

## THE MILLENNIUM OF THE CHURCH IN CRACOW

Here is the oldest historical text concerning the beginnings of Ecclesiastical Organization in Poland:

*[Cesar, Otto III] fecit ibi [Gnesin] archiepiscopatum, ut spero legitime [...], comittens eundem predicti martyris fratri Radimo eidemque subiciens Reibernum, Salsae Cholbergensis aeclesiae episcopum, Popponem Cracuaensem, Iohannem Wrotizlaensem, Vungero Posnaniensi excepto*<sup>1</sup>.

The text was written in 1013 by Thietmar, the bishop of Merseburg (1009–1018); the event spoken of took place in 1000. For many years Polish historiography used to date the foundation of the Metropolitan See in Gniezno and the three (of four) subordinated bishoprics (Wrocław, Kołobrzeg, Cracow) from the year 1000<sup>2</sup>. In the last few decades, however, this traditional statement was challenged by many historians, especially when speaking about beginnings of the bishopric in Cracow. What does Thietmar's text finally say: does it really inform us about the creation of the bishop's See? Strictly speaking, one does not read, that Otto III *created* the Cracow diocese, but only *made it dependent* (latin word: *subicio*) on the Archbishop of Gniezno. So why not assume that in 1000 the bishopric in Cracow had already existed, and during the Summit Meeting of Gniezno was only incorporated into the new Metropolis? The more so as there are some other sources strengthening that hypothesis.

First of all, one must take into account the meaning of the first catalogues of the Cracow bishops still preserved in the Archive of Wawel Cathedral (the oldest of them dates back to the 1st half of 12th century, and – in such a case – describes the events from not too great a distance). Before Poppo (the bishop known from the Cronicle of Thietmar) they always place the names of two others: *Hic sunt no-*

<sup>1</sup> *Kronika Thietmara* [The Cronicle of Thietmar], M. Z. Jedlicki (ed.), Poznań 1953, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> There are still some authors defending the traditional view. See: B. Kumor, *Dzieje diecezji krakowskiej do roku 1795* [The History of the Diocese of Cracow until 1795], vol. 1, Kraków 1998; B. Przybyszewski, *Zarys dziejów diecezji krakowskiej (do roku 1994)* [The History of the Diocese of Cracow until 1994. An Outline], Kraków 2000.

*mina pontificum Cracoviensium. Prohorius. Proculphus. Poppo*<sup>3</sup>. Who were they – this Prohor and Proculf? Did they really exist? The bishops? The bishops of Cracow?

For many decades some historians vividly defended the idea that Prohor and Proculf were bishops of Slavonic rite originating from the mission of St Constantine and Methodius. Some even used to place the Metropolitan See of that rite in Cracow. After years of discussion that hypothesis has to be rejected because of the complete lack of evidence in the archeological sources. Is it possible – the historians ask – for the stable ecclesiastical organization to exist and to leave no traces of archeological material? Even a single cross or chalice? Not to mention churches or other buildings?<sup>4</sup>

On contrary the archeology speaks about at least seven stone latin sacral buildings on Wawel Hill dating them back to the 10th and 11th centuries. Certainly some of them point to the period when Cracow still belonged to the State of Bohemia (till about 990). Being its second town (after Prague) it had to be first, a target of Christian mission, and then, a place of its structures and elaborate worship.

But does it mean that in the Bohemian period Cracow had already become a bishopric? Those, who say “yes”, stress the dedication of Wawel Cathedral. From the very beginning it was dedicated to St Wenceslas, King of Bohemia. The same patrocinium since 973 had the cathedrals in Prague and Olomouc. If the Cracow cathedral would have been dedicated to a Bohemian saint (when constructed in 1000), why not to St Adalbert – missionary bishop and martyr, so well known also in Minor Poland, whose death prepared the way for the Polish metropolitan organization to be founded?

Given all these facts, we come to two hypotheses suggested quite recently by two leading Polish medievalists, prof. Jerzy Wyrozumski and prof. Gerard Labuda. The first one affirms that during the Bohemian period, presumably circa 973, the missionary bishopric was created in Cracow<sup>5</sup>; the second prefers the idea that Prohor and Procul

<sup>3</sup> *Katalogi biskupów krakowskich* [The Catalogues of the Bishops of Cracow], W. Kętrzyński (ed.), [in:] *Monumenta Poloniae historica*, vol. 3, Warszawa 1961, p. 328.

