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## Seventeenth-century Prayer Books of Cistercian Nuns in the Collection of the Parish Library of St Bartholomew and St Hedwig in Trzebnica<sup>1</sup>

Siedemnastowieczne modlitewniki cysterek w zbiorach Biblioteki  
Parafii św. Bartłomieja i św. Jadwigi w Trzebnicy

**ABSTRACT:** Part of a collection held by Cistercian nuns was deposited in the Library of Trzebnica Parish. Among other works there are three manuscript prayer books dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. *Spiritual Meditations*, dedicated to Katarzyna Rajska by Cistercian monk Kasper of Przemęt, is composed of several parts. Among them, the most interesting are Eucharistic ponderings and a treatise on the preparation for a holy death. The work *Instruction of Spiritual Exercise* is unsigned, nor do we know its owner. The main body of this manuscript consists of 40 meditations focused on the reform of religious life. The last exemplar in the collection belonged to Abbess Krystyna Pawłowska and was the gift of a Carmelite nun, Agnieszka of Jesus the Lamb. Its author, Bonawentura Frezer, a Discalced Carmelite, is a known seventeenth-century preacher and writer of mystical literature. His *Protestations and various acts* constitute a collection of mystical monologues on the presence of God. All of these manuscripts were made as an aid for the personal prayers of the Trzebnica nuns and had been long in use. The texts form appropriate research material for historians of religious spirituality in the Baroque period.

**KEY WORDS:** Cistercian nuns, Trzebnica, modern prayer books, Kasper of Przemęt, Bonawentura Frezer

**ABSTRAKT:** Część dawnej kolekcji mniszek cysterskich została zdeponowana w Bibliotece Parafii Trzebnickiej. Są między innymi trzy rękopisy modlitewne pochodzące

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z XVII wieku. *Rozmyślenia duchowne*, dedykowane Katarzynie Rajskiej przez cysterskiego mnicha Kaspera z Przemętu, składają się z kilku części. Wśród nich najciekawszą stanowią rozważania eucharystyczne i traktat o przygotowaniu do świętej śmierci. Praca *Nauka o ćwiczeniu ducha* nie została podpisana, nie daje się ustalić także jej właściciel. Główna część tego manuskryptu składa się z czterdziestu medytacji skoncentrowanych na reformie życia zakonnego. Ostatni przykład z tej kolekcji należał do ksieni Krystyny Pawłowskiej i był darem karmelitanki bosej Agnieszki Jezusa Baranka. Jej autor, Bonawentura Frezer karmelita bosy, był znanym w XVII wieku kaznodzieją i twórcą literatury mistycznej. Jego *Protestacje i akty różne* stanowią zbiór mistycznych monologów w obecności Boga. Wszystkie te rękopisy przygotowano jako pomoc do osobistej modlitwy cysterek i jako takie noszą ślady długotrwałego użytkowania. Teksty te stanowią zatem właściwy materiał badawczy dla historyków duchowości religijnej w okresie baroku.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: cysterki trzebnickie, nowożytne modlitewniki, Kasper z Przemętu, Bonawentura Frezer

## Introduction

The convent of Cistercian nuns in Trzebnica holds a special place in historiography. Nearly as soon as its secularisation process concluded, the convent became an object of interest for researchers, mostly due to the significant role it played in the history of the region. The research, however, pays relatively little attention to the issues of operating the convent in the modern era. Wars and conflicts overwhelming the lands surrounding Trzebnica since the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century made the monastic community search for new relations with various religious centres where the nuns were seeking refuge when in danger and where they could draw patterns for creating domestic relations and building external authority. Some of the fruits of those relations in the field of religious renewal are already being studied. Historians of art have reviewed artefacts of the material culture gathered by the Cistercian nuns at Trzebnica during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when their community was in full bloom and the Saint Hedwig sanctuary had again become an important religious centre in Silesia.<sup>2</sup> Also, historians of literature took interest in the modern cultural

<sup>2</sup> R. Kaczmarek, J. Witkowski, *Kaplica św. Jadwigi w Trzebnicy. Wyposażenie i funkcjonowanie od XIII do XVIII wieku*, [in:] *Cysterki w dziejach i kulturze ziem polskich, dawnej Rzeczypospolitej i Europy Środkowej*, A.M. Wyrwa, A. Kielbasa, J. Swastek (eds.), Poznań 2004, pp. 345–368. Further bibliography listed there. The work by a perennial custodian of the Trzebnica sanctuary, priest Antoni Kielbasa, *Mecenat polskich księń cysterek w Trzebnicy*, Trzebnica 2010, is of a popularising character.

heritage of the convent, thus revealing fascinating details of the bibliophilic passion of the Cistercian nuns.<sup>3</sup>

At the time, the researchers' attention focused on the collection of manuscripts held by the Trzebnica nuns, and its modern *polonica* in particular. The manuscripts had belonged to individual nuns, serving them in religious exercise and daily meditation. Among those who pioneered research in this area are Mieczysław Walter,<sup>4</sup> Helena Szwejkowsk,<sup>5</sup> and Stanisław Pietraszko.<sup>6</sup> The results of their explorations were included in the works of the prominent expert on monastic spirituality, Karol Górski. He also authored the edition of several selected fragments of the manuscript codices written down by Kasper of Przemęt and offered a few to the Trzebnica nuns during his stay in Silesia.<sup>7</sup>

The interruption of this research on the modern religious culture of this eminent female monastic centre in both the ecclesiastic and laic environment must be treated as a significant challenge in the era of the development of research methods on history. Nowadays, these allow for an interdisciplinary approach to numerous issues concerning cultural and social orders. By sharing corresponding outcomes of the research conducted by historians, historians of art or literature, or drawing from sociology or theological science research methods, allows us to elaborate the more comprehensive context of the creation of the Trzebnica convent, which became such a pertinent place in Silesian circles of Sarmatian culture in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

This article presents an update on part of the post-Cistercian library collection from Trzebnica, submitted to the operation of the Cassation Commission in 1810. The largest portion of the collection was deposited in the Central

<sup>3</sup> J. Gwioździk, *Kultura pisma i książki w żeńskich klasztorach dawnej Rzeczypospolitej XVI–XVIII w.*, Katowice 2015.

