

**Zeitschrift:** Internationale kirchliche Zeitschrift : neue Folge der Revue internationale de théologie

**Band:** 76 (1986)

**Heft:** 2

**Artikel:** Polish sources of the ideology of the National Church organised by bishop Franciszek Hodur

**Autor:** Baakier, Edward

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-404709>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 22.11.2024

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## **Polish Sources of the Ideology of the National Church organised by Bishop Franciszek Hodur**

Every authentic important religious movement arises – just as any other new movement does – as the result of definite social, religious, economic or political relations. Counting from the origin of its conception, it usually takes many years for the movement to assume an organised shape, to clearly define its aims and ideology and work out its constitution.

Ideology is the necessary condition which makes it possible for any new movement, either social or religious, to originate, exist and develop. Nobleness and loftiness of the purposes laid down by ideology are the measure of culture of the movement itself.

The Polish National Catholic Church, known before as the National Church, is one of such new religious movements. It was organised by Bishop Franciszek Hodur in the United States of America at the end of the XIXth century and transferred to Poland at the beginning of the XXth century.

The National Church is deeply rooted in the Polish history, literature and philosophy, i.e. in progressive social, patriotic and religious thought characteristic of our nation.

Upon examining the origin of the thought and its development, we come to meet its representatives: social and religious workers, historians, philosophers, pastors, writers and priests. These people, working actively throughout the history of Poland, boldly criticised organisation and ideology of the Roman Catholic Church and aimed at organising the Polish Church which would be independent from Rome and which would unite religion with national ideals and social work.

Already in the XVth century, just before the Reformation, we come up a writer and an active lay member of the community, who spoke for cutting all ties with papacy and for uniting the Polish Church with the state and nationalizing its ceremonial. It was *Jan Ostroróg* (1436–1501), voivode of Poznań, graduate of foreign universities: University of Erfurt and University of Bologna, doctor of both laws, author of an excellent piece of work entitled “*Monumentum pro Republicae ordinatione*” (“Memorial on the organisation of the Republic”). In this work the author condemned humiliating dependence of Poland on papacy and criticized covetousness, simony and scandalous ignorance of the clergy. He criticized considerable participation

of Germans in the life of the church and spread of the German language in sermons and liturgy. Moreover, he suggested to the king the necessity of closer subordination of the Polish Church to the state.

Jan Ostroróg especially attacked economic destructiveness of dependence on Rome. The dependence brought about harmful unhuman and arduous payments in favour of Roman curia, in form of Peter's penny, annates, charges for lawsuits and appeals to Rome. "Crafty and cunning Italians – Jan Ostroróg writes – extort from Poles great amount of money, real treasures and for that they send us church fair bullas". Then, the voivode of Poznań calls: "Gentlemen, Poles, do not let the crafty Italians deceive you any longer!"

Jan Ostroróg's way of thinking was daring and it contained both deep political wisdom and clear sympathy for the idea of organising the Polish Church.

In the XVIth century, when the Reformation spread throughout Poland, the idea of creating the Polish Church was first of all taken up by Polish noblemen of intellect. At that time they had ambitious plans to reform the whole political system of the Republic.

From 1536 till 1565, during regional councils in Cracow, Piotrków, Lublin and Warsaw, Polish nobility aimed towards reformation of politics, economy of the country as well as social and religious life.

In the field of religion and social activity the problem of the unity of religion took the lead. Here, nobility postulated to convene a national council with king at the head. Noblemen believed that the national council would loosen or altogether cut the ties of dependence of the Polish Church on Rome as well as initiate the national language in liturgy, revoke celibacy of the clergy, i.e. that it would create a national Church in Poland uniting the multi-religious Republic into one community – as far as religion is concerned. It would, without doubt, be an act of great religious, social and political meaning.

Arguments for the National Church in Poland were put forward by the most outstanding thinkers and propagators of the idea. Among them *Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski* (1503–1572), the chief officer of a group of villages from Wolbórz, was most active at that time. He was a writer with university education – a quality seldom found in the XVIth century Poland – and a beautiful character. *Ignacy Chrzanowski*, a well-known historian, calls him "one of the greatest moral beauties, of whom Poland could be proud of". This man of spotless integrity devoted a great number of his works to the spread of the idea of a national Church and in struggle for the realization of this idea he en-

gaged his noble heart, great mind and an excellent pen. Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski described the problem of a national Church in his monumental piece of work entitled "De republica emendanda" ("On the Reformation of the Republic", 1554). In the second book of this work, in the book about the Church, J. F. Modrzewski made a frontal assault on the Roman Catholic Church position. He accused papacy as well as the highest church dignitaries and all the clergy of ignorance, indolence, carelessness, laziness, immoral and wasteful way of life, excessive exorbitance, negligence of ministration and lack of concern for religion, which brought the Church to the brink of a precipice.

Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski hoped that King Sigismund Augustus would comply with the request of the nobility and convene the national council in order to settle the problem of the Church in Poland. He personally asked the King to do that, reminding him at the same time that it is his duty. "The King must convene the national council in order to gain penetrating insight into the teachings of religious rites in general, demoralization, offences which breed and expand in ever-widening circles ..." (Writings, vol. V, p. 157).

Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski described to the King a splendid vision of the future which was to be the outcome of debates of the national council convened on the King's initiative: "... that happy day, when the Christian Republic will reap the fruits of the King's actions, when everybody will be happy to have one religion, one cult of God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and the whole court of heavenly beings will pay tribute to the King for that great deed." (Writings, vol. V, p. 48).

For some time King Augustus was inclining to those conceptions. Soon, however, he changed his mind under the pressure of such people as Cardinal Kozjusz and apostolic nuncios, especially the most outstanding among them – nuncio Commendone, who didn't want to let the national council be convened. They sensed that under the cloak of this "innocent" request a tendency to create the Polish Church independent of Rome was hidden.

It is extremely interesting that there was a man who for some time dreamed of sovereignty of the Polish Church, of cutting all ties with Rome, introducing the Polish language into liturgy and revoking celibacy of the clergy, i. e. – in one word – of the national Church. It was *Jakub Uchański*, Bishop of Chełm, later – Bishop of Włocław and finally – Primate of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. He even wanted to be at the top of such a Church. At the royal court, where he

held the office of king's referendary, he got acquainted with advocates of church reform, took part in their meetings, bestowed his friendship on them and became a good friend of Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski.

Dispute between Jakub Uchański and Rome created a chance to undertake steps towards the reform of the Polish Church and exemption from pope's jurisdiction. After the death of Bishop Drohojewski of Kujawy, King Sigismund Augustus appointed Jakub Uchański to this post. Jakub Uchański had been then holding the office of Bishop of Chełm for six years. Pope Paul IV did not want to confirm the nomination because other Polish bishops accused Jakub Uchański of sympathizing with the Reformation. Bishop Jakub Uchański ignored lack of confirmation of his nomination by the pope and in March 1559 he went with due ceremony to Włocławek and accepted authority in Kujawy diocese. Pope Paul IV called Bishop Jakub Uchański's behaviour a scandalous crime and ordered the Inquisition to call the king's nominee to Rome. Bishop Jakub Uchański disregarded the order. In answer to the Inquisition's summons he said: "The power of Rome which is the pope's power ... can reach ... neither Chełm nor Włocławek nor any other town or episcopate ... because Poland isn't under the authority of any kingdom or the State of Rome, but it is an independent kingdom which acknowledges no lord but the king, its lord." (Teodor Wierzbowski, "Uchańsciana", vol. II, pp. 114–134).

There is no doubt that Bishop Jakub Uchański, in this decisive period of his life, considered the daring plan of breaking off relations with Rome. He was ready to stand at the head of the Polish – and at the same time – Catholic Church. He thought of making only slight changes in its organizational structure, i.e. he wanted to grant the Church independence from Rome, introduce the Polish language into liturgy and revoke celibacy of the clergy. These small changes were in fact of great importance and led to the creation of the Polish Church, similar to the National Church in England.

It must be pointed out here that in Poland of the XVIth century also *Jan Łaski* (1499–1560), a Roman Catholic priest, nephew of Primate Łaski, tried hard to organise a Polish Church. Soon after being ordained priest he passed over to the side of the Reformation, went abroad and worked hard in France and England. After his return to the country, in spite of the fact that he wasn't young anymore and, moreover, that his health was impaired, he undertook endeavours to unite all evangelical creeds in one national Church. Unfortunately, he died soon after.

So the idea to create a free Church in Poland, independent of Rome, the Polish Church which was to be a support and propagator of new religious and social ideals, declined and it declined for a long time, i. e. for as long as two hundred years.