<sup>4</sup> The whole discussion was recently summarized by Stanisław Szczur, *Misja cyrylo-metodiańska w świetle najnowszych badań* [The Mission of St Cyril and Methodius in the Light of Recent Research], [in:] J. J. Wyrozumski (ed.), *Chryścianizacja Polski południowej. Materiały sesji naukowej odbytej 29 czerwca 1993 roku* [The Christianization of the Southern Poland. The Results of the Symposium – 29th June 1993], Kraków 1994; see also: G. Labuda, *Drogi chrześcijaństwa do Polski* [The Paths of Christianity to Poland], “*Nasza Przeszość*” 69:1988.

<sup>5</sup> J. Wyrozumski, *Dzieje Krakowa* [The History of Cracow], vol. 1, Kraków 1992; *Zagadnienie początków biskupstwa krakowskiego* [The Beginnings of the Bishopric of Cracow], [in:] J. Wyrozumski (ed.), *Chryścianizacja Polski południowej...*, Kraków 1994.

were in fact the bishops of Olomouc, but with the seat in Cracow<sup>6</sup>. Whatever the truth was, one can be sure that in the year 1000, when the Cracow diocese was incorporated into the Polish Metropolis, Christianity was already (at least institutionally) quite deeply rooted in Minor Poland.

And so, when in the 1030's the reaction of paganism undermined the whole network of ecclesiastical structures in Poland, the bishopric in Cracow was the only one to survive. And it was from Cracow that prince Kazimierz Odnowiciel (Casimir the Restorer, 1038–58) started the reconstruction of the Polish state and Church. From then on the importance of the bishops of Cracow – now the capital of Poland – systematically increased, recognized in a special way by Pope Urban III in his bull *In eminenti* (1186). In the middle of the next century it even gave birth to the local claims of Cracow being an archbishopric, which in fact was not granted to the city until 1925. Between 1000 and 1807 Cracow was ecclesiastically subordinated to Gniezno, then (1807–1818) to the archbishop of Lwów, and after that (1818–1880) to the Metropolis in Warsaw. Between the years 1880–1925 the Cracow diocese depended directly on the Holy See. On 28th October 1925 Pope Pius XI proclaimed in the bull *Vixdum Poloniae unitas* the foundation of the Metropolitan See in Cracow with the following bishoprics: Częstochowa, Katowice, Kielce and Tarnów. The first archbishop of Cracow was prince Adam Stefan Sapieha, the second – (from 1963) Karol Wojtyła. He – already as Pope John Paul II – reshaped for the last time his former archdiocese. With the bull *Totus tuus Poloniae populus* (25th March 1992) he created in Poland a new network of ecclesiastical structures, leaving Cracow as a metropolis with the dioceses of Bielsko-Żywiec, Kielce and Tarnów.

Despite the fact of hierarchical dependency, the bishop of Cracow was the head of the one of the largest dioceses in Europe (nearly 56000 km sq)<sup>7</sup>; from 1443 he was also (until 1790) Duke of Siewierz and – last but not least – the Grand Chancellor of the Cracow Univer-

<sup>6</sup> G. Labuda, *Studia nad początkami państwa polskiego* [The Studies on the Beginnings of the State of Poland], vol. 2, Poznań 1988.

<sup>7</sup> The Millennium of the Diocese of Cracow was commemorated by the series of books: B. Kumor, *Dzieje diecezji krakowskiej do roku 1795* [The History of the Diocese of Cracow until 1795], vol. 1, Kraków 1998; Vol. 2, Kraków 2000; J. Kracik, G. Ryś, *Dziesięć wieków diecezji krakowskiej* [The Ten Centuries of the Diocese of Cracow], Kraków 1998; S. Szczer & others, *Kościół krakowski w tysiącleciu* [The Church in Cracow in the Course of the Millennium], Kraków 2000; K. R. Prokop, *Poczet biskupów krakowskich* [The Catalogue of the Bishops of Cracow], Kraków 1999; *Felix saeculum Cracoviae – krakowscy święci XV wieku. Materiały z sesji naukowej, Kraków, 24 kwietnia 1997 roku* [Felix Saeculum Cracoviae – The Cracovian Saints of the 15th Century. The Materials of the Symposium – Cracow, 24th April 1997], K. Panuś, K. R. Prokop (edd.), Kraków 1998.

sity (till 1806), and, in a special way, its theological faculty, founded in 1397 (the oldest in Poland).