<sup>4</sup> M. Walter, *Śląskie polonica rękopiśmienne w zbiorach Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej we Wrocławiu*, "Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka" 3 (1948), no. 2, pp. 309–313.

<sup>5</sup> In academic circulation, there is still a catalogue of manuscripts belonging to the Cistercian nuns that today requires completion and verification, made over half a century ago by H. Szwejkowa, *Biblioteka klasztoru cysterek w Trzebnicy*, Wrocław 1955.

<sup>6</sup> S.J. Pietraszko, *Nieznane polonica rękopiśmienne w Trzebnicy*, "Przegląd Zachodni" 7 (1951), vol. 3, no. 4, pp. 558–560.

<sup>7</sup> Edition of a fragment of the prayer book deposited in the University Library in Wrocław, Manuscript Department (hereinafter: BUWr OR), ref. I Q 121, [in:] K. Górski, *Duchowość chrześcijańska*, Wrocław 1978, pp. 150–154. Also see: ibidem, *Kierownictwo duchowe w klasztorach żeńskich w Polsce XVI–XVIII wieku. Teksty i komentarze*, "Textus et studia" 11 (1980), pp. 181–196. On the same topic, also my work: *Polska książka w rękę cysterek trzebnickich. Przykład XVII-wiecznych modlitewników przechowywanych w Bibliotece Uniwersyteckiej we Wrocławiu*, "Świdnickie Studia Teologiczne" 10 (2013), pp. 353–367.

Library, later renamed the Royal University Library, with its seat in Wrocław. A certain percentage of the resources, in unknown circumstances, remained on the spot, that is, in the library of the St Bartholomew Parish. Today, that portion of the collection comprises copious, mostly 19<sup>th</sup> century printed works, once the property of the male provost's office near the Trzebnica convent,<sup>8</sup> as well as a certain number of old printed books, a few dozen manuscripts and one incunable.<sup>9</sup>

A comprehensive assessment of the size of the collection and of the content of the printed books originally held in the nuns' library is very challenging, mostly due to the lack of provenance notes for a significant number of the items. Some of the books contain individual manuscript notes or short dedication inscriptions, suggesting that they were indeed used by the nuns. Today, we can already state that a very large number of codices will obtain no metrics other than the date and place of print. Painstaking work on the elaboration of a reliable evaluation of the resource's content requires time and commitment. I limit this paper to presenting only the manuscript codices acquired by the nuns during the cultural breakthrough in the convent's history. These manuscripts were included in the general collection of the Parish Library, catalogued in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and are dotted with the *H* reference.<sup>10</sup>

The material presented here should be included in the source database for historians ready to undertake the problematics of the development of the Trzebnica convent's culture, which seems to be a desirable direction of the research on the modern history of this powerful monastic centre in Silesia.

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<sup>8</sup> On the inside of the cover pages of these old prints are attached pieces of paper informing of the transfer from Trzebnica provost. The form of these notes indicates the activity of the clerics from the Secularisation Commission during the inventory of the convent's wealth.

<sup>9</sup> Also found on this spot was an old German paper catalogue of these collections. They haven't been submitted to research, however. A *prima facie* review of the collection reveals interesting ascetic, polemic, and historical works, which indicate rather lively relations between their owners and the Jesuit college in Wrocław and Silesian Jesuits from other centres. Worth noting also is the rich collection of liturgical codices, including numerous musical works.

<sup>10</sup> An exception among the manuscripts is a collection of acts of solemn profession, which is without its own reference and is kept in the wooden box *H34*, previously used as storage for another manuscript to protect it from damage. H. Szwejewska believed that the codex was kept in the Archdiocese Archives in Wrocław. Idem, *Biblioteka klasztoru cysterek...*, op. cit., pp. 13–16. The Büsching Commissions provenance notes were not fastened to these manuscripts.

## Małgorzata Rajska's prayer book, Spiritual Meditations

The collection of prayer books for personal use by the nuns begins with a manuscript marked for reference by the Parish Library in Trzebnica as *H6*<sup>11</sup>. The title of this work, developed in a baroque manner, reads: *Spiritual/ Meditations or/a way of perfection that/ shows the learning of piety/ tells any monastic persons how/ to exercise in piety/ live in devotion from virtue to virtue / in order to see God in Zion / through their devout life and death/ in piety. For the one who lives piously/ also dies devoutly.*<sup>12</sup>

The book is in quarto format. The spine of the pages is dyed with red paint; its cardstock covers are secured with light green, smoothly polished parchment with no ornamentation. The book was written carefully in *baroque antiqua* in 184 originally paginated pages, dotted with a double red margin. Four initial as well as 13 final pages containing the summary and prayers added before the binding work was completed<sup>13</sup> were written with the use of *fraktur*, and are not paginated.

The sole distinctions of this modest book are the rubricated titles and introduction to consecutive parts of the text. This suggests the work of an average monastic scriptorium. Presently, the codex is damaged, threatened with the imminent loss of the title page. One must also note the lack of a loose card with effigies of saints, among whom Stanisław Pietraszko had over time distinguished a copied image of Mary the Mother of God of Częstochowa.<sup>14</sup>

The benefactor of the main part of the manuscript remains a Cistercian monk from the abbey in Przemęt (region of Wielkopolska), named Kasper, whose surname, origin and title are unidentifiable based on the available sources.<sup>15</sup> In his dedication, he pointed to the circumstances of the creation of his little work:

<sup>11</sup> Both the form and content of the book were discussed by S.J. Pietraszko, *Nieznane polonica rękopiśmienne...*, op. cit., p. 558 ff, and by H. Szwejkowska, *Biblioteka klasztoru cysterek...*, op. cit., p. 39. The provenance of the manuscript is confirmed based on the handwritten note 'tröbnitzer biliotöck' (sic!) made in quill on the title page, most certainly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Parish Library in Trzebnica (hereinafter: BPTTr), H6, *Rozmyślenia duchowne*, k. [Ir].

