

University of Rzeszow

College of Humanities

Institute of History

Supervisor: rev. prof. dr hab. Stanisław Nabywaniec

Confessional Issues in Polish-English (and British) Contacts in the 16th and 17th Centuries

Tomasz Grzebyk, MA

The aim of this doctoral dissertation is to illustrate the interactions between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the British Isles, centered around confessional issues. The work touches upon a seldom discussed area in scholarly literature concerning the history of Polish-English relations in the early modern period. The author has endeavored to create a comprehensive study, the core of which are the confessional issues in Polish-English relations during the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as an analysis of their impact on the relationships between these countries. The combination of political, social, and religious aspects, and the resulting diversity of discussed topics and problems, allowed for the highlighting of the complexity and multi-dimensionality of these relations. This, in turn, facilitates a better understanding of how matters of confessional nature influenced the shaping of Polish-English relations: from international politics conducted at the royal courts in London and Krakow, through issues related to the Reformation and the Catholic Reformation, to private contacts. The dissertation consists of four chapters, supplemented by an introduction, conclusion, and two annexes.

In the first chapter, the author focuses on the political and diplomatic dimensions of confessional contacts. The internal politics of Poland are discussed, including the Polish court's approach to the schism of Henry VIII and the interventions of Polish rulers at the English court in matters of faith. The perception of the Commonwealth by English elites seated in the parliament is also analyzed in the context of the situation of Protestants living in the lands of the Commonwealth. Moreover, attempts to form an anti-Muslim coalition between England and Poland are presented, along with the diplomatic efforts made in this regard, and the involvement of James I Stuart in the affairs of the Commonwealth in the context of unifying Christianity in the face of Turkish threats. The idea of a Christian anti-Muslim coalition is also examined. In this chapter, the author also discussed the role of confessed faith in the context of dynastic marriages.

In the second chapter, the author focuses on the role Polish Protestants played in shaping and developing the Reformation in England. To this end, the activities of Jan Łaski in England and the influence of the Polish Brethren's ideology on the radical Protestant movements developing in England in the 17th century are primarily discussed. The relationships of Polish and Lithuanian followers of John Calvin with England and Scotland are also analyzed, and British Protestant communities that emigrated to the territories of the Commonwealth, mainly to Gdańsk and Kraków, are described. Cases of satirical representation of confessional issues in the Commonwealth in English literature are also discussed.

The third chapter pertains to Polish-English connections based on issues related to the Catholic Reformation. The author primarily focuses on the role of Cardinal Hosius in shaping the mentality and attitudes of English Catholics, as well as portraying the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a destination and asylum for British religious exiles and migrants. An important element of this part of the work is also the analysis of the persecution of Catholics in the British Isles and the influence that information and books circulated by Jesuits regarding this issue had on shaping Catholic identity in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Catholic Reformation. This chapter is complemented by an annex.

The fourth chapter is focused on the role of travelers, merchants, and soldiers in Polish-English contacts. It discusses the role of merchants in transferring religious news from Poland to England and from England to Poland. It also analyzes the way Polish religiosity is portrayed in the accounts of travelers from the British Isles who journeyed through the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th and 17th centuries. Particular attention is paid to issues related to the principles of religious tolerance for which the Commonwealth was famous, peculiarities of Polish religiosity, which surprised English travelers, as well as architecture and sacred art. In a similar way, the manner in which post-Reformation England was perceived by Polish travelers is also discussed.

The conclusions drawn from this dissertation may serve as a foundation for further research for historians dealing with the history of Poland and England in the 16th and 17th centuries, church and Christianity historians, international relations scholars, as well as those interested in the interdependencies between the state and religion.

Key words: reformation, catholic reformation , Poland, England 16th-17th centuries

Thomas Grzebyk