

**The Polish Baptist Identity in
Historical Context**

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Jerzy Pawel Rogaczewski

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AUTHOR: **Jerzy Pawel Rogaczewski**

SUPERVISOR: **Rev. Dr. William H. Brackney**

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Upon the recommendation of an oral examination committee and vote of the faculty, this thesis-project by

JERZY PAWEL ROGACZEWSKI

is hereby accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF DIVINITY

William H. Beachey

First Reader and Advisor

Reinhold J. Luban

Second Reader

W. W. [Signature]

External Reader

William H. Beachey

Dean

Date April 27, 1995

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Stefan Rogaczewski,
a beloved Baptist leader in Poland.

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INTRODUCTION

My aim in writing this thesis is to describe and analyze the nature of the Baptist identity in Poland in historical context. The history of the Baptist tradition in Poland which began as a German movement, will be discussed so that the reader can better understand the importance of the identity of a minority group in a Catholic nation. This theme is also important because Baptist identity is at times threatened by Western influences and trends. Poland's identity is still being formed even while the nation struggles to adjust to Western influence. Strategies and practices need to be developed which will enhance and nurture "Polish" Baptist identity. This thesis is a starting point for such work because it will address the needs of the contemporary Baptist churches in Poland.

On a more practical note, I hope that this thesis will help Baptists in Poland to come to a greater knowledge of their own Baptist identity and understanding of their unique heritage and place in Polish history. In turn they will be able to transfer knowledge of this tradition to the next generation of Poles.

I will first look at the roots of Christianity as it developed originally in North-Eastern Europe. This will

provide some background for the particular development of Baptists in Poland. The rise of Catholicism in Poland as a majority Christian group in Poland, is examined. The emergence of Protestantism in Poland, and the subsequent development of the Baptist movement in Poland with its institutions, literature and relationships, forms a third objective. Finally, I will attempt to assess the unique identity of Baptists in Poland and its relevance for ministry.

The theme of Baptist identity in Poland has yet to be thoroughly examined. Printed resources for this research are limited, and much of the primary sources are Polish language manuscripts and other documents relating to contemporary persons. Behind my own research are several earlier works, including, Bogdhan Jaroszewicz's *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Baptistow w Polsce* (1955), Henryk Ryszard, Tomaszewski *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918* (1993), Krzysztof Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborow Baptistow w Polsce do 1939 roku* (1993). In addition, Wieslaw Jedras' Senior Seminar paper at McMaster Divinity College, "The History of the Polish Baptists" (1986) has been useful.

I give special thanks to Dr. William H. Brackney for encouraging me to study the history of Christianity in Poland, and to write this thesis about the unique identity of Polish Baptists. Through Dr. Brackney's support and historical suggestions I was helped to see the Baptist movement in Poland from a wider perspective. Also, through research and

reflection I have come to a better understanding of what constitutes Baptist identity in Poland and how that identity has been influenced by its relationship to the Catholic Church in particular and the larger Christian community.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Reinhold Kerstan who also spent many hours correcting my thesis, and as one who knows Eastern Europe so well, his advice on this manuscript was invaluable. Through this work, Dr. Kerstan helped me to see that I cannot bring people of other traditions to Christ through criticism but only by the love of God, as evidenced by our words and deeds. I wish to extend my thanks to my defence committee, Dr. W.H. Brackney, Dr. R.J. Kerstan, Dr. A.R. Goldie, and Dr. W.H. Wiesner for their thought-provoking questions and the stimulating discussion that resulted. I would also like to offer my sincere appreciation to Dr. Louise Barber for her marvelous proofreading. Deep gratitude goes to Mrs. Terri Galan, who spent many extra hours typing and editing this manuscript.

Very generous with historical material and advice was Reverend Alex Pashko, pastor of First Polish Baptist Church, Toronto. My warm appreciation goes to the Polish Baptist Union for allowing me to use documents located in their archives in Warszawa. Also I express my thanks to Tadeusz Zielinski for his assistance with documents.

This work would not have been possible without the prayers, love and support of my mother and father. Their

personal experience of being a part of the history of the Baptist Church in Poland helped me to discover what it means to be a Baptist in Poland today.

Chapter I

Early Christianity in Poland and the Making of A Heritage

The essential character of Polish Christianity is Roman Catholic. This point is the foundation for any understanding of the Polish Church. This thesis begins with an historical investigation of Polish Christianity will range from 966 A.D. when Prince Mieszko I (?-992) and his court were baptized, to the present state of Roman Catholic Christianity in Poland. The first chapter will be divided into four parts as follows: the first will consist of a description of the origins of Catholic Christianity in Poland; second, I will examine the impact of the European Reformation; third, the Reformation in Poland; and fourth, I will discuss the fall of Polish Protestantism and the victory of the Counter Reformation.

I. Christian Origins in Poland

(A) The Pre-Christian Period in Poland

The society that lived between the rivers Vistula and Oder found itself by the tenth century within the territory of a Polish kingdom. This society already had a religious history

hundreds of years old, when Christianity arrived. Modern studies of the pre-Christian religion indicate that the Slavs had a vast and rich system of beliefs, a mixture of both ritual and magic. The religious system was transformed significantly between 500 and 1000 A.D., concurrent with the great migration of peoples in Northern Europe and the establishment of tribal fiefdoms. There were many tribes in the territory that later became a united Poland, each maintaining its own deities.¹

Polytheism was widely practiced, and the places of worship were in "holy" forests and groves. Homes provided significant worship centres for various families, neighbours and clans. Medieval clans were united in deep solidarity with the living and dead members of families and clans. The maintenance of cemeteries and presentation of the necessary things in life of those who passed into "mother life", were expressions of an inter-generational solidarity. The whole sphere of beliefs and practices over a long period, was blended into a syncretized form of Christianity.²

(B) Roman Catholic Influence

Catholic Christianity in Poland has significantly influenced the underlying culture of the Polish people. Events

¹ Jerzy Kloczkowski, Lidia Muellerowa, Jan Skarbak, *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Katolickiego w Polsce*, (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1986), 21-22.

² Kloczkowski, *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Katolickiego w Polsce*, 22.

of the tenth century had a great influence on Polish culture and customs. It was then that Christianity surged and spread quickly over Eastern and Central Europe where Slavic peoples had primarily settled.³

In the second half of the ninth century two apostles from Byzantium, Cyril (826-869) and Methodius (815-885), working in conjunction with Rome, led to the evangelization of the Moravian region. However, Cyril and Methodius came to an area that had already experienced the touch of Christianity. The Moravians were probably converted to Christianity about A.D. 800.⁴ It must be noted as well, that Prince Mojmir of Moravia was baptized in 822 A.D. The nation followed the prince only slowly into the Christian faith, because the roots of pagan practices were deep and resistance to conversion was strong. In Methodius' diocese alone, as a result of missionary work, there were over two hundred priests and deacons. During this period, stone churches replaced earlier wooden structures, a marked departure from previous primitive buildings. The Church in its long-term role, reminded pagans of the prominence and

³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴ There is no written evidence that Christianity entered Moravian territory in 800 A.D. However, around that time the burial methods appear to have changed. Prior to 800 A.D. pagans cremated their dead. However, as Christianity moved into Moravia after 800 A.D., people began to bury their dead. See, Wladyslaw Dziewulski, *Postepy Chrystianizacji i Proces Likwidacji Poganstwa w Polsce Wczesnofeudalnej* (Warszawa: Zaklad Narodowy im. Ossolinski, 1964), 184.

presence of Christianity in Moravia.⁵

Moravian Christian heritage also played a significant part in the consolidation of Roman Catholicism, both in the Czech region and in Poland. In A.D. 845, fourteen Czech princes and their entire courts were baptized into Christianity. According to Christian tradition, the princes were prepared for baptism by priests from Moravia, and then returned to Moravia for a short period to study their new faith in preparation for bringing it to the common people. However, pagan beliefs were strong, and it was difficult to find acceptance for the Christian faith in this region.⁶ Two centuries passed before Christianity was declared the official religion. The Czech peoples passed on to Poland many of their traditions as a Christian people of several generations.⁷

(C) The Beginnings of Christianity in Poland

The crucial point of reference in the Roman Catholic history of Poland was the baptism of Prince Mieszko I and his court in A.D. 966. The Prince ruled over a large and already well-developed state from A.D. 963 to 992.⁸ Legends

⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁷ Kloczkowski, *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Katolickiego w Polsce*, 22. See also, *Codex Diplomaticus et Epistolaris Bohemiae*, ed. G. Friedrich, I, Prague 1904-1907, no.33, p.37. Note that Czechs sent Christian missionaries to Poland and among them were monks and clerics.

⁸ Kloczkowski, *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Katolickiego w Polsce*, 22.

surrounding the baptism of Prince Mieszko I indicate that he was aware of the possibility of a violent opposition from those who still adhered to the old system of beliefs. His intention to renounce paganism was evident before his marriage to Czech Princess Dobrava (?-997).⁹

The first chronicler of Polish history, Gall-Anonime, who lived in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, stated that Mieszko I promised to be baptized before his marriage, and afterwards gradually to allow himself to be taught Christian customs and church liturgy.¹⁰ The first Polish diocese was created at Poznan, for here was the seat of the Piast dynasty, and most likely the capital city of Poland during the tenth century.¹¹ A source contemporary to the time of Mieszko I gave some indication about the difficulties in the Christianization of Poland. The historian Thietmar (975-1018) stated, "The first bishop of Poland, Jordan, had to work very hard in words and deeds to incline the inhabitants of the Polish state to change their religion".¹² Thus, Jordan's mission encountered strong opposition, and the ousting of the old cults was a long process.

At the time, even for the most enlightened people, the

⁹ *Dziewulski, Postepy Chrystianizacji i Proces Likwidacji Poganstwa w Polsce Wczesnofeudalnej*, 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹² *Ibid.*, 16.

existence of pagan gods was largely undisputed. However, those gods were seen by the Christian missionaries as idols which were hostile to Christianity.¹³ Conversely, while the most pious worshippers of pagan gods did not question the existence of the Christian God, they saw in Jesus Christ an identity that was foreign to their culture, and viewed Him as one that was allied only with people in the West, not inclined to relate to the Slavic people. Dowiat states: "The Slavic poor man from Merseburg cannot believe that the German god will help him".¹⁴ Between these extreme views there was enough space to allow for religious syncretism. This "double belief" appears in virtually all eastern European regions in the Middle Ages.

During the years A.D. 968 - 990, Mieszko I built an impressive cathedral in a pre-Roman architectural style in Poznan. This magnificent building was more of a testimony to the greatness of the prince than to the power or prestige of the Catholic religion of the day.¹⁵ Also, Christianity penetrated the Polish consciousness in other ways, most prominently through the teaching of the Catholic Church. The coinage of Mieszko I also played an important role in

¹³ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁴ Jerzy Dowiat, *Chrzest Polski*, 64, quoted in W. Dziewulski, *Postepy Chrystianizacji i Proces Likwidacji Poganstwa w Polsce Wczesnofeudalnej*, 61.

¹⁵ Wladyslaw Dziewulski, *Postepy Chrystianizacji i Proces Likwidacji Poganstwa w Polsce Wczesnofeudalnej* (Warszawa: Zaklad Narodowy Im. Ossolinskich, 1964), 30.

spreading Catholic ideology, in that the currency was stamped with Christian symbols.¹⁶

Mieszko's son and successor, Boleslaw Chrobry (967-1025), was a zealous follower of the new Catholic faith. Historian Thietmar presents the crown prince as a true iconoclast, opposing traditional paganism in an attempt to establish a strong central Catholic religion. His particular emphasis was the conversion of the pagans to Catholicism. Dziewulski states:

in the Middle Ages, the mission of the church had two elements: first, to exterminate the pagan cults (abvenutiatio diaboli) and secondly, to establish the new Catholic religion (confessio fidei). According to the teaching of Saint Augustine, it was permissible to be pagan, but the public exercise of pagan religion had to be obliterated.¹⁷

This principle was not always observed by the king's court, and non-Christians were often forced to be baptized and to reject their traditional beliefs. Violence was considered an acceptable method of bringing about conversion. Boleslaw Chrobry reportedly commanded his army to "smash the teeth of those eating meat during an official fast."¹⁸

The coronation of Boleslaw Chrobry (April 15, 1025) as King of Poland, stressed the indissoluble relation between church and state power. The presentation of the crown from the head of the church - the Archbishop of Gniezno - was a

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

powerful assertion against the remaining pagans in the land.¹⁹ By the eleventh century, the church had received official status, thus reducing the country's pagan traditions.

The Catholic Church in Poland sought greater independence from the state, hence the Church renewed its relations with Rome. Roman legates entered Poland in 1075 A.D. and later in the thirteenth century, managed to establish synods and established an infrastructure to help local priests to subdue the land. During this process, three thousand parishes were established, and this enabled the church to enjoy a greater influence on society and establish Catholicism formally.²⁰

The Christianization of Poland, which was a war between traditional polytheism and the new monotheistic faith, showed the consciousness of the masses regardless of their position in society. During this period, there was a stratification of religious persuasion, according to socio-economic status. The major social groups consisted of (1) the king and his court, (2) magnates or aristocrats, (3) gentry (land-holders), (4) the middle class (business owners), and (5) peasants. The disparities between the magnates and the peasants were great. The peasants hung on to the traditional pagan cults, and they publicly rebelled against the innovations of the Catholic religion. Peasants continued to worship their gods in forests

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

²⁰ Jerzy Kloczkowski, Lidia Muellerowa, Jan Skarbek, *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Katolickiego w Polsce* (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1986), 25, 40.

and groves. In general, the magnates were interested in the triumph of the new faith which enhanced their rank in the country. Likewise, because of the magnates' status in the country, the church had a vested interest in their loyalty.²¹

Some Polish historians are sceptical about the true progress of the initial Christianization process. Friedberg (1902-?) states that Christianization was mostly superficial and the influence of the Church embraced only the distinguished in society.²² Similarly, Jerzy Dowiat claims that the royal court, along with the rest of society, was influenced by Christianity only in name.²³ It would seem that the progress of the Church in organizing itself was significant, but the common people remained largely unaffected. In many ways, Catholicism gained only by compromise with the former pagan traditions. An illustration of such syncretism was the mutual influence of local communities and seers, bards, and clergy.

A weakness of early Polish Christianity was that the hierarchy of leadership consisted mostly of persons foreign to Poland. Polish people were not involved in the appointive positions of the Church. The bishops, priests and clergy, who came from Czech land, Germany, and Italy did not understand

²¹ Dziewulski, *Postepy Christianizacji i Proces Likwidacji Poganstwa w Polsce Wczesnofeudalnej*, 46-48.

²² *Ibid.*, 174.

²³ *Ibid.*

the language, culture, and local customs of Poland.²⁴ Only in the mid-eleventh century did Polish candidates begin to assume these positions of leadership.

The Catholic Church was an agent of several progressive principles. One such example was the order to suspend work on Sundays and on holy days.²⁵ This was a positive move for the working classes, whose work schedule was reduced. The doctrine of the afterlife was also an important feature of Christianization. Pagan theology had bred fear in the hearts of the peasants; however, Christianity replaced fear with hope of a life after death. The Church won increased popularity by proclaiming the duty of citizens to care for the poor. Finally, the Christianization of Poland during the ninth to thirteenth centuries brought structure to the lives of the Polish people. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the sacramental system of the Catholic Church had a firm and controlling grasp on Poles from birth to death, giving meaning to childhood, young adulthood, marriage and death.

(D) Pre-Reformation Catholic Church in Poland

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries brought to Poland a very intensive spread of Christianity. The Catholic Church constantly redefined its structure and its function in society, in order to extend Christianity and dominate the

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 20, 21, 25, 39.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 59-60. This prohibition (to suspend work on Sundays) was Giezno's decreed, written by Brzetyslaw I, in 1039.

state.²⁶ Poland, as a part of Catholic Eastern Europe, participated in the international integration of Christian civilization. This was related to a cultural awakening in the nation, seen in literature, language, and the rise of nationalism. Prior to this awakening, the spoken word preached from the pulpit was the only source of Christian proselytism. Following the cultural awakening, icons, architecture, paintings, and statues became main sources of education for the Christian faith. The monastic orders, such as the Paulines, spread through Poland, and often were the keepers of art treasures, such as the Black Madonna in the Jasna Gora Monastery in Czestochowa.²⁷ A profound theological shift occurred in this cultural awakening, as the religious cult switched its focus from the image of Christ as the object of worship to the image of Jesus' mother, Mary. Arising from the Marian cult was the Polish national song "Bogarodzica" (meaning the Parent of God, in the sense of motherhood), written in the thirteenth century. The song is a prayer to Jesus via the mediator Mary. The anthem further entrenched

²⁶ Recalling at this time that state and Church were very closely aligned, so that a powerful religion could control the affairs of state.

