjusz, who is, however, believed to be of English or Scottish origin (Koropeczyk, 1984).³ Apart from England, sixteenth-century Europe saw only early Latin editions (from 1554 and 1559) of Foxe's martyrology, thus making Bazylik's case quite typical (Evenden and Freeman, 2011, p. 58-60).

Shortly after his escape from Queen Mary's England, Foxe compiled his first martyrological work *Commentarii rerum in Ecclesia gestarum [...]* from different materials and published it in Strasbourg in 1554.⁴ This small book, printed *in octavo* in the cheapest possible way, brings particular attention to the person of John Wycliff and his followers (as Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman showed, this part had been compiled from two sources: *Chronica maior* by Thomas Walsingham and *Fasciculi Zizaniorum* delivered to Foxe by John Bale), and then to the Czech reformers and Savonarola; the historical narrative is accompanied by antipapal aphorisms and different documents (Evenden and Freeman, 2011, p. 40-46). Foxe's *Commentarii [...]* had a significant circle of readers (the book was republished in 1564; see: King, 2006, p. 74) and copies of it can still be found in Polish and other European libraries.

After having moved to Basel, where he joined his friend, John Bale, who was already employed at Johannes Oporinus's printing house, Foxe prepared an extended version of his martyrology, entitled *Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum [...] commentarii* (1559), and published it at his employer's press. Only five years earlier, Sebastian Castellio's famous treatise *De haereticis an sint persequendi* was printed in the same house. Oporinus was par-

³ W. Eutanazjusz, *Manchester al mondo. Contemplatio mortis et immortalitatis. Rozmyślanie o śmierci i nieśmiertelności, z angielskiego języka na polski przetłumaczone*, [no publisher], Kraków 1648.

⁴ *Commentarii rerum in Ecclesia gestarum, maximarumque per totam Europam, persecutionum, a Vuiclevi temporibus ad hanc usque aetatem descriptio. Liber primus. Autore Ioanne Foxo Anglo*, W. Rihel, Strasbourg 1554.

tial to irenic attitudes and views, so it is possible that he considered Foxe's martyrology as a voice against any religious persecutions (King, 2007, p. 77).

Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum [...] changed the perspective introduced in *Commentarii* [...] and added the history of the martyrdom of Protestants in England and Scotland, including the Marian persecutions. The full title is significant: *Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum, quae postremis et periculosis his temporibus evenerunt maximarumque, per Europam persecutionum ac sanctorum Dei martyrum caeterarumque rerum si quae insignioris exempli sint, digesti per regna et nationes commentarii*, and brings the whole narrative of the "holy Divine martyrs" into apocalyptic context, referring to St. Paul's (Ad Timotheum 3, 1) words: "[...] hoc autem scito quod in novissimis diebus instabunt tempora periculosa" (Evenden and Freeman, 2011, p. 79). The author was helped by many informers (above all John Bale and Edmund Grindal), and he used different documents as well as historiographical works (Evenden and Freeman, 2011, p. 74-75), including Matthias Flacius Illyricus' *Catalogus testium veritatis* (1556) and *Iohannis Hus et Hieronymi Pragensis confessorum Christi historia et monumenta* (1558). This Basel martyrology was much more extensive than the small book printed in Strasbourg, and had 732 pages, woodcuts, dedicatory poems, eulogies and epitaphs dedicated to the martyrs (King, 2007, p. 78-80). Foxe included the text of his previous work (with some changes), added parts telling the history of the Church in England until the end of King Edward's reign, and extended the narrative to the Marian persecutions. He used and recycled not only other authors' works and documents but also his own historiographical or theological tracts, giving them a new framework and subjecting them to new ideas (Evenden and Freeman, 2011, p. 90-93).

Cyprian Bazylik seemed to follow Foxe's liberty of compilation. The intertextual relationships between the three martyrologies (Crespin's, Pantaleon's and Foxe's) he employed and abridged, as well as the size of his work (over 400 cards *in folio*), make it extremely difficult to determine precisely to what extent *The History of Harsh Persecution* [...] is dependent on *Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum* [...]. The 1560 Latin version of Jean Crespin's *Actiones et monumenta martyrum*, which Bazylik also used, had already incorporated significant portions of the first version of Foxe's martyrology, *Commentarii rerum in Ecclesia gestarum* [...] (Evenden and Freeman, 2011, p. 59-60). With the *Martyrum historia* [...], published in 1563, Heinrich Pantaleon acted in a similar manner and pointed out in his preface that it was a long-expected *pars secunda* of the work by Foxe, his *amicus singularis*, whom he worked with in a Basel printing house (Pantaleon, 1563, f. 3v). In fact, all those martyrologists turned out to be compilers, and every subsequent edition of their compositions was richer and more extensive, building on the results of the works of their predecessors. It thus seems feasible to invoke Donald R. Kelley's (Kelley, 1972, p. 1325) observation (he also mentions Sleyden and Illyricus in this context), that all those authors created "a kind of Protestant *Pleiade*," a literary circle, the members of

which shared a common historical perspective and fund of experience, as well as an ideological commitment.