<sup>12</sup> BPTTr, H6, *Rozmyślenia duchowne*, k. [Ir]. Polish quotes in the original transcription, except the upper case in the middle of the sentence.

<sup>13</sup> Są to: *Litaniae de Sanctissimo Patre nostro Benedicto*. BPTTr, H6, *Rozmyślenia duchowne*, karty wszyte [IIIr–IVv] oraz *Litaniae de sancta Hedwige* (sic!) oraz *Litaniae de sancto Bernardo*. Ibidem, k. [191r–197v].

<sup>14</sup> S.J. Pietraszko, *Nieznane polonica rękopiśmienne...*, op. cit., p. 558.

<sup>15</sup> A memoir of the abbey in Przemęt deposited in the State Archive in Poznań (hereinafter: APP) contains inscriptions by monks starting no sooner than 1748. APP, Cistercian Abbey

This way of perfection which was written during a miserable and lamented exile from Poland in the famous cloister of Kamieniec / to the Reverend in Christ Miss Małgorzata Rajska, a nun from the Trzebnica Holy Cistercian Convent in sign of monastic love, I willingly offer Kasper Prevost of the famous Przemęt abbey in the year one thousand six hundred fifty-five on the fourteenth day of November.<sup>16</sup>

Based on the above inscription, one can mark the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1655 as the date of the finalisation of the work on the text. The date falls in the period when, as a result of the threat of direct war by the Swedish, then the Brandenburg army, the monks from the small abbey in Przemęt were forced to seek refuge in Silesia.<sup>17</sup>

It remains hard to state with certainty whether Kasper of Przemęt was the author of the text or only acted as a copyist or compiler. The catalogue of the Przemęt Library prepared in the twilight of the abbey's existence in 1817 contains more than a dozen collections of spiritual meditations – both anonymous and works signed by their authors. The listing lacks information as to the dates when these works were written or edited, nor is it complete. It also doesn't quote the titles penned by the monk Kasper which, however, doesn't prove a lack of creative activity on his part.<sup>18</sup> Karol Górski didn't dispute the authorship of the monk of Przemęt and in fact considered him to be the genuine writer of works in this and a few other collections of monastic spiritual exercises and meditations from the Trzebnica Cistercian nuns' library.<sup>19</sup>

A conclusive answer to the question of authorship of the source we discuss isn't the most relevant matter. To establish reliable sources of inspiration of the

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in Przemęt, 53/1459/0/-/60. I also have not found any information about provost Kasper in any unit of the above group, which also contains an acute gap in the *actas* from 1611–1661.  
<sup>16</sup> BPTr, H6, *Rozmyślenia duchowne*, k. [Ir-v]. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are by the Wrocław Theological Review (Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny).

<sup>17</sup> In 1622, the abbey in Przemęt counted as many as 22 monks involved in improving the abbey's economy and internal discipline. R. Hołownia, K. Kaczmarek, *Wieleń-Przemęt*, [in:] *Monasticon Cisterciense Poloniae*, vol. 2: *Katalog męskich klasztorów cysterskich na ziemiach polskich i dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, A.M. Wyrwa, J. Strzelczyk, K. Kaczmarek (eds.), Poznań 1999, pp. 341–355.

<sup>18</sup> The catalogue contains 123 titles, among which collections of meditations, considerations, spiritual exercises and retreats constitute an important percentage of the whole set. The following Polish authors are listed: Bishop Stanisław Łubieński, Jesuits Kasper Druźbicki and Melchior Grodziecki, a royal preacher, the Dominican Fabian Bierkowski, and the unknown Wilhelm Staniechurski, Gruszecki, Marciński, Choynecki, Węgrzynowicz. APP, Poznań district, Department of churches and schools, Der Vermögenszustand des Cistercienser Mönchklosters zu Priment, 53/291,0/2/4097, *Catalogus librorum in Bibliotheca Monasterii Prementsis*, pp. 287–320.

<sup>19</sup> K. Górski, *Kierownictwo duchowe...*, op. cit., p. 184.

modern religious culture of the Maiden from Trzebnica, it suffices to indicate the milieu of the Cistercian convent of Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) that participated in the transmission of the prayer book's content. The codex was not written by only one hand – page 45 recto reveals a writer who had a tendency to substitute the digraph 'sz' with the letter 'ß' and who used more frequently the majuscule in the name of 'Jesus.' Pietraszko also considered fragments of the *Spiritual Disciplines*<sup>20</sup> to have been added. It seems that the monk of Prze-  
męt must have dictated at least some parts of the text or ordered it copied by a copyist, possibly from Silesia. One cannot exclude the participation of the local Cistercian monks from the abbey in Kamieniec Żąbkowicki who gave refuge to the monks fleeing the Swedish tempest in Wielkopolska. The question of the milieu in which the codex of our interest was written remains, however, open.

The donor of the codex, the monk Kasper, indicated its addressee, a nun active in the Trzebnica convent but coming from Wielkopolska, Małgorzata Rajska.<sup>21</sup> Analysis of the internal part of the text demonstrates, however, that the work wasn't originally created with the intention to be offered to the nun mentioned in the introduction, rather to a certain, undetermined 'Jadwiga' whom the author addresses in the first part of the meditation.<sup>22</sup> In any case, it wasn't Cecylia Jadwiga Rokicka,<sup>23</sup> who later became the prayer book's owner, possibly already after Rajska's death, and who arguably used it until the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>20</sup> S.J. Pietraszko, *Nieznane polonica rękopiśmienne...*, op. cit., p. 560.