²⁷ The monastery of Paulines in Jasna Gora (Czestochowa, southern part of Poland) was established in 1382. The Madonna and the Saints became important at this time in the popular psyche of the people, for they were examples to be emulated. The people thus looked to the Saints and to Mary as example of how they should live their lives.

Catholic tradition in the minds of the Polish population.²⁸

A significant characteristic of the fourteenth century is the renaissance of positive Church relations with the state. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Archbishop in Gniezno, and later in Krakow, became the top authority in the state church.²⁹ This overwhelming popularity of the Catholic Church gave the Archbishop more influence and power than the monarch. This new relationship was symbolized in the coronation of the king by the archbishop. The royal counsellors were primarily chosen from bishops and priests. Such people quickly became the nation's new social elite.

In other ways the Church was influential in Polish life. Priests played a key role in the development of Polish science and education. One memorable example was Canon Nicholas Copernicus (1473 - 1543), from Frombork. His experiments in astronomy and mathematics were universally acclaimed achievements in the European scientific community. Education was directly related to the church's scholastic program. Often the only schools available were church institutions. Similarly, the Church had a significant influence on the development of architecture, the gothic style dominating many of the urban cathedrals.³⁰ It is apparent from these and many

²⁸ Jerzy Kloczkowski, *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Katolickiego w Polsce*, 76.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

other examples, that this period witnessed a Catholic Christian renaissance in Polish history, as the momentous events of the Reformation were to unfold.

II. The Protestant Reformation

In some ways, Poland was in a unique geographical position in the sixteenth century. As a result of the union with the Principalities of Lithuania in 1385,³¹ Poland was a dividing line between Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox believers. Lithuanian nobles remained Orthodox and were as resistant to the Reformation as were the Polish Catholics. Soon, however, there was an interest in social and political change, which brought new doctrine and practice.

Perhaps the greatest factor leading to the Reformation in Europe was the general attitude of the population. The increase in optimism shook the foundation of the medieval synthesis and ushered in a new epoch based on the great potential of humanity. The Renaissance brought many changes, particularly in the political arena. Popular discontent with Rome and centralized authority soon led to open rebellion. The chief catalysts were Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Huldrych Zwingli.

(A) Martin Luther

An early leader of the Reformation was Martin Luther

³¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

(1483-1546). The German Reformation began in October, 1517, when Luther protested, among other abuses, the sale of indulgences. His *Ninety-Five Theses*, printed and circulated throughout Germany, and posted on the church door in Wittenberg, aroused a violent protest against the sale of indulgences and other undesirable practices.

The turning point in Luther's theology came as a result of his study of the Epistle to the Romans, particularly chapter 1, verse 17, "The just shall live by faith". Luther's theme of *sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola fides*³² was revolutionary in its confrontation of the sale of indulgences by the Roman Catholic clergy and other abuses in the Church of Rome. The development of the Lutheran Church, separated from Rome and wholly independent, took place in the year 1530 at the Diet of Augsburg.³³ The Lutheran Reformation spread from Germany to Switzerland, France, England, Scandinavia, Poland, and Hungary.

(B) Huldrych Zwingli

Another stream of the Reformation occurred in Switzerland. The initiator of this movement was Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531). About the year 1516, Zwingli came to view the Bible rather than the church as the ultimate authority and

³² Andrzej Tokarczyk, *Ewangelicy Polscy* (Warszawa: Interpress, 1988), 8.

³³ Kurt Aland, *Martin Luther's 95 Theses* (London: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 88, 116.

the source of doctrine for the church.³⁴ His major difference from Luther was over the Lord's Supper, disagreeing with Luther's view that the body and blood of Christ are actually present in the sacrament. For Zwingli, the Lord's Supper was primarily an occasion to remember the benefits purchased by Christ's death, and became a symbol of spiritual reality.³⁵ Zwingli was strongly predestinarian in his theology, and he wrote a number of tracts and aided in the composition of confessions to promote the course of the Reformation, such as the *Sixty-Seven Theses*, which proclaimed the authority of the gospel.³⁶

(C) John Calvin

In another region of Switzerland, first in Basel then in Geneva, John Calvin (1509-1564), built a new Christian community. Calvin gave the Reformed faith its most complete and systematic statement through his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1535.³⁷ The foremost principle of Calvin's theological teaching was embodied in the Latin phrase, *sola scriptura*. Especially important to were the doctrines of the sovereignty of God and predestination. The

³⁴ Williston Walker, *A History of The Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 443.

³⁵ H. Wayne Pipkin, editor, *Huldrych Zwingli Writings* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Publications, 1984), Volume II, 129.

³⁶ Jerald C. Brauer, *The Westminster Dictionary of Church History* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 886.

³⁷ William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 17.

basis of faith and church structure established by Calvin were published in 1566 in the *Second Helvetic Confession*.³⁸

(D) The Anabaptist Movement

The unique part of the Reformation was that associated with the Anabaptists who lived in Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands. This radical group of believers denounced paedobaptism, and insisted on the separation of church and state. Anabaptism originated in the circle of Conrad Grebel who baptized George Blaurock, a former priest, on 21 January, 1525.³⁹ Their opponents called them *Anabaptists*, (rebaptizers).⁴⁰

A controversial leader among the Anabaptists was Thomas Muenzer (1493-1525), from Zwickau. Muenzer preached that the Kingdom of God should become a reality on earth. He agitated German peasants to armed revolt against the clergy and secular feudal masters. Muenzer taught that one should not passively await the coming of the Kingdom of God, but should fight for it with "fire and sword".⁴¹ Most Anabaptists and their sympathizers rejected all social differences and propagated communal ownership of goods and land. In questions of

³⁸ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1953), 890-891.

³⁹ John Allen Moore, *Der Starke Jorg* (Kassel: Johan Gerhard Oncken Verlag, 1955), 13.

⁴⁰ Walker, *History of the Christian Church*, 449.

⁴¹ George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952), 44 ff.

religion, they put Scripture above worldly authority. Anabaptist concepts were radical even to the other Reformers; thus Anabaptists were bitterly persecuted in Protestant and Catholic regions. The first Anabaptist martyr was Felix Mainz, who was drowned in the River Limmat at Zurich on 5 January, 1527.⁴² During the times of persecution, many Anabaptists fled across Europe, some of them reaching Poland, where for some time, they found freedom for their religious ideas. Recent scholarship shows that numerous Mennonites, fleeing from persecution in the Low Countries, settled in the region of Gdansk where they obtained land in the Vistula delta. Today, there are few reminders of the historical presence of Mennonites in Poland. Only a few ancient church structures and their surrounding cemeteries point to their former existence.⁴³ The beliefs of the Anabaptists survive today in the Mennonite and Brethren faiths and, indirectly, in the Baptist tradition.

III. The Polish Reformation

The various streams of the Reformation entered Poland through three doors: exposure of Poles to new ideas in universities, anonymous missionaries, and social class

⁴² Walker, *History of The Christian Church*, 450.

⁴³ "News Release", Mennonite World Conference, 17 March, 1995; 2.

identification with a particular part of the Reformation.⁴⁴ In general, the response of the people of Poland to the Protestant Reformations depended upon the desires and expectations of different social groups. The main goal of the Reformers in Poland was an expropriation of Crown and Church power, thus limiting the authority of the Church's courts over the gentry, and rendering government policies independent from Rome.⁴⁵

A characteristic feature of the Polish Reformation was the spread of Calvinism among the nobility and among the middle class. As one historian notes,

Calvinism became the belief of the nobility. The Polish nobility were educated in the best democratic tradition, and to them the social doctrines of Calvinism were more acceptable. Calvinism was better received in Poland because it came some time later than Lutheranism. At that time, the Reformation could develop openly. The ties of Calvin himself to Poland had a personal character. Calvin wrote letters to King Zygmunt August (1520-1572) and to Prince Michal Radziwil (1515-1565), asking them to support his ideas of the Reformation.⁴⁶

The Polish nobility was open to Calvinism because its democratic confessional structure created the possibility of involving lay people in the organization of the church. Moreover, the nobility preferred a national church, as well as

⁴⁴ Janusz Tazbir, *Swit i Zmierzch Polskiej Reformacji* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1956), 52. Also see Andrzej Tokarczyk, *Ewangelicy Polscy* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Interpress, 1988) 19-20 and Janusz Tazbir, *Reformacja w Polsce* (Warszawa: Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1993), 44.

⁴⁵ Tokarczyk, *Ewangelicy Polscy*, 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

a church without large contributions of money. Such a church could be the tool of social reforms in the struggle against the social power of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Lutheran Reformation also had an impact in Poland. Luther emphasized the need to know and preach biblical truth in the vernacular. The first Polish publication of Reformation material was the translation of Luther's Catechism, printed in Wittenberg in 1530.⁴⁷ Moreover, Martin Luther himself investigated closely the progress of the Reformation in Polish lands. Luther was of the opinion that the Slavic Reformation initiated by the Bohemian Jan Huss (1369?-1415) had a greater opportunity for growth in Poland than his own ideas.⁴⁸

In 1570, the Lutherans, Calvinists and Czech Brethren gathered at Sandomierz in a show of confessional unity.⁴⁹ It was one of the greatest examples of early Protestant ecumenism. However, the congregations of Arians (Polish Brethren) were excluded from taking part. This was a reaction to their radical confessionalism and doctrinal stance, as well as against their social views. According to the Polish Brethren, Christ was a human elevated to divinity after the Resurrection. Further, the Polish Brethren practised the

⁴⁷ Tokarczyk, *Ewangelicy Polscy*, 22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁹ Janusz Tazbir, *Reformacja w Polsce* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1993), 46.

baptism of believers by immersion.⁵⁰ In 1758 Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) came from Italy to Krakow in Poland and joined the Brethren. From this connection, the Polish Brethren came to be called "Socinians".⁵¹ Socyn, the nephew of Lelius Socyn, a famous Italian Anti-Trinitarian, further influenced the development of Polish Arian thought, which actually pre-existed Socyn's arrival in Poland. Domestic Arianism, represented by Grzegorz Pawel (1525-1591) from Brzeziny, and by Marcin Czechowicz (1532-1613), taught full freedom of conscience. At the time when the matters of church and state were closely tied together, the Polish Brethren demanded a radical separation of church and state.⁵²

The Polish Brethren contributed to progressive social thought, building institutions and influencing education. The Arians opened the Rakow Academy in 1602.⁵³ The movement

⁵⁰ Today's Baptists in Poland see and emphasize a relationship between themselves and the Polish Brethren. There is no historical evidence to prove the line of continuity between Arians (the Polish Brethren) and Polish Baptist movement which arose in Poland in 1858. However, the Polish Baptists argue that the Polish Brethren gave the present Polish Baptist movement strong theoretical and practical support, especially in the doctrine of baptism by immersion.

⁵¹ Tokarczyk, *Ewangelicy Polscy*, 47.

⁵² Janusz Tazbir, *Swit i Zmierzch Polskiej Reformacji* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1956), 170.

⁵³ Tokarczyk, *Ewangelicy Polscy*, 48, noted that Academy of Rakow became the capital of the Arians in Poland. Associated with Rakow were many scientists, philosophers and great thinkers. The precursor of the idea of tolerance was Jan Crell (1590-1630) who stated: "we cannot press people to confession of faith because this brings only hypocrisy." In the Rakow confession it states: "we defend freedom. All people should

disintegrated, however, at the time of the Counter-Reformation, when the Brethren were banished from the country in 1658.⁵⁴ Most fled to Hungary and Prussia, with hundreds emigrating further to England and Holland.

Perhaps the greatest success of the Polish Reformation was the decree by the Polish Diet in 1573 of the "Warsaw Confederation", guaranteeing unconditional and eternal peace for people of different faiths. The initiators of this first official act of religious toleration were the noble classes of both Catholic and Protestant faiths. While one Catholic bishop signed the agreement, most of the Catholic clergy did not support it.⁵⁵ Many nobles saw in the Confederation an opportunity to avoid a "Holy War", the ultimate conflict where people are divided along religious lines. The Warsaw Confederation was largely responsible for guaranteeing toleration and freedom of conscience for a period of several years. Eventually this confederation broke down, and in 1579 Catholics began to act aggressively towards the Protestant Reformation movements. For example, Catholics destroyed a Lutheran Church in Wilno in 1579 A.D.⁵⁶ In 1632 Tomasz

have the freedom to choose faith in Christ, and all people should have freedom of religious beliefs." The Academy was closed in 1638 along with its publishing house by the Catholic Bishop Jakub Zadzik.

⁵⁴ Janusz Tazbir, *Swit i Zmierzch Polskiej Reformacji*, 185.

⁵⁵ Tokarczyk, *Ewangelicy Polscy*, 36-37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 43. Also see Valerian Krasinski, *The Reformation in Poland* (London: Wilczewski & Co., 1840), 177-195.

Zamojski (1594-1638) asserted to Protestants that their religion was a guest in the Polish lands and the Catholic religion was the Master of the House; Protestants were to receive only what Catholics were willing to give them.⁵⁷ The fact remains, however, that sixteenth century Poland avoided a religious war and there were no executions of religious dissenters.

Another influence of the European Reformation on Poland were the religious wars and persecutions which forced many opponents of the Catholic Church to leave their countries and travel across Europe in search of religious asylum. A seemingly good place of refuge was Poland. There, different faith groups found safe haven to continue their work. Among those movements were some of the Anabaptists, who settled mainly in Silesia (southern Poland). In August, 1534, a group of about two hundred Anabaptists came to Torun. The next year, King Zygmunt I issued a decree asking the mayors of cities not to accept Anabaptists within the territory of Poland. The king also ordered the deportation of those who had settled.⁵⁸ To complicate matters, Anabaptists had to struggle with internal extremism, which frightened the political authorities with the possibility of revolution, so the authorities took effective steps to censure Anabaptists. Most of the Anabaptist groups, therefore, left Poland, being deprived of the chance to play

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Tazbir, *Reformacja w Polsce*, 148-149.

a significant role in the development of the country.

In addition to the Lutherans, Calvinists, Polish Brethren, and Anabaptists, there appeared another religious group in Poland: the Czech Brethren. The historian Edward Balakier (1919-1994) in his book, *The Matter of the National Church in Poland in the Sixteenth Century*, traced their course:

Ferdinand I, the Czech king, issued a decree in 1547 forcing the Czech Brethren to leave Czech territory. One group of the Czech Brethren went to Prussia, a second group of about four hundred people went to Great Poland, where they were received.⁵⁹

In Poland, the Czech Brethren founded schools and printing shops. They were known for their simplicity of lifestyle and their faith in the ideal of poverty. Most later joined with Calvinists to form the United Reformed Church.

To summarize, the success of the Protestant Reformation in Poland was limited. In Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Germany, the social basis and propelling force of the Reformation was the middle-class. In contrast, the representative Polish group embracing Reformation ideas was the Nobility. They competed against the Magnates for political influence and an independent position of strength in the country.⁶⁰

The Polish Reformation also significantly differed from

⁵⁹ Edward Balakier, *Sprawa Kościoła Narodowego w Polsce XVI Wieku* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Literatury Religijnej, 1962), 80.

⁶⁰ Tokarczyk, *Ewangelicy Polscy*, 15.

its Western European counterparts, in that it was a movement without the fires of execution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In France, Germany, and Italy, bloody religious wars were fought. During the same period, Poland was a safe haven for many of the dispossessed. The examples of Socyn and the Arians testify to this reality.

IV. The Downfall of Polish Protestantism and the Victory of the Counter-Reformation

A major problem for the Protestant movements in Poland was the lack of effective leadership. No major heroic figures emerged to carry forth the ideals, ideals often considered foreign to Polish culture. In addition, the Protestants suffered from lack of unity; like ocean waves, they were dashed apart as soon as they met the rock of Roman Catholic solidarity.⁶¹ Infighting among Lutherans, Calvinists, and Polish Brethren in Poland kept the Protestants preoccupied. Many who had left had expressed initial interest in Reformation ideology, but concluded they were fighting a losing battle, and so returned to Catholicism.⁶²

A second reason why the Reformation did not reach the masses in Poland was doubtless the conflict between

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 45. Also see Krasinski, *The Reformation in Poland*, 104-130.