In the second half of the XVIIth and in the XVIIIth century, in the Republic of Poland the rule of the Roman Catholic Church became consolidated as a privileged religion and the strongest one, having at its disposal Jesuit order brought into Poland by Cardinal Hozjusz – Bishop of Warmia. The Jesuits started to carry on counter-reformation activity, control educational system in Poland, fanaticize the youth, instill into the hearts of the simple faithful hatred of all that was non-Roman Catholic. Educational and pedagogical activity of the Jesuits did not only decimate lines of dissenters but was also one of the reasons for recession of the Polish culture.

At that time no one thought about the Polish Church. Intellectual and moral downfall of the Polish people in Saxon times inevitably led toward the greatest tragedy of the Polish nation, toward the loss of independence and the partitions of Poland. Even the Constitution of the 3rd of May passed by the Four-Years Diet in 1791 failed to prevent further partitions. It is well known that two outstanding priests, *Stanisław Staszic* and *Hugo Kołłataj* contributed considerably on preparation of the sound principles of the Constitution. In their letters they first of all attacked Jesuit schools which educated young people in the spirit of subservience to the Church and Rome. They also insisted on having educational system undergo surveillance by the governmental authorities. Thanks to their efforts Polish educational system was reformed by the National Education Committee.

In the era of oppression, when the Poles had been again and again starting up to fight for freedom and finding on the part of popes neither support nor understanding but condemnation of their aspirations for freedom – it dawned again upon outstanding Polish poets, philosophers and historians to create the Polish Church.

Repulse related with the partitions of Poland and influence of Napoleonic wars caused national spirit to grow and made patriotic feelings more tense. And here, too, men of intellect – sons of the exhausted country: Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Zygmunt Krasiński, Maria Konopnicka, August Cieszkowski, Bronisław Trentowski, Karol Libelt, Hoene-Wroński and others began to express their sorrow, disappointment and deep discontent with activities of the papacy and with the Roman Catholic Church. They demanded reform of the

Church, revival of religious life and some went even farther and insisted on organising the Polish Church.

*Adam Mickiewicz* (1799–1855) reproached the Church for the lack of apostolic spirit, accused the clergy of becoming detached from real life, of conceit and self-presumption abandonment of the way of cross and of evasion of sufferings and sacrifices. “The Catholic clergy – he wrote – takes shelter in books, theology and doctrines because it costs much less to write or dispute than to speak openly and expose oneself in the defence of the truth” (Slavonic Literature, course III and IV, pp. 335–337).

*Juliusz Słowacki* (1809–1849) made simply a general assault on the position of the Roman Church. Popes – according to him – have departed from the teachings of the Holy Fathers and they build a kingdom of this world based on covetousness and greed of wealth.

“... Rome!  
You are no longer the Lady and the Queen,  
Cause you are greedy like a devil of the body  
And lower than your people both in heart and in head!!!”  
(free verse translation)

Other words of the poet, taken from his famous work entitled “*Beniowski*”, sound as Reformation thoughts of the XVIth century on the National Church. Juliusz Słowacki is for cutting all ties with Rome.

“Oh, Poland! If you are to stay young  
And be like the one which exists today,  
And be baptized with this damned water,  
Which dogs don’t want and snakes don’t even drink,  
If you are – with your beauty of a knight –  
To go among your people, like a snake which crawles,  
If you are to equal with the crafty Italian,  
Then better stay the way you are – human dust!”  
(free verse translation)

(Writings, ed. Wocław 1949, vol. III, p. 104)

When Pope Pius IX, the same one who had condemned the January Uprising of 1863 in official statements, escaped from revolutionary Rome and in the town of Gaeta yielded himself to the care of the king of Naples to be an ally of Austria, then Juliusz Słowacki, who had been since a long time solidarizing with Italian revolutionists, considered the Pope’s behaviour to be the final confirmation of his opi-

nion of Rome and the evidence that Roman papacy decayed in order to leave the scene open for a new authority.

“Amongst disputes God the Lord rings the bells –  
He has placed a throne for a Slav pope,  
Who is not going to run away on seeing the swords like the  
Italian one did.

So here comes the Slav pope  
Brother of the People.” (free verse translation)

(J. Kleiner, “Juliusz Słowacki”, Warsaw 1927, vol. IV, part II, p. 210)

The third great poet and philosopher *Zygmunt Krasiński* (1812–1859), in his work entitled “Irydion”, described papal Rome of those days in following words: “... In Forum dust only, in Capitol shame only.” No wonder, then, that he dreamt of a different new Church: “A Church of my dream – Juliusz Słowacki wrote – is a Church higher than all the others, a Church accepting everybody in its bosom but by Poland and in her name” (Letters to Słowacki, 26. I. 1843).