<sup>21</sup> Margaretha Rayska (Małgorzata Rajska) made her vows during the visit of part of the community to the Wielkopolska region in 1639. BPTTr, *Acta of the Vows* [no. 1]. Since at least 1661, she fulfilled in the convent the role of administrator of the monastic treasury. State Archive in Wrocław (hereinafter: APWr), Archive manuscripts, updated and outdated inventories, Urkunden Inhaltsverzeichnis vom Archiv des Fürstlichen Jungfrauen Stifts Trebnitz Ordinis Cisterciensis (hereinafter: ArchTrzebn), 82/167/0/1/118, no. 885 (21<sup>st</sup> of February 1661), no. 889 (8<sup>th</sup> of October 1662). Małgorzata Rajska funded the painting of Saint Hedwig in the main altar in the chapel containing the funder's reliquary. Witkowski, op. cit., p. 357. She died on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1664. BPTTr, H5, *Catalogus Venerabilium Virginum et Sororum Sacri ac Exempti Ordinis Cisterciensis in Ducali Coenobio Trebnicensi Professarum* (...), k. [I]. Rajska had a younger relative, Regina, who in 1683 remained also as a Cistercian nun in the convent in Ołobok. S. Karwowski, *Klasztor pp. cysterek w Ołoboku*, Poznań 1900, p. 43. See also: M. Borkowska, *Skład osobowy polskich klasztorów cysterek w XVII–XVIII w.*, [in:] *Cysterki w dziejach...*, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>22</sup> BPTTr, H6, *Rozmyślenia duchowne*, k. 12v.

<sup>23</sup> Handwritten inscription by the owner: 'Jadwiga Rokicka.' BPTTr, H6, *Rozmyślenia duchowne*, inside of the front cover. Rokicka took vows to the abbess Krystyna Pawłowska on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1680. BPTTr, *Acta of Vows* [no. 46]. In 1725, she became prioress of the community and died two years after that. APWr Archive Manuscripts, Inventories, ArchTrzebn, 82/167/0/1/118, no. 983. BPTTr, H5, *Catalogus...*, k. 4v.

The codex constitutes a collection of meditations and orations. The composition of these texts seems very thoroughly serving the purpose explained in the dedication. The author of the work gathered and compiled the pieces in such a manner that it would be most beneficial for the Cistercian nun in her religious work, making her vocation more perfect and her spiritual development easier. The collection was divided into a few parts, each one dotted with a title, which is then repeated in the table of contents at the end of the manuscript for easier use. The first fragment, covering pages 1v–31r, is entitled: *Exercises or spiritual meditations for those entering the holy order*. This part is composed of 18 separate meditations. Each one starts with an introduction, followed by a few points and concluded by a text of a prayer, most often addressed to Christ. Three shorter meditations complete this part of the prayer book. They are enclosed with the title: *On nine conventual goods described by Saint Bernard in these words. In the convent one lives more purely: Falls more rarely: Rises more promptly: walks more carefully: rests more safely: is besprinkled with the heavenly dew more often: Becomes clean more quickly: dies with greater trust: takes award more abundantly*.

Kasper of Przemęt comprised in his prayer book relatively large fragments containing meditations on the Passion of Christ and the Eucharist. The subsequent pages of the book feature *Meditation on the Passion of Christ comprising forty-five points which studied diligently will give you a taste for devotion and bring spiritual consolation*, composed of a scene of the Passion designed for contemplation. Meditations on the value of the Eucharist open with an *Instruction*, enclosed in the form of a few, not extensive points that are supposed to be meditated on to prepare the nun for the devout reception of the holy communion. Several dozen spiritual meditations are divided into two chapters, to be said before and after reception of the sacrament. These are followed by a series of prayers devoting oneself to God and conveying intentions to be repeated in daily, weekly, or monthly cycles. These intentions consist of a renewal of the resolutions and devoting oneself to God, which evokes the nuns' sacramental practice. Kasper of Przemęt placed in this spot prayers to be said prior to confession and those that accompany the subsequent stages of preparation for the reception of the Eucharist.<sup>24</sup> Among these pieces, there is a very interesting work in the form of a dialogue, entitled: *Pious conversation of a repentant man*

<sup>24</sup> Fragments of the text, covering pages 66v–83v, were published in the contemporary transcription without giving reference to page numbers, under the title of *Discipline*, [in:] K. Górski, *Kierownictwo duchowe...*, op. cit., pp. 184–195, and *ibid.*, *Duchowość chrześcijańska...*, op. cit., pp. 150–153. The title *Discipline* is erroneously drawn from an altogether different fragment of this prayer book, see further.

*with a soul*, which resembles a theological treatise in defence of frequent access to the Sacrament of the Altar.<sup>25</sup>

Another distinguishable thematic bloc proposed by Kasper of Przemęt to the nuns of Trzebnica comprises the various conventual exercises inscribed in the rhythm of the monastic liturgy and in their individual devout practice. Among these, we find meditations to accompany the religious rituals of the Holy Mass,<sup>26</sup> a manner of conducting an examination of the conscience, as well as very interesting ascetic exercises in the form of acts of humility and vigilance to perfect monastic virtues until reaching the state of unification of the soul with God. After this fragment, the prayer book presents a quite elaborate treatise about the preparation for death and is composed of a few shorter works. This part opens with a meditation of the benefits of the conscious practice of preparation for the act of dying, followed by a description of particular solutions to facilitate the soul to piously exit this world. The treatise is concluded by the part *Spiritual Testament*, together with a description of the act of dying. In Rajska's prayer book, this passage ends with several shorter meditations on Christian death.