⁶² Tazbir, *Reformacja w Polsce*, 11.

rationalistic Protestantism and mystical Catholicism. The Polish masses preferred the simplicity of the beautiful, vibrant iconography and the traditional liturgy of the Catholic Church, to the complexity of Protestant doctrines. As Tazbir points out,

The masses were not interested in the new faith because they had previously paid tithes to the Roman Church. Now, the same tithes had to be given to the clergy of the new faith; moreover, the necessity to support schools and printing shops was emphasized. In Poland, the peasants did not go to the Protestant churches because neither the Lutheran movement or Calvinism supported the interests of peasants on the city poor.⁶³

Lastly, there were reasons inherent in Polish Catholicism for the downfall of Protestantism. After the Council of Trent (1564), the Catholic Church redoubled its doctrinal stance and fought to overturn Protestant gains at all costs. The Society of Jesus, the most powerful Counter-Reformation arm of the Church, entered Poland in 1564.⁶⁴ The Jesuits influenced the Polish religious culture through their educational system and social work, easily adapting to the Polish culture.⁶⁵ Jesuits had been trained to lead missions to different cultures and to integrate into the society structure. Interestingly, Jesuit schools were popular among both Protestants and Catholics.⁶⁶

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶⁴ Janusz Tazbir, *Szlachta i Teologowie* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1987), 9.

⁶⁵ Krasinski, *The Reformation in Poland*, 198-202.

⁶⁶ Balakier, *Sprawa Kościoła Narodowego w Polsce XVI Wieku*, 85.

V. Summary

This first chapter has traced the beginnings of Christianity in Poland from the ninth to the late sixteenth century. In the ninth century, the first Catholic missionaries brought their faith to the Polish territories, experiencing limited success due to strong pagan resistance. Christianity gained a foothold nevertheless. Following the baptism of Prince Mieszko in A.D. 966, Catholicism gained an increased influence in Polish life which filtered into all areas of society, exterminating pagan practices and increasing formal education.

The Protestant Reformation, born in Europe in the late sixteenth century, was planted in Poland mostly among the nobility who felt the new ideals would liberate them from Rome and give them greater influence in social and political change. Although the persecution of Protestants by Catholics in Poland did occur, it was tame in comparison with other regions in Europe. In reaction, the Counter-Reformation was simply too strong and well-organized for the disjointed and oft-times quarrelling Protestant leadership to withstand. Added to this was the attitude of the masses who were not attracted to the complex and seemingly foreign Protestant doctrines. Further, the Jesuits were expert in cross-cultural mission, thus ensuring the failure of Protestantism in Poland.

To conclude, Christianity came to Poland in the form of

Roman Catholicism, and was firmly implanted in all levels of Polish life, especially in relations between the Church and the state. The intrusion of various Protestant traditions was unsuccessful ultimately because they reflected non-Polish cultures and because the Catholic Church made a successful attempt to strengthen their views and practices. The Catholic heritage of Poland would provide a difficult context for the Baptist tradition in the nineteenth century.

Chapter II

The Beginnings of the Baptist Movement in Poland

This chapter pursues two objectives: (1) tracing the origins of the Baptist movement from Great Britain to Europe, and (2) describing the beginnings of the Baptist tradition in Poland. Of special interest will be congregational establishment, Baptists under persecution, the development of Polish Baptist institutions, and alliances of Baptists in Poland with other Christian groups. This chapter will focus on the time period from 1858 through 1945, a little under a century of religious development.

I. Baptist History from Great Britain to Europe

Baptists are a worldwide religious movement of Anglo-Saxon origin. In the British tradition, Baptists are a part of the Puritan Separatist movement. From England and Wales, they spread to North America and also to Europe. The centre of Baptist life in Europe was Germany. The Baptist story in Poland is a part of the German Baptist missionary advance.

(A) Origins of the Baptists in Great Britain

The Baptist movement emerged out of the English-speaking

culture of Great Britain. At the turn of the seventeenth century, John Smyth (1554-1612), a Puritan-Separatist, led his small congregation to adopt a Baptist view of the church and the ordinances.¹ That congregation fled to Holland in 1606-1607 where it would grow in numbers.² Some of the members of the Smyth congregation returned to England in 1612, where several other churches were established. By 1626, these churches were known as *General Baptist* churches. They were labelled *General* because they believed that "Christ died for all", hence, a general view of the atonement.³

A second major group of Baptists emerged in England in the 1640's. They came to be known as the *Particular Baptists*. They were named this way because they believed in the concept of the particular atonement, in that Christ died for an elect or particular group. Their theology was Calvinistic and related to the English Independents.⁴ The Particular Baptist churches grew rapidly, producing a confession of faith in

¹ James R. Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation* (Waterloo: Herald Press, 1991), 32; 61.

² *Ibid.*, 44.

³ B. R. White, *The English Baptists of the 17th Century* (London: The Baptist Historical Society, 1983), 7. See, A.C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1947), 28. Also See, Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson, *A Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice* (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1966), 38-39.

⁴ Underwood, *English Baptists*, 56; White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 7.

1644,⁵ and a national association in 1660. By 1700, this group had become the stronger Baptist body in Great Britain. There were also other minor groups among the Baptists, such as Seventh-Day Baptists⁶ and the "Leg of Mutton Baptists."

An important date in the history of the British Baptists was 1792. In that year the Baptist Missionary Society was organized, primarily as the result of the efforts of Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and William Carey (1761-1834). This society was a model for Baptist missionary work in India, Africa and Europe.⁷

(B) The Spread of the Baptist Movement to North America

Baptists emigrated to North America beginning in the 1630's. The first church was established in the Colony of Rhode Island in 1638/1639 by Roger Williams and other Baptist settlers. By 1675, an association of Baptist churches was formed among churches situated from Boston to New Haven. Five years later, Baptist churches could be found in the Middle Colonies and in the South. There were both General and Particular Baptists throughout the American colonies, and a few other varieties of American Baptists as well, notably the

⁵ White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 8; William H. Brackney, *Baptist Life and Thought: 1600-1980* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1983), 37,58.

⁶ Brackney, *Baptist Life and Thought: 1600-1980*, 32.

⁷ See Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark) and William Brackney, "The Baptist Missionary Society in Proper Context: Some Reflection on the Larger Voluntary Religious Tradition" Baptist Quarterly XXXIV: 8 (October, 1992), 364-378.

Seventh Day Baptists.⁸ By 1707 American Baptists produced a Confession of Faith and formed an Association of like-minded churches. During the American Revolution, largely as a result of the Great Awakening, Baptists grew rapidly, spreading even to Nova Scotia, Canada. By 1800, Baptists had founded their own college, Brown University in Rhode Island (established 1764), and they were producing literature for a broad constituency.

As in Great Britain, Baptists in the United States shared a particular interest in missions. They formed their first general mission society in 1800 and a national mission society in 1814. By the 1840's, American Baptists supported and encouraged missionaries among American Indians, and to Africa, India, Burma and China.⁹

(C) Beginnings of the Baptist Movement in Europe

The father and pioneer of the Baptist movement in Europe was Johann Gerhard Oncken (1800-1884). Oncken was sent as a missionary to Germany by the British Continental Mission Society in 1823¹⁰; subsequently he was baptized by immersion by an American Baptist missionary, Barnas Sears (1802-1880). In 1834, Oncken established the first Baptist church in

⁸ H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 123.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 360.

¹⁰ Guenter Balders, *Theurer Bruder Oncken* (Kassel: Oncken Verlag Wuppertal, 1978), 22ff.

Germany in Hamburg.¹¹ Following this event, Baptists in Germany grew rapidly, producing a Confession of Faith in 1837¹² which Oncken wrote, and establishing in 1800 a Baptist theological seminary, in Hamburg. Oncken's missionary work also extended to other European countries such as Sweden and Norway, Holland, France, Austria-Hungary, East Prussia, Poland and Russia.¹³

Oncken was among the first Europeans who encouraged believers to participate in voluntary missionary work. His theology was summed up in the phrase, "Every Baptist a missionary."¹⁴

(D) Baptist Identity in General

There are several ideas fundamental to the majority of Baptist groups which help to create the unique identity of the movement. The most important feature of Baptist identity is the high priority given to the authority of the Scripture. The bible is understood to be the sole rule of faith and practice. Baptists also have a unique theology of the Church. The church is a body of immersed believers who receive membership by voluntary personal profession of faith. Also of importance to the Baptist tradition is the independence of each local

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 40,43.

¹² Robert L. Kluttig, *Geschichte der Deutschen Baptisten in Polen* (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1973), 339.

¹³ McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 470-494.

¹⁴ Bohdan Jaroszewicz, *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Baptystow w Polsce* (Warszawa, 1955), 10.

church. This congregational principle is derived from the belief that Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of each local congregation. Two other primary characteristics of Baptist identity have been their beliefs in the importance of religious experience and of religious liberty, the latter connected with the concept of the separation of church and state.¹⁵ Every believer interprets the bible for himself and there is no interference of the state into the affairs of the churches.

II. Beginnings of the Baptist Tradition in Poland

Baptist growth in Poland occurred as an extension of the work of the German Baptist, J. G. Oncken. For generations, Polish Baptist work carried a German imprint.

(A) The Establishment of the First Congregations

The beginning of the Baptist movement in Poland dates to the second half of the 19th century. Gotfryd Fryderyk Alf (1831-1898) has been known as the "parent" of the Baptists in Poland. In 1858, Alf started his work as a teacher in Adamow, a town ten miles north-east of Warszawa, (Warsaw). On the recommendation of the Consistory of the Protestant-Lutheran Church, Alf became a cantor in a Lutheran church in Mentow.¹⁶

¹⁵ Maring, *A Baptist Manual*, 4-7.

¹⁶ The letter of the Religion Department dated 5 February, 1862 to the local government of the Plock Gubernya, about Baptists, in: "The Central Archives of the Old Records in Warszawa", the

Alf's task was to prepare children for Confirmation in a Lutheran church. During his experiences in a bible study group, Alf came to know Jesus Christ and his saving grace, and began to understand the meaning of personal salvation through Jesus Christ.¹⁷ Shortly thereafter, he began to meet with a pietistic group of believers and led a prayer service and a home bible study. Those who participated in these Bible study meetings were mostly German colonists.¹⁸

Alf's followers were unhappy with the situation in their church. Much debate surrounded the issue of baptism. From these discussions, Alf and his followers came to the conclusion that the acts of repentance and baptism were incorrectly practised in the Lutheran Church. The issue of baptism was discussed by Alf's followers. Eventually, Alf's group was divided. Some were advocates of infant baptism while others were in favour of believer's baptism. There was much hesitation and discussion over infant baptism, and those who defended believer's baptism were in a difficult position because it was not easy to break with the Lutheran heritage

Central Religious Government of the Kingdom of Poland, signature 1036. The records refer to the sects of Baptists in Poland between 1862-1880. Also see Kluttig, *Geschichte der Deutschen Baptisten in Polen*, 20-21.

¹⁷ Henryk Ryszard Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918* (Warszawa: Slovo i Zycie, 1993), 26-27.

¹⁸ After the third partition of Poland when Prussia occupied the part of Wielkopolska and Mazowsie, German colonization intensified. German colonists were members of the Protestant-Lutheran Church. See Janusz Tazbir, *Reformacja w Polsce* (Warszawa: Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1993), 44-45.

and tradition of baptising infants. The disagreement surrounding this issue grew.¹⁹ Then Heinrich Assmann (1836-1925) came from East Prussia and met with the Baptist believers. He proposed to invite Pastor Wilhelm Weist to Adamow from the city of Stolzenberg (Braniewo) in East Prussia. Weist came to Adamow in November, 1858 with his co-workers, Ferdynand Szymanski,²⁰ and Ludwik GROSS.²¹

Weist explained the essence of baptism as he understood it from a biblical perspective. As a result of this discussion, Alf and nine of his followers were baptized as conscious believers on 28 November 1858. The next day another seventeen people were baptized by Pastor Weist.²² It was at this point that the first Baptist congregation on Polish territory was established. Local Lutheran clergy were hostile and expressed opposition to this movement. In an effort to prevent the Baptists from taking root and/or expanding, Lutheran clergy forced the local government to arrest W. Weist, L. Gross, and F. Szymanski on 30 November 1858, for

¹⁹ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptistow* , 11.

²⁰ Ferdynand Szymanski was a Pole who lived in East Prussia. He was invited by Weist as an interpreter for German and Polish.

²¹ Edward Kupsch, *Geschichte der Deutschen Baptisten in Polen 1852-1932*, 23-28, quoted in Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, 21.

²² Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, 21.

having baptized adults in Poland.²³ After six days of imprisonment the trio was released. They went to Adamow where on the next day, Pastor Weist baptised thirteen people.²⁴ Pastor Weist chose two people, Alf and Gnass, to lead the congregation and gave instructions to Alf about how the church should be structured and administered. Then Pastor Weist left Adamow with his translator, Szymanski, to return to East Prussia.²⁵

After Pastor Weist's departure, the congregation in Adamow began to work actively among the German colonists, and among Poles. However, the German colonists were the majority in the church in Adamow. As a result of the German presence in the Adamow congregation, the services were conducted in German.²⁶ It must be stressed that in the beginning of the development of the Baptist movement in Poland, Germans predominated. As this new congregation in Adamow was

²³ The letter of the Chief of Directors from the Government Committee of Raitheusness dated December 27, 1858 to the chief of Directors of the Government Committee of the Inner Religious Matters, in "The Central Archives of the Old Records in Warszawa", sign. 1036. See Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, 21.

²⁴ "Missionsblatt der Gemeinden getaufter Christen", 1859, 27, and E. Kupsch, *Geschichte der Deutschen Baptisten in Polen*, 30-31; Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, 22.

²⁵ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptistow*, 13.

²⁶ From the letter of F. G. Alf dated 15 October 1864. This letter contained information about the language to be used in the church services, in the "Central Archives of the Old Records in Warszawa", signature 1036. See also *Kalendarz Chrzescijanina* (Warszawa: Zjednoczony Kosciol Ewangeliczny, 1983), 302.

established during the time of German Occupation, the Polish were not allowed to establish "new" local churches on their own.

(B) German Influence in Early Polish Baptist Life

The Baptist community, just emerging in Poland, received from the German Baptists the rules of membership to guide the church, and the theology and practices for the church.²⁷ The rules for membership stated that the only people able to become part of the church were those that presented their testimony of Christian conversion. The congregation would listen to the testimonies of the converts and then vote on whether the person should be accepted into the church or not. Those that were voted into acceptance by the congregation were then baptized by immersion, enabling them to participate in the Lord's Supper. Members were responsible for supporting the pastor of the church; in Adamow this was Alf. All members were held responsible for living a "holy" life which was evidence of their commitment to Christ and their separation from the world. According to Oncken's perspective, all Baptists were considered to be missionaries responsible for sharing the message of the Gospel. Church discipline was maintained by deacons or elders who exercised the discipline according to

²⁷ From a Declaration submitted by Baptists to the Town Hall in Nowe Miasto dated 21 July 1865, in the "The Central Archives of the Old Records in Warszawa", signature 1036. Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, 55: noted, "We totally accept the teaching and principles of faith and practice as written in the Catechism published by J. G. Oncken in Hamburg in 1860."

Matthew 18:15-17. If a problem arose in the church among the members, the deacons were responsible for discipline in order to ensure that all members were held accountable to the congregation as a whole.²⁸

The German Baptist churches in Poland were based on the congregational model which gave relative independence to each congregation to administer its affairs according to the wishes of the members. Based on the statutes to which the Baptists of the Adamow church adhered, there were only two ordinances/sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism was only for adult believers who had consciously confessed the Lordship of Christ in their lives. The Baptists in Adamow were seen as a religious sect,²⁹ whose roots lay in Hamburg.