Through a 1000 years of its history the diocese of Cracow had many distinguished bishops, like: Nanker, the author of synodal Statutes (1320), being for many years a model for the parallel codifications in Polish dioceses; Zbigniew Oleśnicki (1423–1455), the first Polish cardinal and a politician of european importance; Jerzy Radziwiłł (1581–1600) and Bernard Maciejowski (1600–1605), the leaders of post-tridentine reform; Jan Chojeński (1537–1538), Andrzej Stanisław Kostka Załuski (1746–1758) and Jan Paweł Woronicz (1815–1829), extremely meritorious for Polish culture; and finally the great pastors of the last century: Cardinal Albin Dunajewski (1879–1894), Cardinal Adam Stefan Sapieha (1911–1951) and Cardinal Karol Wojtyła (1963–1978). Two bishops of Cracow were given the public cult in Catholic Church: St Stanislaus (1072–1079), the martyr and national patron of Poland; and blessed Wincenty Kadłubek (1208–1218), the first historian of Polish origin, the author of *Chronica Polonorum*. The local and temporary cult was adressed to the other five: Aron (1046–59), Iwo Odrowąż (1218–1229), Prandota (1242–1266), Nanker (1320–1326) and Jan Grot (1326–1347).

Some of the Cracovian bishops were outstanding theologians, influential also on the european level. Pointing to that group one must mention at least Piotr Wysz (1392 – 1412), the canonist and author of *Speculum aureum* – the reformist tractate well known in Europe; and Tomasz Strzemiński (1455–1460), whose work *Determinatio Basiliensis* was accepted among the official statements of the Council of Basel. Bishop Wysz played an important part in the restoration of the University of Cracow (founded by King Kazimierz the Great in 1364 and renewed by Władysław Jagiełło and his wife St Hedwig in 1400) and the creation of the theological faculty. It is important to stress that already the first generations of Polish theologians (Mateusz of Cracow, Benedykt Hesse, Jan Elgot, Jakub of Paradyż) took an active and vigorous part in the Universal Church-wide movement of reform known as conciliarism, while the canonists (Stanisław ze Skarbimierza, Paweł Włodkowic) created so called “Polish School of the Law of the Nations”, justifying (on theological grounds) the human liberty of religion and confession (more then five centuries ahead of the 2nd Vatican Council!).

In the centuries which followed (especially the 17th and 18th) Cracovian theology lost its original freshness and universal importance. It was revived, however, in the first decades of 20th century, by such scholars as Jan Fijałek or Konstanty Michalski. Unfortunately, after world war II, the communist government in Poland expelled the theological faculty from the University (1954). It survived as independent Pontifical Faculty of Theology (recognized only by the Holy

See), incorporated in 1981 into newly created Pontifical Academy of Theology (in 1989 recognized again by the State).

Of course, the history of the Church is not the history of her élites alone. Christian life is living first of all in the parishes and small communities. The very first list of the parishes of the diocese of Cracow one can reconstruct from the registers of St Peter's-penny. The oldest (from 1325) speaks about 467 parishes. Till the end of Middle Ages the number increased to nearly 800 (80% of the former diocese)<sup>8</sup>. Today, after many territorial changes, the diocese has 404 parishes.

Since the very beginning the diocesan clergy has been strongly supported in the work of evangelisation by the monastic and religious orders. First to come were the Benedictins (Tyniec, 1044). They were followed (in the 12th and 13th c.) by the Regular Canons, Cistercians (Mogiła, Koprzywnica, Ludźmierz) and Friars (Franciscans, Poor Clares, Dominicans; the Carmelites and Augustinians came in the 14th c.). From the 16th century on it is easier and more reasonable to point the different fields of activity of the new orders than to draw up their complete list. So, the education (Jesuits, Piarists, The Sisters of St Ursula or The Sisters of Presentation, founded in Cracow and leading the first female school in Poland), charity (e.g. Albertins, founded in the 2nd half of 19th c. in Cracow by Adam Chmielowski, a famous painter and great patriot, who lost his leg during the uprising against the Russians, and finally a genuine father of all the Cracovian homeless, sick and outcasts, known by them as brother Albert, the founder of male- and female- orders to continue his work in the world of poverty), and strict evangelisation, e.g. conducting parochial retreats and missions, hearing confessions (Capuchins, Redemptorists, the Community of Ressurrection) – to stress the most important ones only.