The composition of this collection to a large extent corresponds to the content of another prayer book previously owned by Trzebnica abbess Krystyna Pawłowska and presently kept in the University Library in Wrocław.<sup>27</sup> Analysis of the handwriting from abbess Pawłowska's book allows us to roughly estimate the date of creation of the main corpus of the manuscript to the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>28</sup> which makes the filiation of the two codices impossible.<sup>29</sup> The content arrangement in Małgorzata Rajska's prayer book seems to be more logical from the point of view of the nuns' training. Therefore, I would be more

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, k. 82r–83r.

<sup>26</sup> Edition without quoting source or references: K. Górski, *Duchowość chrześcijańska...*, op. cit., pp. 154–158.

<sup>27</sup> BUWf OR, I Q 139, k. 4r–50r. The little book belonged to abbess Krystyna Pawłowska, who made a few handwritten notes in the codex before offering it to Franciszka Trzebińska. Krystyna Katarzyna from Wierzбно Pawłowska was born in 1633, professed her vows on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February 1651, and since 1662 fulfilled the role of prioress and took the function of superior in 1674. She died on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 1699. BPTr, H5, *Catalogus...*, k. 2v. APWf, Archive Manuscripts, Inventories, ArchTrzebn, 82/167/0/1/118, no. 889, 894, 897, 898. Trzebińska took vows in 1665 and at the end of her life, she was prioress of her convent. BPTr, H5, *Catalogus...*, k. 5r. APWf, Archive Manuscripts, Inventories, ArchTrzebn, 82/167/0/1/118, no. 999, 1000.

<sup>28</sup> A. Sutowicz, *Polska książka w ręku cysterek trzebnickich...*, op. cit., p. 363, debates Helena Szejnkowska's thesis.

<sup>29</sup> Analysis of the handwriting in the codices BUWf OR, I Q 121, I Q 122, I Q 139 and BPTr, H6 doesn't indicate the work of the same hand.

inclined to adopt the thesis claiming that it was the 1655 version that was the original and that it served copyists, or even the Trzebnica nuns themselves, who worked in the scriptorium, multiplying their reflections of interest.<sup>30</sup> Comparison of the content arrangement of both sources is presented in the following table:

Title of the piece	BPTr H6	BUWr OR I Q 139
About nine monastic goods	31r–33v	196r–197v
Meditation on the Passion of Christ	33v–44v	129v–138v
Instructions [before Communion]	45r–53r	4r–11r
Second part. Invocations after receiving Holy Communion	53r–62v	11r–19r
Short morning exercise	62v–66v	19r–23r
Prayer for the enlightenment of the heart	66v–67v	23r–24r
Act of Humility before Communion. Prayer before Communion. Devout desire of a soul yearning for Jesus Christ before Communion	67v–70v	24r–27v
Meditation before receiving the Holy Sacrament. Pious conversation of a repenting man with the soul	71r–84v	27v–42r
Meditations about frequent reception of Holy Communion	84v–90r	45r–48v
Meditations after receiving Holy Communion or rather, instructions with prayer	90v–92r	48v–50v
Daily intention or the manner of spiritual exercise	92v–98v	50v–58v
Instruction for a beautiful life of a consecrated person	99r–104v	58v–63v
A short way to meditate on the Passion of Christ during Holy Mass	104v–109r	64r–68v
Evening examination of conscience	109r–111r	69r–71r
Spiritual Alphabet	111v–113v	71r–72v
Prayer to Saint Hedwig	[113v–114v] no card	72v–74r
Service dedicated to Saint Rosalia, countess and hermit	115r–115v	74v–76r
Spiritual disciplines, or various ways of punishing and multiplying the formation of our souls in front of God's Majesty	115v–132r	76v–93v

<sup>30</sup> As may be proved by an attempt at copying, made certainly by a subsequent owner, *Instructions on preparation to pious death* after Kasper of Przemęt concluded his work on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 1657. BUWr OR, I Q 121, k. 223v–225v.

Instruction on preparation for a pious death, which can be called an expedition on the path toward eternity	132r–140v	94r–104v
Preparation and exercises for a holy death Daily/ Weekly/ Monthly/ annual/ serving at all times/ to the holy death close to dying	140v–156v	104v–115r
Spiritual Testament	156v–162v	115r–120r
Asking for grace particularly needed at the time of dying	163r–164v	120r–121v
The trial of dying, or exercises at the soul's dying	165r–170r	121v–124v
Meditation on death	170r–184v	124v–128r

### *Instruction of Spiritual Exercise*

The complete title of this prayer book, designated by the Library of the Trzebnica Parish as *HII*, reads *Instruction of spiritual exercise in general and in the convent*.<sup>31</sup> This codex is also in quarto. The cardstock covers are coated with polished green parchment, which suggests that the work was done by the same bookbinder as the little book owned by Małgorzata Rajska, discussed above. Prayer book *HII* is composed of 138 non-paginated cards, with a double margin and delicate black lines. The spine is dyed red. Two initial pages and two final pages are empty. The codex has no ornamentation other than rubricated titles and middle titles. The book shows signs of woodworm activity and mechanical damage, with the first seven cards especially in danger of progressive destruction.<sup>32</sup>

There is no information inside the book to elucidate us as to the circumstances in which the manuscript was created or brought to the convent of Trzebnica. The work was completed around the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>33</sup> by one hand with the use of *minuscule antiqua* which at places makes the handwriting quite careless, with several parts crossed out. The copyist commonly applied certain letters of German *fraktur*.<sup>34</sup> It seems highly probable that the copyist was connected to

<sup>31</sup> The codex was briefly discussed by S.J. Pietraszko, *Nieznane polonica rękopiśmienne...*, op. cit., p. 562, and by H. Szwejkowska, *Biblioteka klasztoru cysterek...*, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> The damage is noted in the card catalogue.