Baptists in Poland adapted from Germany church education and practice. For example, the church in Adamow followed a course of instruction which they had received from Pastor Weist of Stolzenberg, East Prussia.³⁰ The church at Adamow was given an important educational opportunity when Alf went to study at the Baptist Mission School (later Baptist Theological Seminary) in Hamburg. After a few months of study in Hamburg, G. F. Alf was ordained by J. G. Oncken on 26 September 1859; he then returned to Poland.³¹

²⁸ Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, 55.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 33, 42.

³⁰ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptistow*, 13.

³¹ Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, 29.

In 1860 the congregation in Adamow erected a church building with German Baptist financial assistance. The same year the church baptized one hundred ten people. In 1861 the church received autonomous status granted by the German Baptists of East Prussia. The result was the first independent Baptist church in *Congress Poland*.³² However, this church was still part of the Alliance of Baptist Churches based in East Prussia.³³ It continued to receive financial aid, prayerful support, and visitors from the East Prussian congregations.

The ceremony celebrating the autonomy of the church took place on 4 August 1861. Two pastors from East Prussia, Gulzana and Heina, came to declare officially the independence of the Adamow congregation. The church ordained three deacons: Frederyk Reszke, Michal Tauber, and Jacob Brede. The church was active in 1860-61 in missionary work, which led to two hundred sixty conversions in one year. From 1858 to 1863 the church in Adamow was the centre of Baptist life in Poland.³⁴ Logically, Adamow was also the model of missionary work that all other Baptist churches were to follow, namely that of a village church. The village model of the Baptist church became the prototype for *all* the Polish Baptist churches established

³² *Congress Poland* was the partition territory under the occupied rule of the Russians.

³³ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow* , 16.

³⁴ Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, 39.

in the second half of the nineteenth century: Kurowek, Zezulin, Zyrardow, Warszawa, and Lodz.³⁵

As mentioned earlier, the first stirrings of the Baptist movement were derived from a reaction to the rationalism found in the Lutheran Church. The Baptists approached Lutheranism with the same critique that Luther had used against the Catholic Church during the Reformation: secularization of the clergy, the corruption of church by state politics, and the immoral life of the clergy was a major concern for Baptists.

(C) Rural and Urban Models of Baptist Churches in Poland

During the 1860's the newly established Baptist congregations experienced a great deal of persecution primarily by the Lutheran Church, but also by the local governments. As a result of persecution, Alf and his followers left Adamow in 1864 for the village of Kicin.³⁶ From Kicin the Gospel was propagated in the villages and cities of the surrounding area. This included Warszawa and Zyrardow, which became the missionary stations of the village church of Kicin. In 1875 these "missionary stations" became autonomous churches.

The congregations at Warszawa and Zyrardow were modelled after Oncken's principles of organization, but these newly

³⁵ It is important to note that no other model for Baptist churches in Poland can be identified. Thus, it may be assumed that Oncken was a primary influence on the form of Baptist churches in Poland.

³⁶ Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce*, 48.

created churches had their own strategies for building the church which differed from Oncken's plan. Oncken first established churches in large cities. In Poland, however, the reverse was true. Baptists established themselves in villages and small towns such as Adamow, Kicin, Kurow, and Zezulin, first, moving to the larger cities from the smaller centres after 1875. Some of the larger city churches that were established subsequently to the smaller village churches were: Lodz, Wloclawek and Warszawa. Thus, the first members of the Baptist movement were primarily farmers. They were simple people lacking formal education who responded easily to Baptist preaching and evangelism. These people were the early foundation for the Baptist movement in Poland.

In contrast to the village churches, the congregations established in the cities were characterized by a resilience which resulted in some cases in amazing longevity of the churches. Indeed, some churches established in the cities in the nineteenth century continue to survive and thrive even today, like churches in Warszawa and Lodz. As with the Apostolic community, the key to continuing development of the Baptist work throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the urban congregation.³⁷

The main reason for the short-term perseverance of the

³⁷ William M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960). See also Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods; St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 10-17.

village church life was the migration of the population from villages to cities. In Europe during the nineteenth century many countries were transformed from primarily rural to primarily urban populations. People migrated from villages to cities to look for work in the newly formed industries, and to find greater cultural and pleasurable opportunities. In Poland, however, during the difficult time of occupation when Polish development was suppressed, the main reasons for the migration from towns to cities were persecution and poverty. It was easier in the city to escape Roman Catholic domination which characterized the villages and towns in rural Poland. In the beginning of the 1860's, the persecution also resulted in the emigration of Baptists from Poland to the United States and Volhynia.³⁸

The best example of an urban-centered Baptist church was the congregation in Lodz, found in the southwest of Congress Poland. The work of Baptists in Lodz began in 1867. The first people from the city to make contact with the Baptist movement were a bookkeeper, Jan Rohner, and a weaver, Ludwik Henrik Pufhal (1839-1910), who later became the pastor in Warszawa. Both Rohner and Pufhal had studied the bible and were convinced to build a new and revived church.

In 1867, Rohner established contact with the church in Kicin, and visited it. Rohner read materials by J. G. Oncken,

³⁸ A province under Russian political control, located east of the present Polish border.

and he observed the Christian lives of the members of the Kicin church. Through this he realized that the practise of the Christian life by Baptists was radically different from the nominal Christianity he had seen elsewhere. When he returned to Lodz, he started teaching Baptist doctrines. In his home in Lodz, Rohner held the first services of what would later become the formal Baptist church there. On 25 September 1868 J. Rohner and L. H. Pufhal and their spouses were baptized by G. F. Alf in a small pond owned by one of the industrial companies of Lodz. From that time forward Lodz became the missionary station of the church of Kicin. After his baptism in 1868, Rohner was called to become the pastor of the church in Lodz.³⁹ The church continued to grow and by 1870 had one hundred members. The Lodz congregation consisted of Germans, Poles and Czechs, although this ethnic diversity did not continue indefinitely.⁴⁰

In 1877 J. Rohner resigned and the church in Lodz called Karol Ondra (1839-1887) to be its new pastor. Under Ondra's direction the church again grew rapidly. By 1878 the church

³⁹ Henry Ryszard Tomaszewski, *Powstanie i rozwój ruchu Baptistow w Polsce w latach 1858-1939*, in *Kalendarz Chrzescijanina* (Warszawa: Zjednoczny Kosciol Ewangeliczny, 1983), 273.

⁴⁰ In 1872, in Zelow, close to Lodz, the first exclusively Slovakian Baptist church was established. The members consisted of Czechs and Slovaks who called as pastor, Karol Jersak. Prior to 1872, there were members in the Polish Baptist churches with Slovakian names. However, there was no exclusively Slovakian Baptist church in Congress Poland until Zelow.

membership reached 252 and became autonomous in March, 1878.⁴¹ The years between 1885 and 1904 were characterized by dynamic development. The church had an orchestra, and a Sunday School which, by 1900, consisted of eight hundred children. The church organized biblical courses to train its missionaries. In 1907, according to an agreement with the Russian government, the Baptists were allowed to establish a Bible School in Lodz.⁴² As a result of this development the church in Lodz became a model for both a missionary and an urban church in Poland. The church growth in Lodz was such a success because of job opportunities in Lodz's industries which drew many, people to Lodz, and, consequently to the church. The Baptist Church in Lodz thus became a model for other congregations, such as Lodz-Chojny, Lodz-Baluty, Pabianice, Zgierz, Aleksandrow, Piotrkow.⁴³

(D) The Establishment of the Baptist Congregation in Poland's Capital

In Warszawa the Baptist missionary work began in 1870. The first convert to the new beliefs in Warszawa was Jozef Herb. Herb became interested in the Baptist movement after meeting some Baptists who were on trial for their faith in the capital of Poland. He was encouraged to go to Kicin, where he was baptized in 1871. The first Baptist services were held at

⁴¹ Tomaszewski, *Powstanie i Rozwoj Ruchu Baptistow*, 274.

⁴² Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach, 1858-1918*, 92.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 82.

his apartment in Warszawa, and later, by the end of 1874, the congregation grew and rented a building. In 1875 the church in Warszawa became independent from the church in Kicin.⁴⁴

Another convert to the Baptist tradition in Warszawa was Jozef Antoszewski (1853-1934). Antoszewski was baptised in the Vistula River in 17 June, 1871 by G. F. Alf.⁴⁵ As the church grew in Warszawa, Antoszewski became a faithful missionary there. He served in this church by preaching to the Polish group that belonged to the larger Baptist Church in Warszawa that was both German and Polish. In 1884, Antoszewski became the leader of the Polish language services observed every second Sunday.⁴⁶ This marked the beginning of the separation of the Polish Baptists from their German parent.

It had taken twelve years (1858-1870) to shift focus of the Baptist work from the village of Adamow to Warszawa, the capital of Poland. It was important for Polish Baptists to move into the capital as it was the center of political, cultural, and religious life. In this way the Baptists became more influential among Catholic Christians. Also, it demonstrated to the Roman Catholic Church that Baptist existence was a force to be reckoned with. Thirdly, the move to the capital was important in that the church services at Warszawa eventually were conducted in the Polish language

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁵ Jaroszewicz, *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Baptistow w Polsce*, 51.

⁴⁶ Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce*, 70.

which signified a permanent commitment to the Polish culture.⁴⁷

III. Baptists Grow Under Persecution

The persecution of the Baptists continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They were persecuted initially by Lutherans, later by Catholics and by the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as by the local governments that were closely aligned with these established churches. Throughout their persecution though, the Baptists continued to progress, first together with the Germans and eventually on their own. As a result of Poland's unique geopolitical position between Eastern and Western Europe, the nation has suffered great identity crises. Over many centuries, Eastern and Western powers have divided up the lands of the Polish people. The nineteenth century was no exception: during the time when the Baptist religious movement entered the region, Poland was occupied and partitioned among Russia, Prussia and Austria.

(A) The Beginnings of Baptist Persecution: Persecution by Lutherans

As a result of Poland's geopolitical position and its

⁴⁷ This mirrors Baptist experience in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain where establishment of the Baptist work in the capitals were of great importance. See, for instance, William H. Brackney, "Dissenter Religion, Voluntary Associations, and the National Vision: Private Education in the Early Republic" in *Voluntary Associations in a Free Society*, edited by Robert G. Jones (Washington: George Washington University, 1983), 39-45; Ernest F. Kevan, *London's Oldest Baptist Church* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1933).

resultant series of German occupations, Lutherans moved into Poland in the three centuries preceding the 1800's. There were three waves of German immigrants bringing with them the Lutheran religion. The first group arrived just after the Reformation. The second set of immigrants arrived from Germany in the 17th century. The last group of immigrants came to Poland throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and settled in Wielkopolska and Mazowsze.⁴⁸ In the nineteenth century, when Russia, Prussia and Austria had divided Poland, the Lutheran religion was firmly established in Poland.⁴⁹ The Lutherans eventually became the major opponents of the Pietistic groups during the first period of Polish Baptist formation.

The Baptist tradition grew up among German Lutheran colonists who later on became opposed to the Baptist movement for several reasons. First, they were opposed because it attracted Lutherans, and Baptists were seen as being proselytizers. Second, the Lutherans of Poland followed the lead of the Lutherans of Germany who had previously opposed Oncken and other German Baptists. Third, German Lutherans were in conflict with the concept of believer's baptism by immersion. It was difficult for them to accept this concept which was associated with the Anabaptists. Anabaptists had

⁴⁸ Janusz Tazbir, *Reformacja w Polsce*, 44-45.

⁴⁹ Kloczkowski, *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Katolickiego w Polsce*, 179.

been persecuted by Lutherans for being too radical in their theology of baptism. The Baptists in Poland, in the second half of the nineteenth century were identified with the Anabaptists, and thus were likewise persecuted. Fourth, the Baptists held to a believer's church as opposed to the national and instituted church of the German Lutherans. Fifth, sacraments were important to Lutherans, but sacraments were not the basis for Baptist practice. For example, the Lord's Supper was seen by Lutherans to be a sacrament, but the Baptists considered it an ordinance and not a means of grace.

The Polish Baptists, in the beginning of their mission in Poland, reached out to the Lutheran communities rather than to the Catholic communities. This was probably due to the general Protestant orientation of the Lutherans, and because the first Baptists were formerly Lutherans. Therefore, during the second half of the nineteenth century the Catholic Church either ignored or tolerated the work of the Baptists.

From the onset of their movement, Polish Baptists developed and conducted mission work without the formal permission of the existing government. Because of pressure from the Lutheran Consistory, local governments forbade Baptists from gathering in homes, conducting services, and from doing missionary work. G. F. Alf, who was the leader of the Baptist movement in Adamow, was put under rigorous police supervision, being required to give reports to them every twenty-four hours, regarding his and the church's activities.

If he failed to comply with their demands he would be sent to Siberia.⁵⁰ Due to the persecution they were suffering, the Baptists asked the Russian government for legal status and tolerance.⁵¹ The government refused their request, sending a letter saying, "...If your sect is not tolerated in the country, by law we cannot grant you legal status."⁵²

J. Schultz, one of Alf's co-workers, responded to the government's letter. He outlined Baptist doctrines, and again requested toleration for Baptists, equal to that given to other Christian churches in Congress Poland. He asked for permission to build a church, to invite pastors from Germany and to celebrate worship services according to Baptist practice.⁵³ In response the government requested the Lutheran Consistory to provide an assessment of the relatively small sect. The Consistory responded by opposing the legal registration of Baptist churches. Alexander Krusenstern, the Lutheran spokesman, sent a delayed response in December 1861, which in part stated, "This sect (Baptists) is fanatic and very harmful to society and the existing Christian church in general. For this reason I cannot endorse the legalization of such a movement".⁵⁴ Krusenstern accused the Baptists of

⁵⁰ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow*, 13.

⁵¹ Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce*, 29.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

disobedience to the law, incest, and general opposition to the Lutheran Church and its traditions and practices. He further accused Baptists of attempting to deceive members of the Protestant Lutheran Church, and enticing them into the Baptist fold. When the Baptists smuggled literature from the West, he suggested that they could be smuggling subversive political documents as well. Finally, this Lutheran leader discussed how destructive it would be if the Baptists were allowed to be registered and to build a church. Krusenstern advised the government to place greater restrictions on the Baptists rather than giving them greater freedom and legal status.⁵⁵ These opinions of a Lutheran official represent a good example of how the newly established Baptist movement was viewed by a major Polish Protestant group.

The persecution, which consisted of imprisonment and social ridicule, actually unified Polish Baptists and strengthened their resolve. Through the faithfulness of Alf and his followers, the work progressed; and from 1858-1877 the Baptist movement in Poland grew to a membership of 2,700 (in Congress Poland 1,800, in Pomerania 900 members). Apart from this number, some Baptists fled to Volhynia, Russia and to other countries seeking toleration and an escape from persecution.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 33-37.

⁵⁶ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptistow*, 27.

(B) Persecution During the First and Second World Wars

The First World War was devastating both to the Polish nation and to the Baptist movement. Because the Czar of Russia identified Baptists with Germany, he deported some eastern Polish citizens, including the Slovacs, to Siberia, while others were forced to serve in the army. Many of these Baptists died, others emigrated to the United States and Canada, and some to Germany. Only a few actually returned to Poland.⁵⁷

Many Baptists moved from Congress Poland to the North-East part of the country. The first church to be established there was at Bialystok in 1902.⁵⁸ Christian literature was sent to this area from Germany; from the early 1900's, the British Bible Society also sent literature to Bialystok. Mr. Rout, the distributor of this new Christian literature, became very interested in missionary work in the area.⁵⁹ The Baptist movement attracted quite a few converts, and because Mr. Rout's work demanded that he travel, he asked pastor Otto Lenz from the established Baptist church in Kowno (Lithuania) to support the new work at Bialystok. New services started shortly after this and from 1902 to 1910 the Baptist community at Bialystok became the missionary station of the church at

⁵⁷ Wieslaw Jedras, "The History of the Polish Baptists" (Senior Seminar Paper, McMaster Divinity College, 1986), 29-30.

⁵⁸ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciota Baptystow*, 64.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

Kowno.⁶⁰ On 1 August, 1910 the community in Bialystok became an autonomous church which called Edward Robert Wenski (1885-1943) to be the pastor. The congregation at this time had sixty-five members.⁶¹

The War was yet another challenge to the newborn Baptist communities in Poland. The Baptist movement which numbered at least ten-thousand people in 1914 was reduced by fifty percent through persecution, imprisonment, and immigration during the War.⁶² However, this tragedy did not cause the movement to die. Since the congregation of Bialystok was scattered, services were not held regularly as before, but there were a few churches which continued to meet regularly such as the ones at Warszawa and Lodz.