Joining the ‘Pleiade’, Bazylik is often challenged by the dilemma of choosing between different narrative versions of the same events. In such situations he does not always follow Foxe, but even when turning to the other authors, he includes quotations from *Rerum in ecclesia gestarum* [...], especially in the initial and prominent passages of the particular stories. For example, in the story about Hus, built mostly from literary material taken from Crespin’s and Pantaleon’s works, Bazylik still opens with Foxe’s introductory sentence:

During that council of Constanz in the year 1415, there was a motion against Jan Hus whom the priests were eagerly trying to execute, but since they could not do it openly, having fear of the Czechs, they acted deviously [...]. (Bazylik, 1567, f. 6 r.)⁵

Similarly, in the description of Jerome of Prague’s martyrdom, based mostly on Crespin’s and Pantaleon’s version of the story, the Polish author, in spite of his current model, decides to refer to passages from Foxe’s own introduction:

As these two, Jan Hus and Jerome of Prague, were connected in their lives, studying together and professing God together, so they were equal in their deaths; because when [Jerome] found out that Jan Hus had been summoned to Constanz, he went there and was entreating Hus, who had already been imprisoned, to regard that fortitude he owed to his Master, Christ. (Bazylik, 1567, f. 11 r.)⁶

And although Foxe’s *exordium* is more extensive, this reference seems enough to link the Polish text to the most celebrated of Bazylik’s literary models. His translation

⁵ Polish text: “Na tym tam konstancyjeńskim koncylium była rzecz o Janie Husie roku 1415, którego pilnie usiłowali zgubić księża, a iż tego nie mogli tak jawnie uczynić, bojąc się Czechów, chytrze w tym postąpili [...]”. Latin text by Foxe: “In hoc interim concilio agitatum est de Ioanno Husso, anno 1415, quem omnibus modis ex vita eripere sudant ecclesiastici proceres. Verum cum id aperta ratione non posse se intelligerent, propter Bohemorum potentiam, ac vires, quibus tum ille communitus erat, obliquis consiliis rem aggreduuntur [...]” (Foxe, 1559, p. 61).

⁶ Polish text: “Jako ci dwa złączeni byli za żywota, Jan Hus i Jeronim z Pragi, którzy też i spólnie się uczyli, i spólnie Pana wyznawali, tak też i w śmierci sobie byli równi, abowiem dowiedziawszy się, iż Jana Husa pozwano do Konstancyjej, przyjechał tam [Hieronim] i upominał Husa, już wsadzonego do więzienia, aby pamiętał na stateczność, którą był winien Mistrzowi swemu, Krystusowi”. Latin text by Foxe: “Tum ut in omni vita illi coniunctissimus erat, ita nec morte a veteri sodali ac pietatis socio ad modum distrahebatur. [...] Hieronymus hic simulatque Ioannum Hussum ad concilium accitum, ac iam iam iturum intelligeret, sedulo officio adest amico suo, consolatur, rogat, ac ad animat, ut memor virtutis ac constantiae suae, rem graviter gerat pro Christo ac veritatis incolumitate” (Foxe, 1559, p. 67).

is usually far from faithful to the original. Quite often it takes a form of an intelligent abridgement with elements of paraphrase. No doubt, the Polish author is sensitive to the rhetorical values of Foxe's prose, but he cares more for action and the progress of events. That is why in the remainder of Jerome's story he chooses mostly Crespin's version as the more dynamic. However, even in this he shortens and condenses, caring mostly for emotional and the edifying passages, such as Jerome's words before execution or Hus's prophecy about Luther-swan appearing one hundred years after the martyrdom of Hus (a goose).

Most often, Bazylik tends to abridgement, summarises larger passages, and is picking from Foxe's work phrases or sentences that captured his attention because of their rhetorical features or their indispensability to the plot. He also gives priority to elements charged with emotion and having didactic value, as well as to those generating vividness and dynamism of narrative. Nevertheless, the true aim of his endeavour was to create a monumental martyrology of Europe, organised in the form of annals, which would combine within itself the heritage of Protestant Churches of various origins.