A new Church was to be the Church of love, John’s Church. “From now on Christ will neither be born nor will he die on earth. The Church will rise on the ruins of Peter’s Church. The last Pope will die under the ruins of the Basilica of St. Peter” (Zygmunt Krasiński, Writings, ed. by Wyd. Jubil., Cracow/Warsaw 1912, vol. VI, p. 283).

*Maria Konopnicka* (1842–1910) was under strong ideological influence of great romantics, too. Ardent patriotism, brave movement of democracy, keen interest in social affairs, genuine humanitarianism and decided aversion to Rome and its Church are strongly marked in her poetry and short stories.

After visiting St. Joachim’s Church in Rome, in which the poetess didn’t find the coat of arms with the name of Poland written on it, although there were badges of all other countries – even of Orthodox Russia – Maria Konopnicka reproached Polish priests in Rome for making no protest to the injustice done to their country. She expressed regret that the National Church had not been established in Poland as it had been in England or Germany:

“... Oh, why did not we have a Henry on the throne  
Like England, which shines in the crown of people today?  
Why, a long time ago, did not we go together with Luther  
To the gate of Wittenberg to hand a hammer and hobnails,



When at variance with the Church Luther had been nailing  
his thesis,  
Severing millions of followers from Rome.  
And to throw the pope's bulla into fire?  
– Today, we would have here our name, like Germans do!  
But we have always been on the side of the Church ...  
– Wronged, forgotten, we give away last penny,  
We long for Rome like for our own country!

Rome is our second mother-land, and it is even better be-  
cause it is of spirit!  
When bells ring in Rome – Poland listens on her knees!”  
(free verse translation)

(Maria Konopnicka, “After visiting the Jubilee Church in Rome”)

Anxiety to organise the Polish Church is strongly marked in the poetry of those days. This characteristic has been clearly expressed by a poet of “Young Poland” (“Młoda Polska”)– *Kazimierz Przerwa Tetmajer* (1895–1940). He put into the mouth of Kostka Napierski, the leader of the peasants revolution in the Tatra Highlands (mid XVIth century) the following words:

“Nobility is to be crushed, Rome is to be broken with, high clergy keeping with magnates is to be overthrown, Polish Kingdom with its own people, with its own Polish Church is to be built. Oh, indeed, a Polish-hearted pope, and no bullas and orders from the Roman office – that is what the Polish peasant needs.” (Cracow 1910, p.96).

In the XIXth century, also Polish philosophers undertook criticism of the Church and clergy. They, too, wanted changes, reform of the Church and its nobility; they hoped for a better Church, for a new Polish Church.

*Hoene Wroński* foretold coming of a Messianic era, in which there would no longer be any renegations or differences of religion, and all strayed would create one true and universal Church.

*Andrzej Towiański*, a mystic, having at one time great influence on Polish emigrants in France, was not afraid to publish that “... The present Church has fallen into decay so far, that it is no longer a Church ... it has become an earthly structure, an earthly kingdom ruled by a spirit opposed to Christ” (*Andrzej Towiański, Selection of Works*, ed. by Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, Cracow, p. 122).

*August Cieszkowski*, author of the work entitled “Ojczyzna nasza” (“Our Father”), wrote: “The Catholic Church, which had the right to use the

word 'catholic' in its name, has deprived itself of this right. Pretending not to weaken its unity it has renounced vital diversity – and so, it has fallen into one-sidedness and uniformity, which are the sign of stiffness and lifelessness.”

August Cieszkowski blamed the Church for the lack of religious tolerance which resulted from negligence of religious matters. He didn't condemn any particular faith or religion but considered all of them important “steps towards the Truth”, mile-posts of the road followed and of the progress made (A.Cieszkowski, “Ojczyzna nasza”, vol.II, p.486).

August Cieszkowski also handled social problems and he did it very extensively. The Church of the Future, the Church of a new era of the Holy Ghost will establish “the Kingdom of God” on earth.

According to Cieszkowski, mankind has already lived through the period of childhood, entered into adolescence and aims – in the third era – at maturity. The third era will be the era of action only; human beings will achieve “the Kingdom of God” and through their own action they will gain “the Promised Land”. In the Kingdom of God on earth all antagonisms will disappear and unification of “all-miscellaneous” will take place (A.Cieszkowski, “Ojczyzna nasza”, Poznań 1923, vol.III).