The Second World War damaged the established and developing Baptist movement even more. Not only were the churches reduced in number of members, they also suffered from lack of material resources. Church buildings were destroyed, libraries and archives were burned, and many material possessions were taken to Germany. According to the political agreement between Russia and Germany, the German population of the eastern part of Poland was taken either to the General Gubernya or to the German Reich. Some were allowed to go to

⁶⁰ Krzysztof Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborow Baptystow w Polsce do 1939 roku* (Warszawa: Slowo Prawdy, 1993), 11.

⁶¹ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciota Baptystow*, 65.

⁶² Jedras, "History of the Polish Baptists", 29-30.

Russia if they chose. Among the people taken out of Poland were some Baptists. In this way, the Slavic Baptist Church in Poland was broken up into several parts.⁶³ Because of the deportations, deaths, and emigrations of Baptists, the churches were reduced to 1763 members.⁶⁴

(C) Persecution From Roman Catholic Authorities

The period between the First and Second World Wars again brought the Baptist movement under persecution. This persecution came from within Poland itself, with both the secular Polish government and the Roman Catholic clergy being antagonistic towards Baptists. False accusations were thus placed on Baptists by Catholic leaders in order to subdue the movement. For instance, on 13 December 1922, the police arrested Jan Petrasz who was the president of *Zwiazek Zborow Slowianskich w Polsce* (The Slavic Baptist Association in Poland).⁶⁵ Petrasz was accused of undermining the Catholic Church by spreading the Baptist faith among Poles and proselytizing the Catholic majority. Petrasz was also charged with sharing "communistic" propaganda during the regular services.⁶⁶

Because of the strong leadership and the missionary activities of the Baptist preachers, the number of members

⁶³ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciota Baptistow*, 128-131.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶⁶ *Kalendarz Chrzescijanina*, 286.

increased to 5479 in 1932; including families, the movement numbered 11,802 members. According to the historical statistics, *Zwiazek Zborow Slowianskich Baptystow w Polsce* (The Slavic Baptist Association in Poland) had seventy three churches and two hundred seventy five missionary stations.⁶⁷ This growth alarmed the leadership of the Catholic Church which forced the local governments to persecute the Baptists. Part of the persecution included the introduction of Catholic teaching in the schools which led the children of the religious minorities to be exposed to persecution. An example can be seen in the childhood experience of Stefan Rogaczewski (1929-) who recalled:

It was the year 1936. I lived in a small village in the eastern part of Poland. There was only one small primary school in our area. Most of the children were Catholics. In my class I was the only Baptist, and the only other non-Catholic was the son of a communist. The Catholic priest persecuted us, he would make fools of us, treating us roughly. He beat us on the hands. The priest taught the class to make fun of us. My home was far away from school, after religion class I had more classes. My friend and I stood in the cold unheated cellar, we waited until the religion class had ended. . . .⁶⁸

⁶⁷ The Union of the Slavic Baptist Churches in Poland was established in 1921, after the First World War. From this time, Baptist missionary work continued as a separated movement, with the Germans and Slavs as separate unions. See *Kalendarz Chrzescijanina* (Warszawa: Zjednoczony Kosciol Ewangeliczny, 1983), 290.

⁶⁸ Interview with Stefan Rogaczewski on 24 August 1994.

IV. Institutional Development of Polish Baptists.

(A) Theological Education

One of the most important influences on the Baptist movement in Poland was the biblical and theological training that took place in the seminary. As the work of the Polish Baptists began, there was a great need for leadership development. The German pastors and missionaries that came to Poland and later the Polish workers required adequate training.

The situation in Poland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was distinctive. Poland was a largely agrarian and rural country. The first Baptist churches in Poland were village congregations consisting of simple people such as farmers and workers. These people placed very few expectations or demands on their pastors regarding education and training. Sermons were simple bible expositions from the Polish text.⁶⁹ As among Baptists elsewhere, there was among Polish Baptists an anti-intellectual attitude that despised the "learned".⁷⁰ In contrast, however, were the German Baptists like F. G. Alf, who had a good education. Alf studied at the Baptist Mission

⁶⁹ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciota Baptystow*, 154.

⁷⁰ The people of the church, because they were poorly educated, found the message of the bible straightforward and simple. They did not understand someone who spoke about the complexities of the bible. They thought, in the church context, learning was wrong. This legacy continues today in parts of Eastern Europe where pastors are still expected not to have a higher education. See Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, 52.

School in Hamburg during the year 1859.⁷¹

There were several difficulties to overcome for those who sought theological education. First, it was legally difficult to send candidates to the seminary in Hamburg to study for the pastorate. The Russian government required pastors to obtain special permission for their studies, and this was not easy to secure. Secondly, to travel to Hamburg was a very expensive undertaking, and there were few resources in the young religious movement to meet the costs. Finally, not all Polish pastors who desired to further their education had enough knowledge of the German language to study. As a result, Polish Baptist leaders decided to organize some biblical and theological training courses in the church at Adamow. This became the root of Polish Baptist theological education.

The first missionary courses organized by Alf took place in Adamow in 1861- 1863.⁷² In 1864 the classes continued in Kicin, and this course ran until 1879. The main teachers for the classes were G. F. Alf, A. Penski, and E. Aschendorf.⁷³ Materials, cost, and local conditions limited the class size

⁷¹ In 1859 Alf attended in the Baptist Mission School in Hamburg. During that year Alf was ordained by J. G. Oncken, after which he returned to Adamow to continue his ministry. The first mission course was established by Oncken in 1849 in Hamburg, Germany. This school was called "Baptist Mission School." The German Baptists, not satisfied with the simple mission courses, established a full time seminary in Hamburg which was called "Theologisches Seminar Hamburg" in 1880. See Tomaszewski *Baptysci w Polsce w latach 1858-1918*, 29.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 92.

to a maximum of twenty students per year. The costs were met by contributions from the local churches in partnership with the German Baptists.⁷⁴ In 1907 the Russian government gave Polish Baptists permission to establish a seminary in Lodz. The school opened on 14 October 1907 in the Baptist church of Lodz. The first program included courses in Old and New Testament, hermeneutics, dogmatics, ethics, pastoral care, history of the church, history of missions, geography of the Holy Land, youth work, and music.⁷⁵

The seminary operated until 1911 when the Russian government closed the school again,⁷⁶ for political and religious motives. Before the first World War there was a very tense relationship between Poland and Russia. The Russian Orthodox government was not interested in the development of a dissenter movement in Poland. As Tomaszewski observed, "the opponents of the Baptists induced the Russian government to close the Seminary".⁷⁷ Only in 1922, when Poland received its freedom from Russia, was the school re-opened and courses reinstated. In 1924, the seminary received financial help from Baptists in Great Britain and the United States, many of whom had an interest in education.⁷⁸ The Polish Seminary in

⁷⁴ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciota Baptistow*, 155.

⁷⁵ Tomaszewski, *Baptysci w Polsce w latach*, 92.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciota Baptistow*, 156-157.

Lodz was able to continue training pastors until the outbreak of the second World War when Germany invaded Poland in 1939.⁷⁹

(B) First Polish Baptist Literature

Not only was the Baptist seminary vital to the continuation of Baptist work in Poland, but equally essential were the Polish Baptist publications that were printed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first Baptist missionaries understood the important role of literature, and, most importantly, the necessity of Polish Bibles to be distributed among Poles and Germans. The first missionaries stressed evangelism through Polish tracts and Bibles. However, during the Partition, this distribution was difficult because Russian and German officials viewed such activities with suspicion, labelling it political propaganda or conspiratorial work against the government.⁸⁰

Through the late nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, more Polish language materials were required and missionaries distributed literature in the Polish language. For instance, in 1905 in Lodz, Baptists printed a Polish hymnal. In 1909, pastor Jan Petrasz from Poznan printed a

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁸⁰ Between the years 1858-1874, Baptists in Poland distributed 6360 Bibles and 56,372 tracts. The literature was printed in Hamburg by the Baptist Tract Society (established in September 1836). See Jaroszewicz, *Zarys Dziejow Kosciola Baptystow w Polsce*, 164, and Edward Kupsch, *Geschichte der Deutschen Baptisten in Polen 1852-1932*, 471.

Polish hymnal entitled *Krotki Zbior Duchownych Piesni dla Nabozenstwa*, ("A Short Collection of the Spiritual Songs for Worship"). A Polish magazine, *Drogowskaz*, began in 1906 under the editorial control of Truderung.⁸¹ In 1921, the journal *Wolny Chrzescianin* (*The Free Christian*) which was already published in the Christian community was transformed into a strictly Baptist journal and was published in Poland.⁸² Baptists in eastern Poland decided to print the journal entitled *Majak* in the Russian language.⁸³ The editor of this journal was Waldemar Albert Gutsche (1889-1973). In 1923 Baptists bought a printing office in Lodz and established the publishing house, "Kompas." Bibles and New Testaments were printed by the British Bible Society as well as by the Polish publishing house "Kompas".⁸⁴ In order to propagate knowledge of Baptist doctrine among the Catholic Poles, the Baptists in Warszawa initiated the printing of a brochure entitled, *Baptysci-kto Oni?*, ("Who are the Baptists?"). This brochure presented the differences between Baptists and other denominations and stressed the unique religious experiences of the Baptists in Poland.

⁸¹ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptistow*, 165.

⁸² *Kalendarz Chrzescijanina*, 296.

⁸³ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptistow*, 165.

⁸⁴ Henryk Ryszard Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Typu Ewangeliczno-Baptystycznego wchodzace w sklad Zjednoczonego Kosciola Ewangelicznego w latach 1945-1956* (Tomaszow Mazowiecki: Slowo i Zycie, 1991), 16.

Beginning in 1925, the Polish journal, *Slowo Prawdy*, under the editorship of L. Miksa was established. In 1935 Alfred Wladyslaw Kurzawa (1905-1973), took over the publishing of the journal. *Slowo Prawdy* served as source of Baptist identity in Poland, providing monthly information about the polity and practice of Polish Baptists. This journal became a powerful tool in the reinforcement of Baptist identity.

(C) The Evolution of a Polish Baptist Union

(1) The Separation of the Slavic and German Baptist Unions

After the First World War, in 1919, Poland was faced with new challenges. On the one hand, there was much destruction and tragedy; many Poles had died, some had been deported to Siberia, and others had emigrated to new lands. On the other hand, after more than one hundred years of wars and partitions, Poles experienced the emergence of a new identity and national consciousness.

The fact that Poland in 1919 became a newly independent nation greatly affected Baptist mission work among Slavs and Germans. The nationalism which had emerged as a result of the war with Germany became very influential and strong. There was a clear difference, in terms of culture, power, and language, between Germany and Poland and also between Germany and minority groups living in Poland, such as the Czechs, Belorussians, Russians and Ukrainians. It was in this context that Slavic and German Baptists cooperated, but in separate Unions. After World War I, the Polish Baptists who had

emigrated to the United States became very interested in mission work and encouraged trained individuals to return to Poland as missionaries and pastors. For example, the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society sent a Polish pastor, Karol Wladyslaw Strzelec (1869-1962), to Poland. His efforts contributed to the eventual separation of German and Slavic work. Strzelec called all Slavic missionaries to attend a conference in Warszawa in September and October, 1921.⁸⁵ The main goal of this conference was to establish missionary work in Poland. This conference encouraged the formation of a new organization which would include the efforts to unify Slavic churches. During this conference the delegates established a constitution of *Zwiazek Zborow Slowianskich Baptystow w Polsce*, (The Union of Slavic Baptist Churches in Poland or the Slavic Baptist Union). The members at this conference elected Jan Petrasz to be the president of this union. Petrasz, together with the other members of this union/committee, worked to register this Union legally with the government.⁸⁶

After the First World War, the cooperation of German and Polish Baptists was interrupted. After the Slavic Baptist Union separated, the German Baptist Union worked independently. The German Baptist community was decimated, because during the First World War, Russian authorities deported many Germans to Siberia. After a period of

⁸⁵ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow*, 70.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

imprisonment they were able to leave Russia, but they did not return to Poland due to its Marxist regime, rather returning to Germany. The remaining German Baptists in Poland worked alone. However, their mission did not have the good results of the Slavic Baptists. At first the German Baptists worked in three associations. They were: The Association in Congress Poland, The Association in Greater Poland (Wielkopolska), and The Association of Volhynia.⁸⁷ The cooperation among those associations went quite well. At their common meeting in Lodz on 1-3 November 1928, these three associations united to form a new body called *The Union of Baptist Churches of the German Language in Poland*. The status of the union was approved, and their publication was called, *Der Hausfreund*, edited by Adolf Knoff (1879-1950).⁸⁸

Despite the separation of the German-speaking Baptists from their Slavic brethren, they still cooperated. They organized missions and worked together at various publications. In 1924 a common seminary was opened in Lodz for both groups. They also worked together in Bethlehem Hospital, and at the "Kompas" publishing house. In 1937 the German Union had forty congregations with 8100 members.⁸⁹

Just before the Second World War erupted, two efforts were made to re-unite the German and Slavic unions, but these

⁸⁷ *Kalendarz Chrzescijanina*, 299.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

attempts were not successful before the outbreak of War.⁹⁰

(2) Separation of Baptists and Other Evangelical Churches in Poland

Under Prussian and Russian partitions, Polish Baptists were able to create autonomous churches which operated in the Polish language. When Poland received its independence, this encouraged mission work within the nation. In November 1920 a conference of *Komitet Polskiej Misji*, (The Polish Mission Committee) was held. This body was already established in churches like Lodz and Poznan at the end of the nineteenth century. The Committee elected Edward Kupsch (1888-1971), K. W. Strzelec, A. Horak, and Boleslaw Goetze (1889-1962) to be representatives for mission work across Poland. They sent letters to the Polish Baptist churches emphasizing the need to circulate Polish Christian literature and Polish Bibles. Volunteers emerged to strengthen the work. For example, A. Fiszer from Warszawa wrote, "I feel called to active missionary work. Please place my name on the list of distributors of Christian literature."⁹¹ In this way, the Polish Baptist mission work became officially established.

In the early part of this century, Slavic Baptist work was divided into two groups: the Polish Baptist churches and other Evangelical Christian groups. From 1921 these groups began to discuss unification. During the Slavic conference in

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 299-300.

⁹¹ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow*, 69.

Brzesc in 1923, these two groups decided to unify. They proposed the name, *Zjednoczenie Ewangelicznych Chrzescijan i Baptystow w Polsce*, (The Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptists in Poland).⁹² The president was K. W. Strzelec, a Baptist. The vice-president was Ludwik Szenderowski, (1873-1933), an Evangelical Christian. The next year the relationship between these groups turned sour. When the Union president, Strzelec, left for the U.S.A., there was a need to elect a new president. It should have been logical for the vice-president, L. Szenderowski, to become the president, but the Polish Baptists were not happy with this decision. Szenderowski and his Evangelical Christians defended the position that Christians should not participate in any military activity. The Polish Baptists defended the position that Christians could go to war if necessary.⁹³

It should be added that there were theological conflicts between these two groups. L. Szenderowski secretly consulted the Felter Mission⁹⁴ which represented extreme Pentecostal theology. Once Baptist Poles became aware of such dialogues, they were not comfortable with Pentecostal theology and practice (e.g. worship forms). This situation caused tension and added to the friction that would divide the two groups. Before the third meeting of *The Union of Evangelical*

⁹² Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Typu Ewangeliczno-baptystycznego*, 13.

⁹³ *Kalendarz Chrzescijanina*, 287.

⁹⁴ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow*, 180.