<sup>33</sup> Helena Szwejkowska places the creation of the codex in the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. See: *Biblioteka klasztoru cysterek...*, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> The remaining characteristics include the letter 'ß' or 's' instead of the digraph 'sz,' the line in letters 's' and 'y' elongated upwards, and the majuscule 'w' resembling an epigraphic record.

the local milieu. It cannot be ruled out that the scribe's work was done by one of the nuns.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, the prayer book does not include any ownership notes or dedications. The lack of information concerning the author, copyist, and owner of the studied collection is a serious hindrance to source analysis.

The collection may be divided into a few sections. The initial one constitutes a lecture on how to conduct an examination of conscience. The author divided this section into two parts: *Instruction on general examination of conscience* and *Instruction on particular examination of conscience*.<sup>36</sup> This section is followed by a short treatise on the methods of prayer with a suggestion to include them in the nuns of Trzebnica's daily practice. Three ways of addressing God are described: prayer in thoughts, daily devotions, and slow recitation of the words of the Psalms or a chosen chaplet.<sup>37</sup>

A very copious fragment of the studied prayer book is a collection of forty *Meditations* by an unknown author.<sup>38</sup> This text hasn't been studied yet by historians. All the meditations are composed in three-point structure, preceded by preparatory prayers that are only written before the first meditation. The composition and the arrangement of content resemble popular patterns of Jesuit spiritual practice, but only more extensive interior analysis of the work can confirm the thesis. The author proposed to the nun a reform of her conventual life based on meditation on the dignity of her creation and the love of God, through recognition of her sins and the deliberate choice whether to join Christ's or Satan's banner, up to imitation of the Saviour's virtues. Noticeable motifs from the first part of the spiritual retreat of Ignace de Loyola appear to suggest the possibility that other works on Christ's passion and Resurrection existed in the original book collection of the convent in Trzebnica.

In a subsequent part of the prayer book, we find the *Testament of the devout Soul in which one renders the spirit to God*. This piece isn't a repetition of the work transmitted by Kasper of Przemęt, although the sense and aim of this prayer are the same – they put the nun in the face of death, requiring her to give an account of her life and devote herself to God.<sup>39</sup> After this, follows the already mentioned text *Spiritual Discipline*, copied here with insignificant linguistic differences, distinguished by the not always diligent use of the original.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> A gloss completing the instruction of the meditations demonstrates that the prayer-book used to be in an active use. BPTr, H11, *Nauka o ćwiczeniu ducha*, k. [6v].

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, k. [2r–5r].

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, k. [5r–6v].

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, k. [6v–113v].

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, k. [113v–116r].

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, k. [116r–138r].

## Abbess Krystyna Pawłowska's prayer book *Protestations and other acts*

The prayer book discussed here was deposited under reference number *H12*. Its complete title is *Protestations and various Acts assembled by Father Bonawentura of S. Stanislas of the Discalced Carmelite Order*.<sup>41</sup> This small codex in *octavo* was secured by wooden covers with dark brown leather with modest pressed ornamentation and is rather worn out today. The book had been able to be locked, as demonstrated by the remnants of small straps with incomplete metal clasps. The covers and edges of the pages show signs of woodworms while the inside cover cards are splitting. The manuscript was executed on 110 pages with small but meticulous cursive. The scribe didn't apply any ornamentation or rubrication, with the exception of the majuscule used for titles.

The title of the prayer book suggests the authorship of a monk of the Discalced Carmelites, popular in the circle of theoreticians of mysticism, Bonawentura Frezer, bearing the monastic *patrocinium* of Saint Stanislas. Born in 1638, in the family of Aleksander and Barbara Szczepanowski, he graduated at the Krakow Academy, took his vows in 1656 in Podoliniec (in the region of Spisz), and received his holy orders on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1664. Father Bonawentura fulfilled many responsibilities in his convent: he was a prior in Przemyśl, definitor of the province, and a provincial. He was also active as a preacher<sup>42</sup> and a lecturer of philosophy and theology in the convent institute in Lublin, Przemyśl, and Krakow. He died in Warsaw on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1687.<sup>43</sup> He left a few manuscripts in the field of theology of mysticism that are scattered in various monastic archives. It seems that Frezer was a popular spiritual director and teacher of monastic life among nuns, to whom he addressed guidelines concerning the practice of prayer and ways of achieving a state of intimacy with God.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> H. Szwejkowska, *Biblioteka klasztoru cysterek...*, op. cit., p. 43; S.J. Pietraszko, *Nieznane polonica rękopiśmienne...*, op. cit., p. 562.

<sup>42</sup> Two funeral sermons from 1671–1672 were released in print and were noted by Karol Estreicher, *Bibliografia Polska*, vol. 13, part 3/2, Krakow 1894, p. 248.

<sup>43</sup> Biography after: *Antologia karmelitańska*, vol. 2, elaborated by M. Zawada OCD, Krakow 2011, p. 238.

<sup>44</sup> Some of the works were published by Discalced Carmelites: Bonawentura Frezer, *Komentarz do III mieszkania „Twierdzy wewnętrznej”*, [in:] „*Mater spiritualium*”. *Studia nad doktryną św. Teresy od Jezusa*, S. Ruszczycy (ed.), Krakow 1974, pp. 513–528. Bonawentura od św. Stanisława Frezer, [No title], [in:] *Antologia karmelitańska*, vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 239–247. Other works by Frezer: *Hymn o Duchu świętym*, *Nauka doroczna przez dwanaście miesięcy*, *Akty bardzo skuteczne dla nabycia ufności zbawiennej w Bogu*, *Litania do świętej Anny*, edited [in:] *Antologia karmelitańska*, vol. 3, elaborated by M. Zawada OCD, pp. 220–239.