The above way of thinking reminds us of the views of Bishop *Franciszek Hodur*, who pointed out that the most important purpose for the Church which he had organised is to establish God's Kingdom on earth, i.e. create a perfect human community based on love, peace, brotherhood and justice. “Some people – he wrote – have a wrong conception of the Kingdom of God. They think that it is only a state of the blessed after death, in the heavenly land; and it is God's order in the eternal life on earth” (Apocalypse of the XXth century, Scranton, Pa.1930, pp.185–186). This is the Church August Cieszkowski dreamt of – the Church based on genuine religious tolerance, closely uniting religious activity with social activity – so closely, that the latter is already religion in itself. He not only dreamt but even tried to realise his conceptions; he considered himself a creator of a new religion and a new Church (Lt. Wiktor Wasik, “History of Polish Philosophy”, Warsaw 1965, vol. II, p.369).

*Bronisław Ferdynand Trentowski* (1808–1869) was the one who pronounced against the Church of Rome most decidedly and sharply. He was superior to other philosophers of the XIXth century in respect of national spirit, patriotic fire and hot temperament. He considered his

philosophy Polish and national. He wanted Polish philosophy to rouse the admiration of the whole world as soon as possible, and most of all – he wanted it to surpass German philosophy. He saw Polish philosophy in the writings of Karol Libelt, Józef Kremer and August Cieszkowski. All the works of B. F. Trentowski are invested with national spirit and at the same time they contain bold criticism of Rome, papacy and the Jesuits.

In a pamphlet “O wyjazzmieniu ojczyzny” (“On casting the country’s yoke” – i. e. about throwing off the yoke placed by Rome) B. F. Trentowski appealed to the Poles to organise a Church – Polish and Catholic at the same time and free from supremacy of the Pope:

“... Beloved nation, may you become an advocate of freedom, light and progress among the Slaves; cast away teachings of Rome and the Jesuits; build a Polish Church – Christian, national, catholic, capable of being an expression of a new spirit because the Protestant Church has become old and it is affected with retrogression.” (“O wyjazzmieniu ojczyzny” The Slavs Book, Paris 1845, p.59)

In 1842, Bronisław Ferdynand Trentowski published his greatest work entitled “Chowanna”. It was accepted most enthusiastically in some circles of the Polish community. It contained pedagogical and educational instructions. The Polish philosopher was very well prepared, both theoretically and practically, to deal with the subject because when young he was a teacher in a grammar-school in Poland and then he taught and educated young people in private homes and finally, as an assistant professor he lectured at an university in Friburg.

“Chowanna” – the author wrote – “...is a national pedagogics and its purpose is good education of our children, i. e. our future beloved Poland.”

In “Chowanna” our celebrated writer gave the concept of a Polish Church a careful consideration and even found a name for it: *Polish Catholic Church*.

“One must be blind – he wrote – not to see dazzling the mind absurdities in the Roman faith. ... Reform of religion is therefore necessary. But why should we accept Swiss or German teachings? Don’t we have our own minds and can’t we apply Christianity to the needs of our country? *Let us establish the Polish Catholic Church*, let us choose a Polish pope” (“Chowanna”, Poznań 1842, vol. II, part II, p.807).

Words of many other writers and men of learning could be cited

here – of people, who since the XVth century have been coming up with bold criticism of activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and pointing out its aggressiveness, lack of religious tolerance and backwardness of culture.

In order to prove that the above statement doesn't contain words of empty meaning – let me draw your attention to one man, who in inter-war Poland censured strongly the Church of Rome. It was *Tadeusz Żeleński*, pen-name *Boy* (1874–1941), a doctor educated in medicine, then an excellent literary critic, writer and journalist and a translator of many volumes of classical French literature into the Polish language. One of his statements, which can be found in his work “*Nasi okupanci*” (“Our invaders”, Warsaw 1932), is sufficient to get the idea of the feeling of the Polish intellectuals in respect to the Roman Catholic Church:

“A caste of isolated from life savages will regulate the most important problems of the community, to its greatest prejudice, as long as it will be possible in Poland to shout out loftily: God and religion – there, where in fact it is the matter of power and money.”