Christians and Baptists in Poland, Baptists met in Zelow in May 1925. They elected their own Baptist board. The president of this union was Ludwik Miksa. This new organization was called the *Zwiazek Zborow Slowianskich Baptystow*, (The Union of the Slavic Baptist Churches)⁹⁵ In September, 1925, at Brzesc, the General Congress of the Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptist Churches in Poland took place. During this conference, conflict increased. The two groups finally divided and agreed to work separately.⁹⁶ On 1 February 1927, the Union of Evangelical Churches and Baptist Churches in Poland received formal registration with the government. This Union had been waiting to be registered since 1923 at which time the two groups were still together. The registration took place at a time when the two groups had begun to form separate unions. The unfortunate result was that the official legalization happened when the two groups no longer worked together. ⁹⁷

The Polish Baptists still desired to be registered as a separate group. However, the Polish Department of Religion did not approve such a request. There were several reasons given. First, as previously explained, the first Baptists in Poland were German and there was still some animosity between Germans and Catholic Poles. Baptists were still viewed as

⁹⁵ Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Typu Ewangeliczno-Baptystycznego...*, 13.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Germans who would pose a threat. Secondly, the Department had already approved registration for this group under a new title in connection with the Evangelical groups. It seemed unnecessary to approve another registration under another title. The Baptists did not receive official registration until after World War II.⁹⁸

Despite these problems due to registration, the Baptist movement continued to grow. In December 1932, the Union of Slavic Baptists in Poland had 5479 members; when spouses and children are added, the total number of people in the Baptist community had grown to 11,800. The Union grew to include seventy-three churches and two hundred seventy two mission stations.⁹⁹

According to extant historical documents, in 1937 a meeting of the German and Polish Baptists took place. The members of these groups decided to unify their efforts by forming *Kosciol Ewangeliczno-Baptystyczny w Polsce*, (The Evangelical Baptist Churches in Poland). However, again, this union was neither legal nor registered until shortly before the Second World War.¹⁰⁰

(3) The Union of Polish Baptists During the Second World War

After 1939, Polish territory was reduced to new borders.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁹ *Kalendarz Chrzescijanina*, 290.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 299.

Germany took a major part of the western part of Poland. The eastern part of Poland was taken by the U.S.S.R. and the Polish-Russian border was established at the Bug river. (see map pg. 75) This reduced territory of Poland became known as "General Gubernya." The Polish Baptist churches that were located in the western part of Poland became members of the German Baptist Union, the *Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden-Baptisten*, (The Union of the Free Evangelical Baptist Churches). The denominational centre for this Union was in Berlin.¹⁰¹ The irony is that many Baptists returned to the original source of the Baptist movement in Poland, Germany. This time there were more restrictions than before; for example, Baptist services in the Polish language were forbidden in the newly declared German territory.¹⁰²

In March 1941, in reference to General Gubernya, it should be noted that the German government attempted to eliminate all religious groups or sects by forbidding all church services. However, the Baptist work was not eliminated altogether, because pastors and missionaries heroically led Polish services in private home meetings. Thus, Polish Baptist identity managed to survive the oppression.¹⁰³

In April 1942, this difficult situation changed. The German Baptists in Berlin encouraged the German government to

¹⁰¹ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow*, 129.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

allow Baptists to continue their work without opposition. The end result was that Polish Baptists invited other Free Evangelical groups to form a union. The union was named *Bund Nichtdeutscher Evangelisch Freikirchlicher Gemeinden-Baptisten*, (The Union of Non-German Evangelical Free Churches of Baptists) in General Guberyna. The formation of this union took place in April, 1942 with Aleksander Kircun (1905-1989), a Baptist, elected president of the union.¹⁰⁴

Some of the benefits of this Union included public worship free of persecution and the centralization of Baptist mission work. The board of this Union monitored the growth of the Baptist community. Mission courses were offered secretly to those willing to undertake theological training, this included training for pastors. This union carried on until 1945, the end of World War II.¹⁰⁵

V. Summary

Baptists as a worldwide religious movement originated in Great Britain with identifiable features, such as religious liberty, believers baptism, and the authority of Scripture.

Largely the result of German Baptist missions begun by J. G. Oncken and others, a strong community of Baptist churches

¹⁰⁴ This group included: The Union of Slavic Baptists, The Union of Evangelical Christians, The United Church of Christ, The Free Evangelical Christians, and The Association of Mutual Help of Evangelical Christians. See Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow*, 129-130.

¹⁰⁵ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow*, 130-131.

gradually emerged in Europe. The establishment and growth of the Baptist movement in Poland may be properly understood as an outgrowth of Oncken's work in Germany. The "father" of the first rural churches in Poland was G.F. Alf, whose church-planting work expanded into the rapidly industrializing cities.

Baptists in Poland, who were mostly composed of converts from Lutheranism, initially faced persecution from the Lutheran Church itself and later the Catholic Church. The effects of internal religious persecution were exacerbated by the events of the First and Second World Wars.

In the twentieth century, Polish Baptists developed several important institutions. Theological education in Poland began in the local churches and evolved to the establishment of a seminary at Lodz. A journal, *Slowo Prawdy*, became a powerful tool in the creation and reinforcement of a Baptist identity in Poland. A distinct and independent Polish Baptist identity began with the separation from the sponsorship of the German Baptists and culminated with the dissolution of ties to other Evangelical groups in Poland in 1925.

To conclude, when the Baptist movement came to Poland it was seen as a grave threat to the existing Catholic and Lutheran traditions. However, in less than a century of religious development, the Polish Baptists received official status and recognition in a post-war, Marxist Poland.

Chapter III

Baptist Identity in a Post-War and Post-Marxist Poland

This chapter will survey the development of the Polish Baptist Union after World War II. Discussion will include the influence that World War II had on the church with regard to border shifts, the decline in membership and the destruction of church property. The Baptist movement in Poland after the war was re-established under a Marxist regime which restricted Baptist life severely. Important in this period were relationships with other Baptists around the world and the establishment of Polish Baptist institutions. Finally, the relationship with other Christian groups such as the Evangelical churches, the Catholic Church, and the Polish Ecumenical Council will be examined.

I. Impact of World War II

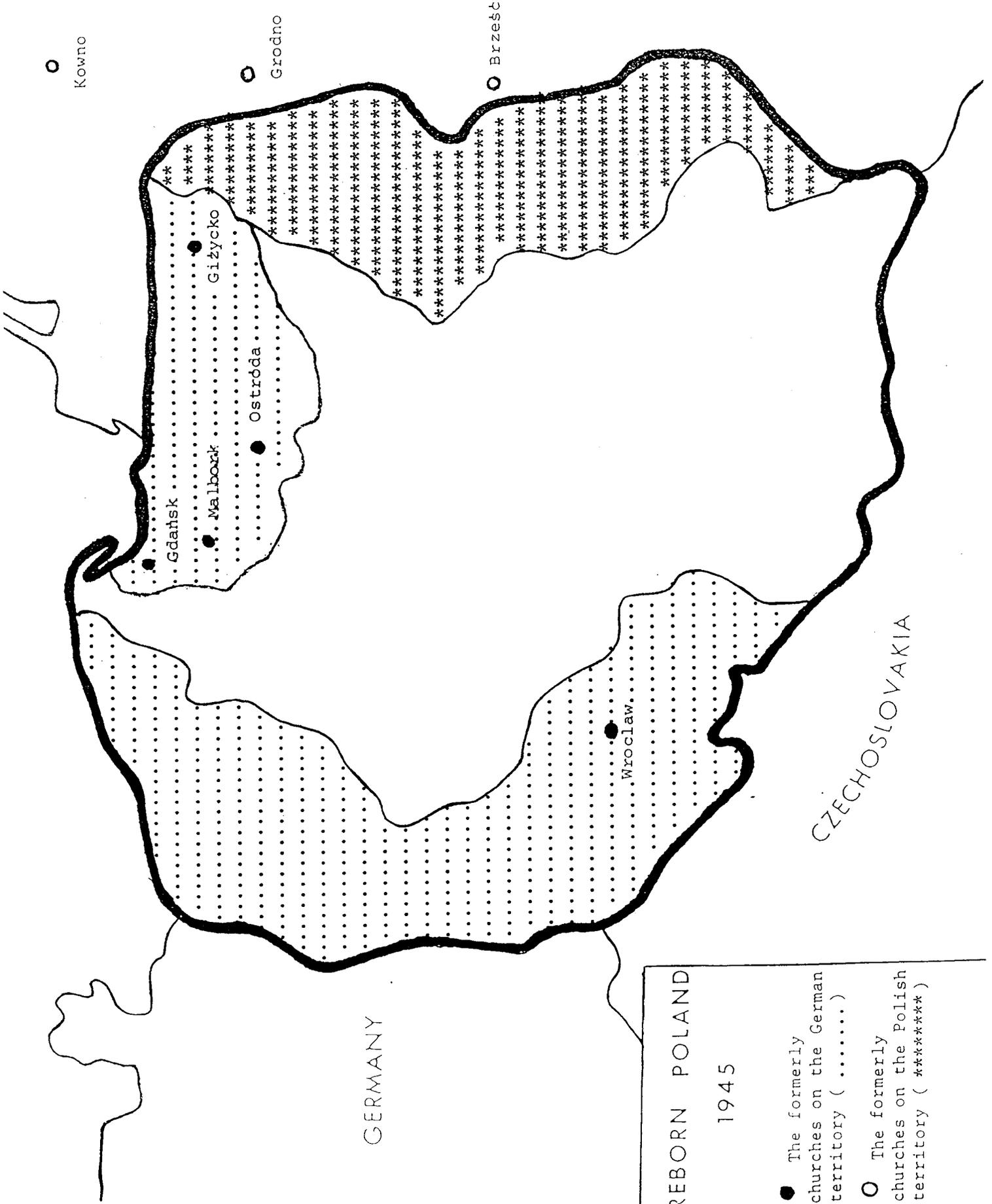
In 1945, after Poland was liberated from the German occupation, a new period of Polish history began. Poland underwent change politically, economically and socially. Shifting borders and a population decrease due to the massive number of deaths and property destruction added to the

country's major transition. This turmoil also greatly affected the Baptist churches.

The situation of Baptists in Poland was complicated because of the border changes: the eastern border was shifted westward, and great tracts of land were lost. Because of this, many Baptist churches came under the sovereignty of the Soviet Union, e.g. churches in Brzesc, Kowno and Grodno. In the North and West, however, the border expanded to include the former East Prussia, Pomerania and West Prussia, which brought more churches into a newly-defined Poland. Through this border change, Polish Baptists who had lived in German territory were restored to their indigenous homelands, and Germans who had not fled to Germany proper were likewise incorporated. The formerly German churches in Gizycko, Swietajno, Ostroda, Gdansk, Malbork and Wroclaw, thus became a solid part of Polish Baptist work. (see map, pg. 75) However, due to the deportation of most German citizens from these areas, the net membership gain was only about 500 members.¹

These deportations also affected Polish people with German backgrounds. Some were deported to Germany, others were sent as prisoners to the eastern Soviet Union. Deportations of Ukrainians, Czechs, Belo-Russians and Russians likewise forced many residents out of Poland to return to their ethnic home regions. In this way, Polish Baptists lost many members and

¹ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptistow*, 135-136.



REBORN POLAND

1945

- The formerly churches on the German territory (.....)
- The formerly churches on the Polish territory (*****)

GERMANY

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

some pastors.² Because of an "anti-Nazi" sentiment, German Poles were often the focus of severe persecution and retaliation. The Polish Marxist government tried to eliminate evidence of "imperialism" and anything hinting of Western influence. This situation led to the destruction of large German congregations (8100 members in 1937)³ that before World War II had existed in East Prussia, north of Poland. For example, in Swietajno, where the pastor was Wilhelm Kerstan (1901-1977), the church had more than nine hundred members.⁴ A few years after the end of the war, this congregation ceased to exist. Many other church buildings were damaged and destroyed. For example, the church building in Warszawa, also containing the Baptist archives, was completely lost during a bombing raid. About sixteen members of the Warszawa church were killed by the German occupation force. In general, about twenty-five percent of the Warszawa church membership was lost during the war.⁵ Similar losses and damage were experienced by other Baptist churches throughout Poland, such as in: Bialystok, Lodz and Katowice. The population of Polish Baptists decreased to 1,763 members from a pre-war high of

² *Ibid.*, 135.

³ *Kalendarz Chrzescijanina*, 299.

⁴ Personal interview with Dr. Reinhold Kerstan, 16 February, 1995.

⁵ *Slowo Prawdy*, June 1949, 14.

7745.⁶

The Marxist government confiscated many Baptist churches and used them for other purposes. For example, the church building in Lodz was converted into a cabaret theatre, while another building was used as a meeting hall by the communist youth organization. The protests of Baptist leaders against this lawlessness action were to no avail. The government pursued its goal to stamp out all forms of religious activities.⁷

II. Polish Baptists in a Marxist State

(A) Relations within the State

The Baptist movement in Poland received official recognition by the government in 1946. The process of gaining this status was very lengthy and there was significant persecution. At the same time the process displayed the passion of the Polish Baptists in their desire for official recognition. During World War II, the Germans forced all Evangelical churches into one union called, "Der Bund Nichtdeutscher Evangelisch Freikirchlicher Gemeinden-Baptisten". On 27 August, 1944, the board of this forcibly

⁶ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow*, 175. Two Unions, Slavic and German Baptists in 1937 approached the number of 1600 members. See Wieslaw Jedras, "History of the Polish Baptists", 37.

⁷ *Slowo Prawdy*, April 1991, 12.

created union met in Zamlec (near Otwock) to discuss the future of the Evangelical movement in Poland. During this meeting, the Union representatives decided to apply for legal status as the "Baptist Church". At this gathering the group also decided to call a council of the Polish Baptist contingent in May, 1945. At the council in Zamlec, the church was provisionally named *Zwiazek Ewangelicznych Chrzescijan Baptystow w Polsce* (The Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists).⁸ As the representative of the council, President Aleksander Kircun sent a letter to the Department of Public Administration, stating: "This project speaks of the possibility of establishing a relationship between the Baptist Union and the government of the Republic of Poland. . . . We respectfully request registration in order to recognize the legal status of the Union of the Evangelical Christian Baptists."⁹

The registration of the church was necessary to the future of the Baptist movement in Poland for the continuation of missionary work, educational activities and publishing efforts. With the establishment of a Marxist government with an officially atheistic position, it was very difficult for churches to work without registration. Without such permission, any unofficial church activity could be viewed by

⁸ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow*, 133.

⁹ Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Typu Ewangeliczno-Baptystycznego*, 44.

the authorities as an outright act of sedition. Also, without registration, churches had no chance to reclaim their buildings which they had lost during the War.

In 1945, the Marxist government informed the officials of the "Evangelical" Union that their application for legal status would not be recognized because of the stance Baptists had taken (in their Confession of faith) with regard to taking up arms for the state. The *Baptist Confession of Faith* (see appendix "A"), Article 13 originally stated, "We believe that one cannot pressure people to bear arms for the state."¹⁰

When the Baptist leaders realized that they would not obtain official recognition with this statement as it was, they changed it and resubmitted their application. The disputed line then read, "We believe that the members of our Church have a responsibility to obey the government during both times of war and peace."¹¹ This attitude of the Baptist board probably helped greatly in obtaining official registration of the church.

There were other problems hindering recognition besides the statement of faith. After the war, the Baptists did not have a good public reputation. For example, the Office of Consultants of the Department of the Public Administration stated, ". . . the leaders of the Baptist church, such as President Aleksander Kircun and Stanislaw Krakiewicz (1892-

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

1985), during the German occupation worked with the Nazis. The general activity of the Baptists leads to the conclusion that they work against our state and government. For this reason, we are against the registration of the Baptist Union in Poland."¹²

In order to improve their reputation and status, Polish Baptist leaders continued to communicate with the government. One telegram stated,

The Council of the Polish Union sends their best wishes for the new and independent Republic of Poland. We pray for the President and for the progress and prosperity of our country. Together with the entire Polish nation, we want to be faithful in rebuilding our homeland, especially its spiritual and material life.¹³

After this, the Department of Public Administration asked the Christian Ecumenical Council in Poland for an opinion about the Polish Baptists. The Ecumenical Council responded as follows, "During this time there are no foreseeable theological or legal problems in offering the Baptists the desired status."¹⁴ On 4 May, 1945, after gathering all their information, the government registered *Polski Kosciol Ewangelicznych Chrzescijan Baptystow* (The Church of Poland Evangelical Christian Baptists) as a legal religious

¹² *Slowo Prawdy*, April 1991, 15.

¹³ Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Typu Ewangeliczno-Baptystycznego*, 45-46.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

denomination in Poland.¹⁵ Registration was an historic event in the life of the Baptist movement in Poland, occurring almost ninety years after the first Baptist congregation was established. This placed the Baptists in a new situation where they began to receive privileges, though dealing with an unsympathetic government.