But, let us come back to those "common" Christians, the parishioners. It's not easy to describe the piety of this so-called "great dumb", the country- and towns-people, who left only a few traces in the ecclesiastical and state archives. One can scrutinize the texts of Sunday *exhortationes* (rhymed Decalogues, songs and prayers in vernacular), which together with the *Biblia pauperum* painted on the walls made a core of the popular teaching. For those expecting more the medieval parish had already offered the membership of different Confraternities. Till the middle of 16th century in Cracow alone there were fourteen of them (the oldest, created in 1347 was dedicated to Blessed Sacrament); some (like The Confraternity of St Sophia,

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<sup>8</sup> On the network of the parishes in Medieval Poland – see: E. Wiśniewski, *Rozwój organizacji parafialnej w Polsce do czasów reformacji* [The Parochial Network in Poland until the Reformation], [in:] *Kościół w Polsce*. T. 1: *Średniowiecze* [The Church in Poland. Vol. 1: The Middle Ages], Kraków 1968.

founded in 1410 in St Mark's Church) have survived until today. In 1584 the Confraternity of Charity (the very first in Poland) was organized in Cracow by a jezuit Piotr Skarga. Today those religious and pious guilds find their successors in many ecclesiastical movements, born in the Catholic Church after the II Vatican Council. Some of them, like Neo-catechumenal Way, Charismatic movement, Focolari, came to Poland from the West; some were founded in Poland or even in Cracow. Among these one must point out the so-called "Apostolic Groups" and, first of all, the movement called "Światło-Życie" (Life-Light), created by father Franciszek Blachnicki, who found a vigorous protector and defender against the communist régime in the person of Cardinal Wojtyła.

Another feature of the popular piety is pilgrimage. We can certainly say that the "great dumb" of our diocese was from the very beginning "the pilgrim people", and it is in the sources originating from this kind of piety (like *miracula, vita, exempla* etc) that we can finally find him speaking. The pilgrim city was, first of all, Cracow itself. The tombs of the saints were visited here: the graves of St Stanislaus and Quinn Hedwig in Wawel Cathedral, St Jack (one of the first Polish Black Friars) in dominican church, St John of Kęty (15th c. professor of Cracow University) in St Anne's church and many others. The pious devotion surrounded also the miracolous pictures of Our lady: in St Mary's church (the main church of the city), in all the mendicants churches, in St John's; and also outside Cracow: in Kęty, Płoki or Ludźmierz. The pilgrim movement got quite unique and spontaneous character in the 17th century (being certainly one of the most important "popular" way of re-catholicization of the Country after the Reformation). The most important sanctuaries of Our Lady in the diocese (Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Myślenice) were born in that century.

*You will be able to know them by their fruits* (Mt 7:17). Again, it is not easy to apply this logion of Jesus to the Church. The most important fruits of the Gospel are deeply hidden and covered from the sight of historians. Through the centuries, however, the Church tries to single at least some of them out, and to show as examples for all Christians. The saints are those fruits. Their Cracovian *Spectrum* is really rich and full of diversity. We have here the bishops and priests (St Stanislaus) and lay people, even from the first line of politics (St Kinga, St Hedwig, St Casimir); the scholars (like St John of Kęty) and very simple people (blessed Aniela Salawa, a house-servant); the passionates of silence and contemplation (blessed Bronislava, St Faustyna) and men of restless spirit and various activities (St Albert). In a special way Cracow was "the City of saints" in the 15th century (historians call it: *felix saeculum Cracoviae*). The same streets were walked along by: St John of Kęty, St Casimir, blessed Simon of Lipnica, blessed Casimir of Kazimierz, blessed Izajasz Boner, and

surrounded until today by the local cult Michał Giedroyć and Świętosław called "the Silent".

Those were pointed out by the popular and official devotion. The overwhelming majority – as we believe – is known only to God. We "seat on their shoulders like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants", and try to write down the next chapter – our chapter – in the history of the Church of God, which is in Cracow.

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