(Tadeusz Żeleński called “Boy”, “*Reflektorem w mrok*” (“With a reflector into the dark”), ed. by Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 1985, p. 16)

From the above it is clearly seen that in Poland the Roman Catholic Church has been approached with a critical attitude since a long time. Anxiety to create the Polish Church, independent of Rome, was present among the Poles. However, it wasn't possible to organise the Church neither in the XVIth century nor later, especially in the era of oppression.

Realization of the idea of the National Church had to wait until the end of the XIXth century. It was completed in the United States of America, in 1897. The USA was then the only country which observed closely separation of religious matters and the political ones. In that country, where Tadeusz Kościuszko fought under the banner of George Washington and where at the end of the XIXth century millions of Poles found home and work – only there a Polish Church could be generally accepted to be then transferred to the mother country after she regained independence.

It was Polish emigrants – simple peasants and workers, working hard in mines, factories, on farms and in slaughter-houses of Chicago

– who gave an impulse to establish the Polish Catholic Church. They rose in revolt against the hierarchy of the Church of Rome in America, against German, Irish and Anglo-Saxon bishops and pastors. The revolt was headed by an exceptionally brave and energetic man, an ardent patriot and lover of history and culture of his nation – the Rev. *Franciszek Hodur*. He was the organiser of the Polish National Catholic Church in the United States of America, Canada and Poland. He may be compared with a farmer, who uses seeds for new sowing from Polish granaries, or with a painter who paints a picture of the Church using colours from Polish fields and forests.

Ideology of the Church worked out by Bishop Franciszek Hodur contains realization of principles and postulates which can be found in works of Polish writers dating from the XVIth till the XXth century. The Church organised by Bishop Hodur and Polish emigrants is a Church free from the supremacy of Rome, a Church which renounces pope's jurisdiction and which doesn't believe in the tenet of pope's infallibility; it is a democratic Church as opposed to the Church of Rome which has a monarchic structure; it is a Church filled with the spirit of patriotism and love to all that is Polish and native; it is a Church which tries to include *social work* – work for the people in its programme. Bishop Franciszek Hodur called in a simply prophetic vision: "People, rise! Your time, your era, the period of your new life has come to this world!"

Like in primitive Christianity – he wrote – when social work was part of the church programme and was as important as care for salvation of sinful man – so in the Polish Church social work should be an integral part of the work of priests.

Bishop Hodur wanted to open the doors of the Church to the people. He believed that the Church would extend more indulgence, compassion, kindness and sympathy to Polish immigrants as well as to farmers and workers in the mother-country and that it would show more interest in the fate of its members. He wanted to protect people against exploitation – and in fact he managed to do so.

After 33 years of the existence of the Church, Bishop Franciszek Hodur wrote:

"The Church which does not offer anything better is good for nothing and it isn't even worthy of existence because it is useless. If in parishes religious, national and social life isn't new and better than before – in accordance with require-

ments of the Gospel – but is like a swampy stagnation all along the line or if there is just a batch of dodgers together with a priest which artificially and shamefully keeps up appearances of life then I cannot acknowledge such a Church, I haven't established a Church like that.”

(Rev. A. Turkiewicz, On Profile, Report on the VIth General Synod of the PNCC in Buffalo, in 1931, p. 72)

Finally, it is a Catholic Church because it hasn't changed – nor has it intended to change – basic catholic truths of the faith, which are contained in the Apostles Creed, the Nicene–Constantinople Creed, the Holy Scriptures and in Apostolic Tradition interpreted by Fathers of the Church, Ecumenical Synods and General Synods. Due to the fact that it is catholic – the Church became one of the branches of the Universal Church of Christ to which such important beliefs as the Orthodox and the Old Catholic Church belong. Therefore in Poland, since 1951 it has rightly accepted the name the Polish Catholic Church, which was already suggested by a Polish philosopher, Bronisław Trentowski, in the second half of the XIXth century. Although the organiser of the Church in America gave it a slightly different name: Polish National Catholic Church, but the longer name may well contain the shorter.

A Church like that – Polish and Catholic at the same time, autocephalous, independent of any religious supremacy from outside – is needed in Poland. There is a large part of our community which wants such church. This desire has found expression in new Polish Catholic parishes which are organised, now and then, in different parts of our country. Moreover, Roman Catholic parishes which have come under the jurisdiction of our Church – as it has happened at Studzianki Pancerne, Zólkiewka, Bolesław, Kotłów and Długi Kaa – are even a more perspicuous expression of the desire of many Poles.

Warsaw (Poland)

Edward Bałakier