The date of creation and addressee of the Bonawentura of Saint Stanislas' *Protestations and various acts* remain unknown. The date the book was offered, the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1688,<sup>45</sup> is visible in the dedication of the prayer book to abbess Pawłowska, so it must remain the date *ad quem* of the creation of the Trzebnica manuscript. The pieces included in this collection were certainly written for a nun, doubtless a Carmelite nun, it is difficult to state, however, whether the addressee was the owner of the prayer book, Agnieszka of Jesus the Lamb, signed under the dedication to the abbess Pawłowska. The name most certainly pertains to Konstancja Iżycka, who lived at the Holiest Name of Mary convent in Poznań from the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1665 as one of the funders, and since 1677 fulfilled the office of prioress alternatively with the Euphrasia of Annunciation to the Holy Virgin.<sup>46</sup>

Sister Agnieszka of Jesus the Lamb was expert with her quill and left a certain legacy, mainly in the form of copies of autobiographies and some works of Saint Therese the Great<sup>47</sup> as well as other works from the field of Carmelite spirituality<sup>48</sup>. After being transferred to Poznań, she made herself useful to the convent by copying biographical works created in her surroundings<sup>49</sup>. Our Carmelite wasn't a creative person within her convent, but she was an active witness of the order's work in Wielkopolska and as a person with a solid edu-

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In all the above, the contemporary transcription was used, with indication of the place of deposit, reference of the codex, without the page number reference.

<sup>45</sup> BPTr, H12, *Protestacje i akty różne*, k. [109r].

<sup>46</sup> Konstancja Iżycka was born in Lublin voivodship on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 1636. She joined the Carmelite order on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 1653, took her vows in Lublin on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January 1654, adopting the convent name Agnieszka of Jesus the Lamb. She arrived at the founding of the Poznań convent straight from her convent in Lublin. In her community, she had the opinion of an ardent nun. She died on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1723. C. Gil, *Słownik polskich karmelitanek bosych 1612–1914*, Krakow 1999, pp. 144 ff.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, p. 145.

<sup>48</sup> A few copies and adaptations of various works from the circle of Carmelite and Jesuit spirituality are assigned to her hand. Agnieszka of Jesus the Lamb was arguably the editor and owner of the lost prayer book from the Archive of the Krakow Province of Discalced Carmelites, ref. no. 246. A. Nowicka-Struska, „*Strzały serdeczne z Pisma świętego i ojców świętych zrobione, a od dusze nabożnej ku niebu wypuszczone*”. *Siedemnastowieczna adaptacja „Pia desideria” Hermana Hugona z rękopisu lubelskich karmelitanek bosych klasztoru Niepokalanego Poczęcia Najświętszej Marii Panny*, „Terminus” 18 (2016), issue 2 (38), pp. 131–157.

<sup>49</sup> She copied the *Life of Barbara of the Holy Sacrament*, penned by another nun from Poznań, most probably Maria Magdalena of the Saviour (Anna Żaboklicka). Edition of the work: *Żywot Matki Barbary od Najświętszego Sakramentu (Zadzikowej) Karmelitanki Bosej (1609–1670)*, by C. Gil OCD, Krakow 2013.

cation, she participated in the development of the Carmelite spiritual culture in Poland. Sister Agnieszka of Jesus the Lamb could have received the work by Father Bonawentura from another nun in the Poznań abbey, Franciszka Teresa of the Assumption of Mary, Frezer's biological sister, who kept herself busy copying her brother's works.<sup>50</sup> The Carmelite provenance of the benefactor is demonstrated by the placement of the names of Saints Joseph and Therese on the title page as well as one invocation addressed to the Saint patroness of the Carmelite order.

At offering her little book, arguably on the occasion of Pawłowska's name day, sister Agnieszka refers to her intimate relationship with the addressee, calling her 'the dearest mother and benefactress.'<sup>51</sup> This inscription in the dedication definitely proves that Iżycka was in direct contact with abbess Pawłowska. Both nuns came to be in touch via unknown circumstances, perhaps during one of Trzebnica superior's stay in Wielkopolska or in another situation, though it is difficult to determine without an extensive archive search.<sup>52</sup> The prayer book presented here was in use by the nuns in Trzebnica, as witnessed by handwritten notes made on the verso of the last page and on the back protective card by the hand of one of the owners.<sup>53</sup> Comparative analysis of all prayer books belonging to Pawłowska could confirm whether the inscription was made by the abbess herself or by another member of the Trzebnica convent.

The title *Protestations and various acts* evokes the relation between God and creation, which calls for compensation on the human side for the palpable lack

<sup>50</sup> Elżbieta Frezerówna was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1649 in Krakow Voivodship. Among Aleksander and Barbara Szczepanowski's offspring, as many as five took vows in the Carmelite order. Elżbieta attempted to be admitted to the convent in Krakow, then took the nun's habit in 1668 in Poznań, where she took her vows a year later. In the convent, she fulfilled the role of superior. Among the works by Bonawentura that she copied and that have been uncovered to today: *Solomon's Songs about the convent soul, a short explanation (Pieśni Salomonowe o duszy zakonnej krótkie wytłumaczenie)* and some biblical commentaries. She also wrote a memoir of her convent. C. Gil, *Słownik polskich karmelitanek...*, op. cit., p. 189.

<sup>51</sup> 'To my dearest mother in God and benefactress, Miss Krystyna Pawłowska, the abbess of the Devout Aggregation of the convent's maidens in Trzebnica Cisterciensis offers this little book of very beautiful Acts in the love of God, daughter and most humble servant, sister Agnieszka ā Jesu, unworthy Discalced Carmelite.' BPTr, H12, *Protestacje i akty różne*, k. [109r]. For more about Pawłowska, see: footnote 26.

<sup>52</sup> According to the biographical facts of Iżycka, established by Father Czesław Gil, outside of a short period of time during her novitiate at the turn of 1653/1654, she did not leave her home convent. C. Gil, *Słownik polskich karmelitanek...*, op. cit., p. 144.