(B) Baptist Growth Under Communism

In 1945, the Polish Marxist government made a declaration of tolerance towards all religions¹⁶. This seemed like good news for the Baptists in Poland at the time. However, it became clear that these words were an empty declaration. Catholic and Protestant clergy were arrested in 1949 (although the government claimed that only Catholic clergy were arrested), leading to conflict between Catholics and Protestants. This activity weakened the churches' authority and attempted to strengthen popular faith in the Marxist government.¹⁷

Because of government opposition, Baptists were forced to centralize their work and pool their resources and personnel. The larger churches became regional centers where the Sunday services would draw people from miles around. The church in Katowice, formed in 1908, illustrates this post-war model of church planting. Katowice Baptist Church is in the center of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

a number of cities, including Sosnowiec, Myslowice, Chorzow, Bytom, and Siemianowice. The members of the congregation live in the cities surrounding Katowice, and travel up to sixty kilometres to attend church. During the week, the church sponsors meetings in smaller missionary stations¹⁸ at Kety, Tarnowskie Gory, Sosnowiec, and Chorzow.

The centralization process of the local Baptist churches helped to consolidate the denominational interests as a viable entity before the government and the Catholic Church. Because Baptists built churches in central locations, they gained visibility where they might otherwise have been overlooked as a rural, isolated phenomenon. Ironically, centralization was an unforeseen benefit of the Marxist government policies. Centralization also made it possible for local congregations to become centers of evangelization, social activity and institutional development.

Centralization also led to regional organization and became a key to the Polish Baptist identity. District meetings were held to elect superintendents to oversee all activities throughout the Polish Baptist family. The superintendent (who coordinates district church work) represents the Baptists from local congregations in the Baptist Executive Committee in

¹⁸ In Poland, the missionary station is a group of church members up to 25 members, which meets during the week for prayer and Bible study. Any group meeting with over 25 members is considered a congregation. The Polish church draws from a larger area than the community church model so prevalent in the West.

Warszawa. The Baptist Executive Committee in Warszawa, which coordinates missionary work for the whole country, is divided into ten districts: Warszawa, Bialystok, Lublin, Mazury, Gdansk, Poznan-Szczecin, Dolny-Slask, Gorny-Slask, Krakow-Tarnow, and Lodz.¹⁹

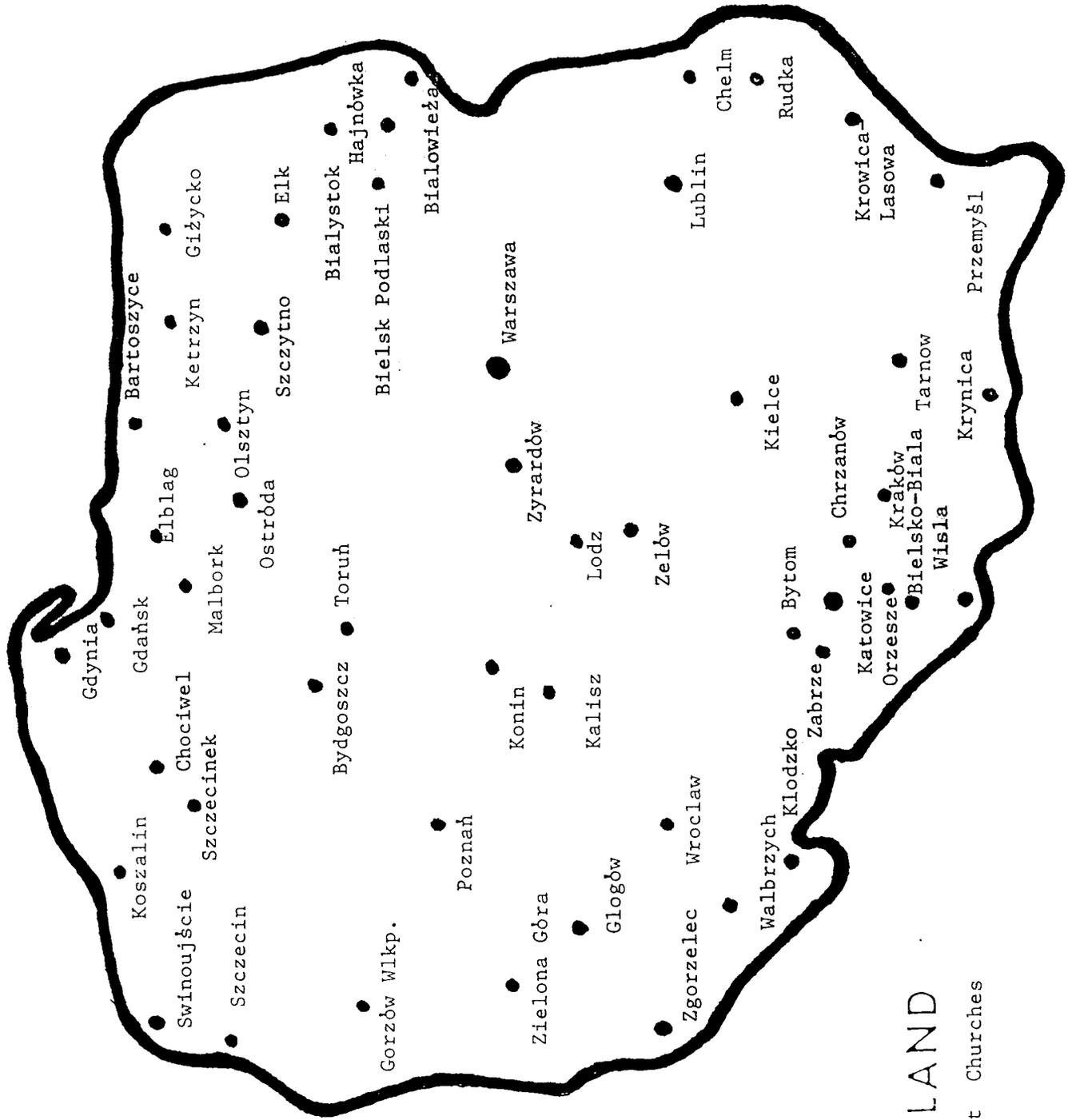
The local churches and districts cooperated to develop the overall Union. In 1961, the Union officially opened a church house center with a chapel in Warszawa,²⁰ it was a gift of the international Baptist community. Here in the national capital, Polish Baptist work could be coordinated more effectively. In order to centralize other aspects of Baptist institutional work, the seminary was also moved to Warszawa, along with the publishing house. In this new center, the Polish Baptist Council has met every four years, as have other conferences and congresses. Thus, centralization has strengthened and coordinated Baptist work in the nation.

Remarkably, Polish Baptist work grew within the Marxist state. In spite of emigration to Europe and North America, the number of Baptists has grown steadily through the years. As of 1995, there are sixty Baptist churches (see map, pg. 84) and over fifty missionary stations, with more than three thousand five hundred baptized members.²¹

¹⁹ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptistow*, 133.

²⁰ This was on the one hundredth anniversary of the Baptist movement in Poland.

²¹ Jacek Piotrowski, *Kosciol Chrzescijan Baptistow* (Warszawa: Slowo Prawdy, 1994), 11.



POLAND

Baptist Churches

(C) **The Importance of the International Baptist Family**

Although the Polish Baptist Union represents a minority group, it is part of a larger Baptist family around the world, known as the Baptist World Alliance, formed in 1905. One of the first occasions for Polish Baptists to make contact with the larger Baptist community came in 1926, when a delegation from the B.W.A. visited Poland. President Edgar Young Mullins (1860-1928) and other representatives of the Alliance called a national congress of Polish Baptists in Lodz.²² This visit by the B.W.A. delegation was an encouragement for the Polish Union. Mullins applauded the Baptists and promised support for additional missionary work in the country. In 1930, the President of the B.W.A., John McNeil (1874-1937), also visited Poland. In 1934 the World Congress of B.W.A. took place in Berlin, Germany, where fifty four delegates from Poland participated.²³ This was an historic moment for the Polish Union. Polish Baptists met other delegates from around the world and understood the similarities and differences among Baptists from different cultures. This contact was very important because in Poland, while under oppression from the Roman Catholic Church, Baptists received support from outside of the country. Also, the Baptists from other countries helped Polish Baptists to establish important patterns of Baptist identity.

²² *Slowo Prawdy*, October 1926, 13.

²³ Jedras, "History of the Polish Baptists", 36.

The B.W.A. assisted the Polish congregations both spiritually and materially. Alliance partners helped to construct functional church structures, repair old buildings and fund the translation and publication of many books and doctrinal brochures. The contacts of the Polish churches within the B.W.A. had a great impact on the missionary work in Poland. These contacts empowered the Polish Baptist Union and promoted inward and outward growth. Internally, the contact with the larger family encouraged Poles to conduct mission work and reinforced the idea that they were not alone. Further, the relation with the B.W.A. gave Polish Baptists a guarantee that during persecution they could always expect help from the international family. Financial help given by international Baptists encouraged the Marxist government to grant the Polish Baptist Union official status. A letter written in 1946 from the Polish Baptist Union to the Marxist government illustrated this: "Because of the financial help from the American churches to the Polish nation, and because of the planned visit of Baptist leaders from America, we ask again for the legalization of our church. The matter is very important."²⁴

The high point of the B.W.A. relationship and the Polish Baptist Union was the Polish Billy Graham Crusade in 1978. Because of this nationwide crusade, Catholic churches were

²⁴ Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Typu Ewangeliczno-Baptystycznego*, 46-47.

opened to Protestant preachers and many churches were packed with thousands of listeners. The contacts between Marxist Poland and the United States were forged during Dr. Graham's visit. He was particularly impressed by the efforts of the Polish Baptist Union, which was the genesis of such a large undertaking.²⁵

III. Baptist Institutional Development Within Poland

(A) Theological Education

In 1945, the Baptist Council in Warszawa decided to establish bible and missionary courses within the churches. In the beginning, the courses were set up on a rotating three-week system in Warszawa and Lodz. In 1946, the Baptist Polish Union gave A. W. Kurzawa authority to begin a theological seminary in Malbork and he became the school's first dean. Between 1947 - 1949 a total of sixteen students attended, but there were only ten students between 1949 - 1951.²⁶

After 1950, the situation between the churches and the government became strained. The government began to impose repressive measures upon the churches and this prohibited the seminary from continuing. The seminary was closed for several years, and this had the effect of inhibiting the goal of the

²⁵ Michal Stankiewicz, *Billy Graham w Polsce* (Warszawa: Slowo Prawdy, 1979), 221ff.

²⁶ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptistow*, 140. See Appendix D.

Union to offer better levels of education to its pastors. Polish Baptists were once again forced to organize smaller informal courses while augmenting pastoral education through self-study courses provided by mail.

During the post-war period, Polish Baptist students were unable to travel to Hamburg, Germany to seek seminary education as they had in previous years. The Cold War had created enmity between Poles and Germans. Thus, Polish Baptists had to look elsewhere for theological education. In 1949, Baptists from the United States set up a seminary in Rueschlikon, Switzerland, for European students. The Polish Baptist leadership used this seminary more than other Eastern Europeans because of its proximity and because there was more freedom of movement from Poland than from other Eastern Bloc countries. Among the Polish students who studied in Rueschlikon were Michal Stankiewicz (1923-1985), Piotr Dajludzionek (1928-), Konstanty Wiazowski (1934-), Aleksander Kircun (Sr.), Stefan Rogaczewski, and several others. Of great value for Polish Baptists was the Summer Institute Of Theological Education (S.I.T.E.), which began in 1979. This program provided intensive training for Eastern European pastors in the summer months. The total number of Polish students who attended this program from 1979 until 1992 was fifty seven.²⁷

²⁷ The total lists of Polish students who studied in Rueschlikon and those who took the S.I.T.E. courses are found in Appendices B and C.

The Baptist Theological Seminary at Rueschlikon was staffed by a large contingent of Southern Baptist teachers who shaped the majority of the future Polish pastors studying in the seminary. Whereas Polish pastors had previously been influenced by German theology in the Hamburg connection, the post-war period saw Polish pastors being educated in a typical American Southern Baptist theological curriculum. German theology was replaced by American and British Baptist literature and methods. The program was taught in English, thus requiring Polish pastors to learn English and enjoy a larger cache of resources.

In the 1960s, the relationship between the Communist government in Poland and the churches thawed. Dialogue was reestablished and the government allowed the Baptist Union to reopen the Polish Baptist Seminary. From 1962-1988, the seminary alternated locations between Warszawa and Malbork. Because of limited facilities in both Malbork and Warszawa, the Polish Baptists prayerfully sought out another location to build a new seminary.

In the late 1970's, Polish Baptists received permission to build a comprehensive educational center at Radosc,²⁸ a site

²⁸ The name Radosc literally means "joy". Radosc is located twenty kilometers south-east of Warszawa. During the fall of 1923, Waclaw Zebrowski, the owner of the land in Radosc decided to organize stationary biblical courses which started in November, 1926. The courses took place in Zebrowski's wooden house. The land in Radosc was bought by the American European Christian Fellowship in 1928. The administrative director was a Jew converted to Christianity, Mojzesz Gitlin. The facility was used by the Gitlin family,

near Warszawa. Polish Baptists were supported with the prayers and gifts of Baptists worldwide to build this complex. The seminary opened on 17 September, 1994 with Gustaw Cieslar as its first Dean. The site functions as a place where Baptists can educate their leaders to handle the ever-changing political, cultural and religious situations in the country. The opening of the Baptist seminary at Radosc instilled a great wave of enthusiasm among the European Baptists. Since the building of the new seminary, Polish Baptists find themselves with an unusual additional opportunity since the seminary in Rueschlikon has moved to Prague, Czech Republic. The Seminary at Radosc has become the desired facility for the S.I.T.E. program in 1995, and the educational hope of Baptists in Poland and in Eastern Europe rides on the achievement of the seminary in Radosc.

In 1990 a parachurch-supported seminary was opened in Wroclaw, making a second school available to Baptists. This seminary is not solely a Baptist institution, but has a shared board made up of several other evangelical denominations. The dean of the seminary, Zygmunt Karel states, "this is an inter-denominational evangelical school - this offer is for all

and later by the Przeorski family until 1939. From the end of World War II until 1961 when the central church and housing facility were built in Warszawa, the religious life of Polish Baptists was centered in Radosc. Here were several short term theological courses, pastor's conferences, children and youth camps, and four synods of the Polish Baptist Union in the years 1951, 1956, 1959, and 1962. See *Slowo Prawdy*, October 1994, 13-15, and Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Typu Ewangeliczno-Baptystycznego*, 14.

people from different denominations who are born again."²⁹ The seminary is fashioned along the parachurch model common in North America, which prepares both pastors and lay people to work in various churches and other church-related vocations. The seminary is under American influence, the staff is predominantly from the West, and the classes are taught in both English and Polish.

(B) Other Instruments of Polish Baptist Identity

During the last fifty years, Polish Baptists have worked hard to build significant institutions in order to develop a distinct Baptist identity. The Baptist Union built several new church buildings, a seminary in Radosc, housing for senior citizens in Bialystok, the publishing centre for *Slowo Prawdy* in Warszawa; the Baptist Union also sponsors Christian radio broadcasts. These institutional elements have provided an important foundation for the Baptist work in Poland.

The Polish Baptist publications became a fundamental instrument for spreading Baptist thought among Catholic Poles. In 1969, Polish Baptists printed *Statut i Konfesia Wiary* (Statute and Confession of Faith). The Confession contained fourteen articles which described who the Baptists were, what they believed and the principles by which Baptist church life would be regulated.³⁰ Polish Baptists also translated into

²⁹ *Slowo Prawdy*, September 1993, 14.

³⁰ The first Confession was printed in Poland in the German language in 1874 and 1930 in Polish. See Appendix A.

Polish several books about the history of the Baptist movement in general. For example, *Your Heritage* (Twoje Dziedzictwo) by G. W. Rusling was printed in Polish in 1962; *Our Faith* (Nasza Wiara) by Emil Brunner was printed in 1963; *I Want to be Baptized* (Chce Byc Ochrzczony) by Eric Lane was printed in Polish in 1982.