As a translator and compiler, Bazylik acted quite boldly and clearly envisioned a different kind of a reader than Foxe had for his own work. Following him in choosing a proper narration, Bazylik maintained a kind of detachment from the overly complicated theological issues that Foxe introduced as autonomous discourses, interpolated documents, declarations, and reports of interrogations. It cannot be denied that Bazylik did translate quite a few passages of purely doctrinal character, but when it came to longer discourses of a similar nature he seemed to lose patience and thus left them out or shortened them significantly. For instance, in the part about Wycliff, he translated the relatively short *Protestatio I. Vuiclevi* which should have been followed by thorough and theologically subtle *Conclusiones*. He skipped them, however, saying:

Numerous are the articles of Wycliff's *Conclusiones* that we shall omit and those especially that tell about the papal domination, which, as we all know now, has no power over the spirit and body of the Lord's Church. (Bazylik, 1567, f. 1 r.)⁷

This inclination of Bazylik is especially clear in his translation of the story of John Hooper's trial and martyrdom, which he shortened by three-quarters, and in a similarly abridged story of John Philpot. Although the Polish writer did not disdain the theological parts, it was the very evidence of martyrdom, that "staidness of pious and devout people" (Bazylik, 1567, f. 178 r.), which seemed truly crucial to his own work; hence his

⁷ Polish text: "Artykułów *Konkluzyj* Wiklefowych wiele barzo jest, które my dla przedłużenia opuszczamy, a zwłaszcza te, które zwierzchność papieską borzą, abowiem już o tym wątpienia niemasz między wiernymi, że papież nie ma żadnej zwierzchności dusznej ani cielesnej w Kościele Bożym [...]".

emphasis on that. Appositely, the documentary sources were also of lesser importance to him. Instead, Bazylik focused on the very dynamism of the story and underlined the dramatic contrast between the Church of the Antichrist and that of the holy martyrs, who sealed her authenticity and truth with their own blood.

The number of Reformation and Proto-Reformation martyrs documented and listed by Foxe found its place in Bazylik's work almost without any abridgements. Amongst the very few inexplicable omissions is the story of William Tyndale, so important for Foxe himself. Possibly the Polish translator had a defective copy of Foxe's work. Bazylik left out as well the history of William Tayler's martyrdom. However, that particular story had a very brief mention even in Foxe's Latin edition of 1559 (he developed it in the subsequent English editions). Moreover, Bazylik was consistent in omitting all poetic works honouring martyrs, which were quite abundant in the Latin original, some of them even of Foxe's own composition. Other omissions appear to owe themselves either to the haste for which Bazylik excused himself in the preface, or to the different type of reader he envisioned — less interested in theological subtleties and more in morals. Therefore, *The History* [...] includes the stories, or at least notes, concerning almost all the martyrs presented by Foxe in the Latin edition, and also supplements it with those listed by Crespin and Pantaleon, but not included in Foxe's work. Interestingly enough, Foxe would supplement his subsequent English editions in the same way, using the same martyrologies. Both writers aspired to annalistic completeness and order, and independently of each other seem to have achieved similar results.

The Polish writer indeed set for himself an extremely ambitious task — he decided to create, “in a chronological order” and using three extensive martyrologies, the complete annals of the persecuted Church in Europe beginning with Wycliff and proceeding right up to 1563. Apart from John Foxe himself, to whom Bazylik owed the model of such continuous narrative, and perhaps Adriaan van Haemstede, who was also partly dependent on the Englishman, the Polish writer did not have other predecessors aiming to achieve such an objective. It should be pointed out that other existing martyrologies, which were being avidly published in Protestant circles, neither developed that unbroken and continuous narrative of almost chronicle-like character, nor introduced so widespread a geographical spectrum encompassing the martyrs of various nationalities coming from different countries (Evenden and, Freeman, 2011, p. 56-71). Being under the influence of *Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum* [...], Bazylik, quite paradoxically, anticipated and forecast, to a certain extent, that vision of an ecclesiastical history, which Foxe completed later in his *Acts and Monuments*.

Emulating the idea of the English historiographer, Bazylik endeavoured to create a story of both the community persecuted for not renouncing God's truth till bloodshed, and the “invisible” Church standing up to the power of the Antichrist that, by

harassing the followers of Christ, was an inevitable sign that the end of the world was coming. The Polish writer perceived the events that took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth century as “the second persecution” that was to precede Parousia — hence his apocalyptic tone. Such an interpretation of history is especially emphasised in the preface:

There it was, as I say, and in the mysteries revealed in Patmos [by God] that the first persecution began, and lasted till the Roman Empire was still ruling the world over. And the second has just begun with the coming of the Antichrist. [...] Many [...] holy people have already lectured that the Antichrist is to reside in Rome and from there to persecute pious Christians. (Bazylik, 1567, f. [***] r. – [***] v., f. [****] r.)⁸

Therefore, the ultimate goal that the Brest printer wanted to achieve was to write the history of the true Church remaining in an endless opposition to papal Rome. To do so he had to recover all “pious Christians” who had fallen victim to the Antichrist from the mists of time, and thus to present and put in order the crowds of Protestant martyrs who, together with the medieval dissenters, formed the suffering yet mystic Body of Christ.