<sup>53</sup> Short invocations and prayers related to the practice of the daily examination of conscience: *Rachunek sumienia poobiedn[i]. Naprzód dziękczynienie*. Ibidem, k. [109v, 110v].

of virtues through various compensatory acts paid to the Creator. This collection is of a faintly different character than those dedicated to the nuns by Kasper of Przemęt and his imitators. Bonawentura's prayers don't follow any unified meditation scheme, even though they are every time systemically arranged by the introduction of several or even several dozen points. They constitute orations extended by numerous epithets and comparisons, guiding the praying person into the mood of interior meditation. The reflections are written in the first person. The praying nun performs many declarations of will, she 'protests' or certifies her own commitments and decides her relations with God, which gives her words a solemn, yet intimate character.

The prayer book opens with *Protestation for the entire life for these ends*,<sup>54</sup> followed by *Intention of preaching affairs and deeds*,<sup>55</sup> which is a summon to everyday report in front of God and the act of devotion of everyday occupations. Only after this fragment is the actual declaration of will claiming the willingness of drawing closer to the Creator and living according to the commandments of His love: *Protestation for renewal of God's Love*<sup>56</sup> and *Protestation against temptation at death*.<sup>57</sup> They are composed of copious acts directed individually to the Holy Trinity, the Mother of God, angels, and saints.<sup>58</sup> The collection is concluded by prayers to be said during the Holy Mass upon receiving the Holy Communion<sup>59</sup> and two orations probably to be recited as the last acts of the day.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion

The prayer books kept in the Library of Saint Bartholomew and Saint Hedwig Parish in Trzebnica and discussed in this paper are unique witnesses to the development of the religious culture of the Silesian nuns in the period after the Council of Trent. Made with little to no ornamentation and with quite average binding methods, meant the focus was mostly on ease of handling by the nuns during prayer – they were not part of the convent's library. As the personal property of the nuns, however, they were not an expression of their bibliophilic interests but rather of their need for convenient tools for their habitual religious

<sup>54</sup> Ibidem, k. [1r–4r].

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, k. [4r–7v].

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem, k. [7r–21v].

<sup>57</sup> Ibidem, k. [21v–104v].

<sup>58</sup> *Akty do świętej Teresy Matki Naszey*; ibidem, k. [77v–79r].

<sup>59</sup> Ibidem, [104v–107v].

<sup>60</sup> *Poswięcenie snu Miłości, Akty Miłości Bożej*; ibidem, k. [108v–110r].

practice. Two of the discussed manuscripts became the nuns' property as a gift of persons in close relation to the community of Trzebnica. Further research on the place that the Saint Bartholomew convent held in the monastic and ecclesiastic environment should further elucidate the question of whether the benefactors and Cistercian nuns had contact in the territory of Silesia or during the nuns' travels to Wielkopolska, which were quite frequent in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This search for the initiators of the relations with the monastic centres in Wielkopolska will induce the confirmation of the thesis about the intense interest in the achievement of Sarmatian religious thought by the Silesian nuns.

Also, the motives and ways these models of relations were built must be established. An initial comparison of these sources with the codices of the same provenance and held in the University Library allows us to note the animated interest among the Cistercian nuns in the creations of the monks from Wielkopolska during the period of bilateral migrations forced by wars. Nevertheless, already in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the nuns of Trzebnica undertook autonomous attempts to elaborate their collection of meditations in Polish.

The means and circumstances of how Polish religious culture penetrated to the Silesian convent and took hold there, at least among a certain group of nuns, are still under examination. One should also remember the specificity of the period, which saw print become more and more popular while the acquisition and use of manuscripts, especially in monastic circles, was a result of individual involvement in the distribution of titles considered valuable and in response to personal taste and spirituality. In this context, it is important to elucidate the influence of prominent individuals on the cultural and religious life of the community. One such distinguished person is the abbess Krystyna Pawłowska, who brought to the convent a few manuscript prayer books and other printed works on spirituality and ascetism for the nuns to use.<sup>61</sup> These collections of meditations and prayers are doubtless an important testimony to the animated cultural exchange among the monastic centres of various observance on the territory of Silesia and Wielkopolska. The question remains, however, whether the interest in the culture of Polish Cistercian monks and the discovery of internal prayer isn't characteristic of the narrow circle of the Trzebnica nuns in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

An extended analysis of the Polish-language manuscript heritage of the Trzebnica Cistercian nuns in the context of other centres of women of this

<sup>61</sup> The abbess owned four printed books in Polish including collections of meditations from the Jesuits of Poznań, a collection of spiritual retreat meditations by the prior Alberyk Kościński from Bledzew, and two sermon collections by the Oratorian Stanisław Sanner. J. Gwóźdź, *Kultura pisma i książki...*, op. cit., pp. 304, 309, 418, 457, 458.

observance connected with Trzebnica traditionally since the Middle Ages, such as Owińska or Ołobok, would allow us to determine the originality and scale of the studied phenomenon. Even if limited to separate cases on the territory of Silesia or the Trzebnica convent only, its appearance should be regarded in light of the influence these nuns could have had on their milieu.

The material presented in this paper, however, is first and foremost an excellent source base illustrating a model of spirituality practised individually by the Silesian Cistercian nuns after the Council of Trent. The editorial choices of the collections of prayers we focused on in this paper, as well as the appendices included by the owners at the time of the use of this book – notes, glosses, and other loose additions such as pictures, handwritten pious texts, demand to be analysed insightfully. The first step of such an analysis should be the determination of the extent of the originality of these historic texts or an indication of their cultural patterns. By correlating those results with the conclusions of art historians, we would be closer to obtaining several elements of the depiction of religious activity of the Cistercian nuns in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The complete hermeneutics of the manuscript material may only be achieved when accompanied by an analysis of the archival sources of various provenance. This would allow us to extend the question and obtain a better picture of the spiritual life of the Maidens of Trzebnica during the modern era when their community flourished.

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