It was this narrative of persecution that was to provide an answer to a most crucial question of Catholic historiography, that is, where was that Church of yours before Luther's appearance? (Gordon, 1996). Thus, it turned out that the true Church had always been present, or at least had existed for a long time, and manifested itself in the bravery and suffering of those Christians who kept challenging the Pope's power (Zakai, 1987, p. 301). By developing a story about the invisible, yet always present and forever persecuted Church, and thus following Foxe, Bazylik made a remarkably important attempt to repossess the past for Protestant historiography, and to write the history of the Church anew in order to legitimise Protestant communities and acknowledge their rightful place in the history of salvation (Kess, 2008, p. 1-2). Therefore, not only did he compile, as he himself noted, “the history of martyrs,” but he also narrated, “in chronological order the events and actions of the Lord's Church all over Europe that takes

⁸ Polish text: “Tam tedy, jako powiedam, w tych tajemnicach na wyspie Patmos objawionych, oznajmuję [Bóg] pierwsze prześladowanie, które, począwszy się za czasów postanowienia napierwszego Kościoła, trwało przez on czas, póki jeszcze w całości trwało państwo rzymskie, gdy panowało wszytkiemu światu, a wtóre ukazuje, które się miało począć od Antykrysta. [...] Wiele [...] ludzi świętych wykladało ten Babilon o Rzymie, a opowiedali, iż w Rzymie miał nastać Antykryst, prześladowca prawdziwych krześcijanów”.

pride in Christ” (Bazylik, 1567, f. 168 v.)⁹. It is this idea that proves Foxe’s influence on the work of the Polish writer.

Bazylik it seems wanted to incorporate into his work Polish issues. However, in the 16th century Commonwealth there were no religious martyrs, apart from an unfortunate eighty-year-old woman, Melchiorowa Weigel, most probably a Judaiser, who was burnt at the stake in 1539 in Kraków for denying Christ’s divinity (Tazbir, 2009, p. 45). The writer thus decided to supplement his rich narrative with a full translation (along with a preface addressed to Albert Łaski, his new patron) of Jan Utenhove’s *Simplex et fidelis narratio de instituta ac demum dissipata Belgarum aliorumque peregrinorum in Anglia [...]*, published in Basel at Johannes Oporinus’s house in 1560 [*The History of the Establishment and Dispersion of the Foreign Church in England*]. Although that North Sea and Baltic odyssey of the London Foreign Church led by John à Lasco did not fulfil all the criteria of martyrdom, yet it could be treated as a kind of religious persecution (mainly by the Lutherans, who denied the exiles any shelter). No doubt, Bazylik, by including this account into his work, was also paying compliment to the pious Protestant family of his patron. However, the attempt was not very successful; Albert Łaski, who did not share heroic devotion of his uncle, abandoned Calvinism two years after Bazylik’s work had been published and converted to Catholicism, more than likely for political reasons.

We do not know much about the popularity of Bazylik’s martyrology, which was published in only one edition. In the 1680s, it was Erazm Otwinowski’s poetic cycle *Affairs or Histories of Notable Women* that provided a trace of how Bazylik’s work was received. Here, Otwinowski devoted two small poems to praise the English female martyrs, Anne Askew and the “Nine Day Queen”, Lady Jane Grey. What is more, in his *Preface to Christian Women*, Otwinowski also recommended reading Bazylik’s martyrology and taught that true Christians could always be recognised by being invariably exposed to the “Antichrist’s tyranny” (Otwinowski, 1999, p. 71-72; Wilczek, 1994, p. 82-84). In the tolerant Commonwealth, where in spite of various and undeniable increasing instances of religious coercion the stakes were not yet burning, the narrative about the persecuted Evangelicals of Western Europe (and thanks to Foxe — mostly those of English nationality) started to become an important factor in constructing confessional identity and legitimising a new ecclesiastical community.

Transl. Agnieszka Matusiak

⁹ Polish text: “[...] historyje postępów abo spraw Kościoła Bożego wedle porządku lat, a nie jednego tylko mieśca, ale snadź mało nie wszyskiej Europy, która się Krystusem Panem chlubi [...]”.

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