The lack of Polish language commentaries on the Old and New Testament (Polish Baptists were more concerned with mission than with theology), pressed the Union to translate into Polish William Barclay's series *Commentary on The New Testament*. The translation began in the 1960s, publication was sporadic, and the entire series was not available until the late 1980s. For example, the *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* was not published in Poland until 1978.

The Polish Baptist Union published a pamphlet entitled, *Poswieceni w Prawdzie* (Devoted To Truth), (1984) which provided basic information about the Polish Baptist movement. The last edition of this pamphlet was entitled *Kosciot Chrzescijan Baptystow* (Church of Christian Baptists), printed in 1994.

An interesting discussion of religious culture and counter-culture in Poland is found in *Chrzescijanstwo Ewangeliczne a Katolicy* (Evangelical Christianity and Catholics), written by Krzysztof Bednarczyk (1925-1992). This book analyzes the differences between Evangelicals and Catholics within an historical context. Also in the historical

vein, Michal Stankiewicz published in 1966 *Ponurzano w Polsce* (Immersed in Poland), which examined the doctrinal relationship between Polish Brethren (Arians) and the Baptist movement in Poland. In 1978, in connection with the Billy Graham Crusade in Poland, the Polish Baptist Union translated two of Graham's books; *You Must be Born Again* (Musicie sie na Nowo Narodzic) and *Peace with God* (Pokoj z Bogiem).

The Polish Baptists produced their own hymnal, *Glos Wiary* (The Voice of Faith) which had fourteen editions between 1959 and 1984. This hymnal is in common use in Polish Baptist churches in Poland, the United States and Canada. From 1925 until the present, the monthly journal *Slowo Prawdy* has served as the source of Baptist identity in Poland.

To build a dynamic Baptist movement Polish Baptists realize their need to return to their deep roots. In the words of L. Miksa, editor of the first Baptist monthly magazine *Slowo Prawdy*,

To the readers, our motivation to start to print this magazine is to obey the commitment of our Lord, Jesus Christ who says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creatures." Because we personally experience the power of the Word of Truth in our lives, we want to share with the Polish nation this message in order to give them a possibility to come to him who is the only word of life - to Christ.³¹

³¹ *Slowo Prawdy*, February 1925, 1.

IV. Baptist Relations with Other Christian Groups in Poland

(A) The Polish Ecumenical Council

After World War II, the minority churches in Poland strengthened themselves by creating unions of congregations. The first example of such movements came from Zygmunt Michaelis (1890-1977) of the *Ewangelicko Augsburski* (the Protestant Lutheran Church). In 1941 Michaelis met with evangelical leaders to discuss a possible union. On 2 October 1945, the representatives of the five Protestant churches *Ewangelicko Augsburski*, *Ewangelicko-Reformowany*, *Metodystyczny*, *Polski Kosciol Ewangelicznych Chrzescijan Baptystow*, *Ewangeliczni Chrzescijanie* (Protestant Lutheran Church, Lutheran Reformed, the Methodists Church, The Church of Polish Evangelical Christian Baptists, and Evangelical Christians) created *Rada Protestanckich Kosciolow w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* (The Council of Protestant Churches in the Republic of Poland). The main goals in the establishment of this council were: (1) cooperation on the social-charitable and religious field; (2) promotion of Polish Protestantism to the Polish nation and other countries; (3) defence of religious liberty and the full equality of religious rights in the country; (4) fostering relationships with Protestant churches outside the country, especially those in North America; and (5) the administration and distribution of material goods received from international Protestant

churches. ³² This new union had to inform *Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej* (The Department of Public Administration) and *Ministerstwo Propagandy* (The Department of Propaganda) of their actions.³³

The representatives of the Polish Baptists, Aleksander Kircun and Stanislaw Krakiewicz, wanted to include other non-Protestant churches. On 19 October 1945, the Council accepted memberships of churches: *Starokatolicki*, *Mariawitow*, *Prawoslawny* (The National Catholic Church, The Church of Mariawitow³⁴ and the Russian Orthodox Church). During this meeting *Polska Rada Ekumeniczna* (The Ecumenical Council in Poland) was created. The main purpose of this council was "to share in Polish solidarity and loyal cooperation in the name of Christ, spiritual and moral renewal of the nation, establishment of democracy and assurance of equal rights among all Polish peoples."³⁵ The board of this council included Zygmunt Michaelis as the first president (Protestant

³² Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Typu Ewangeliczno-Baptystycznego*, 52.

³³ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁴ At the beginning of the twentieth century there arose two branches of Polish Catholicism. The Church of Mariawitow started in 1905 and focussed on the worship of Mary and the sacrament of the Eucharist. This movement spread to more than 100 parishes between Lodz and Plock. The Polish National Church had its beginning in 1910 among Polish immigrants to the United States. This church was transplanted to Poland after 1945.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

Lutheran); Krzysztof Najder (1889-1993) as the General Secretary (Methodists); Stanislaw Krakiewicz as Treasurer (Baptist Union). On 19 April 1947, the Ecumenical Council sent a letter to the Department of Public Administration that the new body effectively replaced the old union (Council of Protestant Churches in the Republic of Poland).³⁶ The *Polska Rada Ekumeniczna* has existed from 1947 until the present.

The participation of the Baptists in the *Polska Rada Ekumeniczna* has helped the denomination in a number of respects. The Baptists became a member of a larger body of churches which provided security in official circles and exert a larger influence over the Polish society. For instance, the *Polska Rada Ekumeniczna* was for many years a mediator between the Eastern Bloc and Western churches. When western nations sent support (either in financial aid or food) it was the *Polska Rada Ekumeniczna* which dispersed the aid throughout the various members. Being a part of this body made it easier to have dialogue with the Polish Catholic Church and avoid direct oppression from the government.

(B) Baptist Relations with Other Protestants

In 1942 during the German occupation of Poland, the Evangelical groups had been united (vide supra) into a union called *Der Bund Nichtdeutscher Evangelisch Freikirchlicher Gemeinden-Baptisten*; the Bund included Baptists, Free Christians, Evangelical Christians, the Church of Christ and

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

other groups. In May 1945 a council of the Bund met. During this session the delegates decided to establish a new Union, *Polski Kosciol Ewangelicznych Chrzescijan Baptystow* (The Church of Polish Evangelical Christian Baptists). The president of this new "Polish Baptist Union" was Aleksander Kircun. The council consisted of thirty-five delegates representing twenty-nine churches with a total of 1,763 members.³⁷ The stated goal of this council was to look toward a united future. However, this goal quickly faded as the group began to fragment.

(1) Separation of Evangelical Groups from the Baptists

There were a number of reasons for this separation, the first being external influences. In 1946, some representatives from Evangelical churches (who were included in the union) visited Poland. Included among them was Konstanty Jaroszewicz from the United States of America, the founder of *Zjednoczony Kosciol Chrystusowy* (The United Church of Christ, which was established in Poland in 1928). K. Jaroszewicz promised financial help and he encouraged the leaders of the United Church of Christ to separate from *Polski Kosciol Ewangelicznych Chrzescijan Baptystow* (The Church of Polish Evangelical Christians Baptist), and to reestablish an autonomous United Church of Christ. Their desires were realized as they reestablished the United Church of Christ and

³⁷ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptystow*, 134-135.

received legal status in December 1946.³⁸

Second, personal ideas of ambition clouded ideas of unity. In 1946, a conflict between Jozef Mrozek (1912-1989), a pastor of a Free Church, and Emil Jeske (1910-?), a Baptist, took place. The reasons for this conflict were nationalistic as well as political: they quarrelled over who would be the supreme authority in the district of Silesia. Pastor Mrozek called a conference of the Free Christian churches in 1947 in Chorzow where they decided to separate from *Polski Kosciol Ewangelicznych Chrzescijan Baptistow* (The Church of Polish Evangelical Christian Baptists). This took place without any cooperation or discussion with the existing Union.

There were also other reasons for the split. Within the larger union, smaller churches started talking about cooperation among themselves and separation from the main group. For example, S. Krakiewicz, representative of *Kosciol Wolnych Chrzescijan* (The Free Christian Church), sought cooperation with Szenderowski, the representative from the *Ewangeliczni Chrzescijanie* (Evangelical Christians). In August 1947, a council involving these two groups (and some others) decided to create a new union, called the Unified Evangelical Church. Though the Baptists were invited to join the new body, they declined to cooperate.³⁹ The President of the Baptist

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 136.

³⁹ Jaroszewicz, *Dzieje Kosciola Baptistow*, 138, Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Ewangeliczno-Baptystyczne*, 64-68.

Union, Alexander Kircun, explained why Baptists would not participate in this new union in the following letter:

The Baptists cannot participate in this new union because we belong to a church which survived very difficult moments of history..we cannot dissolve our church which has tradition in the social and missionary field to enter a union that is without such a tradition. We wish you many blessings in the work of the new union.⁴⁰

Thus, the Polish Baptists (numbering 2,000 members) found themselves separated from the other Evangelical churches (numbering 1,500 members).⁴¹ In 1948, the president of the Evangelical Christians, Szenderowski, pressed Baptists to eliminate the term "Evangelical" because he felt that Baptists no longer needed the title "Evangelical" after the separation of Evangelical Christians and Baptists. In response to this shift, leaders in Warszawa decided to eliminate the word "Evangelical" and change the name of the Polish Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists to *Polski Kosciol Chrzescijan Baptystow* (The Polish Church of Christian Baptists).⁴²

(2) Unsuccessful Attempts at Unification of Baptists and other Evangelical Groups

In 1955, under pressure from *Wydzial do Spraw Wyznan* (The Religious Department) of the Marxist government in charge of

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 139. The Polish Church of Christian Baptist is a literal translation of the Polish title, *Polski Kosciol Chrzescijan Baptystow*. In English this was known as "The Polish Baptist Christian Union".

overseeing Polish religious affairs⁴³, *Zjednoczony Kosciol Chrystusowy* (The United Evangelical Church) worked very hard to build a relationship with the Baptist Union. Despite its desires to unite, such a move was resisted by the Baptists. Contacts were limited to official ceremonies. In a note from the Committee on Public Security, it was stated, "that only the Baptist churches keep their distance from the United Evangelical Church...".⁴⁴ The rationale for the religious department in establishing a single church organization was: (1) to oversee the entire work of the combined unions by establishing a control council including leaders of the United Evangelical Church who will co-operate with the state government; (2) regulation of the organizational work of the churches... by registration of established places of religious meetings and public worship; (3) elimination of unregistered gatherings of unregistered groups; and (4) inclusion under the influence of *Zjednoczony Kosciol Ewangeliczny* (The United Evangelical Church) of all unregistered Evangelical groups.⁴⁵

During the next few years, the Religious Department continued its efforts to bring the two Evangelical churches together. However, during the 1960s the political situation in Poland radically changed and the plans of the Marxist

⁴³ Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Typu Ewangeliczno-Baptystycznego*, 148.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

government were frustrated. Because of labor strikes, public protests against Communism, and Western voices influencing political movements, relations between the government and the churches changed: pressure to amalgamate Baptists and Evangelicals subsided.⁴⁶ Over the next few years both groups worked as separate entities.

(C) Baptist Relations with Roman Catholics

Until the 1960s, Baptists were seen by Catholics as non-Polish. Catholics held the German ancestry of Baptists against them and Baptists were considered heretics and sectarians. The older generation remembered the words of the earlier clergy who said, "God will punish the country when they will tolerate 'heretics'. These people must be taken out of the country."⁴⁷ Much that was non-Catholic was held in contempt. The most common argument against Baptists was that Protestantism was in rebellion from the 'true church'; that Protestants were without link to the foundations of Christianity because they lacked the apostolic succession which only the Catholic Church could enjoy. Baptists were seen as schismatics, without a tradition. Secondly, proselytism became a major concern as Baptists were largely converts from the Catholic Church. In more recent years some Catholics have realized that their stereotypes of Baptists may have been too harsh. Many are afraid of what they do not understand. A common stereotype is

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Slowo Prawdy*, July 1982, 26.

revealed in the following quotation: "the Baptists do not baptize infants. For this reason, if this child dies, he/she will go to hell."⁴⁸

The missionary zeal of the Polish Baptists is something that is viewed with admiration by Catholics. In contrast to the Catholic experience, where lay people are little involved in church ministry, Polish Baptists stress the priesthood of all believers, where all individuals are an important witness of the faith. Each believer is voluntarily involved in the mission of the church.

Since 1975, the Catholic Church has started to take the Baptist movement more seriously. One of the reasons is that the Baptists joined the Ecumenical Council (Polska Rada Ekumeniczna) and have been very active in working throughout the Polish religious scene. Two examples that the doors for dialogue have opened are (1) the Graham Crusade in Catholic churches (1978), and (2) the visit of the Catholic Archbishop of Silesia, Damian Zimon, to the Baptist Church in Katowice in 1992. These visits broke stereotypes that had greatly hindered any dialogue in the past. Continued positive exchanges between the two groups testify to the fact that old animosities between the two church groups have been assuaged. During the last several years in Poland, Catholic clergy have formally recognized the Baptist movement, calling their members

⁴⁸ Krzysztof Bednarczyk, *Chrzescijanstwo Ewangeliczne a Katolicy* (Warszawa: P.K.Ch.B., 1974), 81.

'separate brothers.' This term has replaced the view that Baptists were sectarians or heretics and thus proves that some ground has been gained.⁴⁹

Baptists have also been historically critical of Roman Catholic Christianity. This issue is a very complex one which began with the historical and cultural relationships between the two groups. The Baptists came to Poland in the mid-nineteenth century into a predominantly Catholic country. Many Polish people understood the Catholic Church as being the one true religion, as over ten centuries, the Catholic Church has been integrally linked with the life of the Polish people. In this way, the character of the Polish people has been greatly shaped by the Catholic influence. Polish life is filled with a richness of religious ceremony which takes on many forms. One example of the central role that ceremony plays in the life of the Polish people is related in the following passage:

On 8 October, 1717, the Bishop Czenbek took the ceremony of the crowning of the picture in Czestochowa. . . where the Polish masses had a lot of pilgrims come to the crowning of this picture. Czestochowa thus became a place of miracles for the Polish people.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ The Vatican II documents, issued in 1967, utilized the term tolerance in reference to other faith groups. The Catholic Church stated that it was open to dialogue. The encyclical *Pacem in Tevis*, issued by Pope John XXII, stated for the first time those groups that had previously been seen as sects (including Baptist movement). The Catholic Church publicly acknowledged that Christianity existed among evangelical groups. After this in Poland Baptists are called 'separate brothers'.

⁵⁰ *Slowo Prawdy*, July 1982, 26. This ritual was established by Pope Urban VIII in 1631.

This was the first crowning of a picture of Mary in the history of the Polish Catholic Church.

Polish Baptists, on the other hand, have viewed themselves as having a different focus for their faith. They reject many Catholic rituals, particularly those focused on the Virgin Mary. Baptist life centers on the authority of Scripture and the centrality of Christ.

When Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1901-1981) returned from Rome after Pope John Paul II was elected in 1978, he encouraged the entire nation to elevate the cult of Holy Mary. This stress on the cult of the Virgin became a large problem for the Polish Baptists. Discussion within Baptists circles regarding this question culminated with a denunciation of this practice. In October 1993, The Council of the Polish Baptist Union stated,

according to Roman Catholic statements, they seem to be intent on bringing the whole nation to the 'Holy Mother' for blessing. As Polish Baptists, we disagree with bringing the whole nation before a human being for a blessing. Besides, we believe that bringing the nation to a created being for a blessing may inflict a curse on the nation instead of a blessing. We pray that we could build the character of the Polish nation through God, the Father, and through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the sole mediator and the head of the church.⁵¹

Such a public statement was viewed as a growing division between Catholics and Baptists.

Baptists have also historically viewed Catholic Christians as lax in their moral lives. For Baptists, the

⁵¹ *Slowo Prawdy*, November, 1993, 21.

conversion experience means to turn from the 'world' and to avoid all appearances of evil. Polish Baptists frown on socially liberal practices such as cigarette smoking, drinking alcohol, and dancing, whereas this kind of behavior is commonly seen in the social life of Polish Catholics. Baptists represent a type of Puritan ethos. Faith for Baptists is not a system of dogma, ritual or a church hierarchy, but rather, a religious experience at the personal level.

There are indications that the Baptists are becoming more aware of the faith and life, albeit in a different form, of Polish Catholic Christians. As repeated in the religious press, the following interview between a Baptist and Catholic, illustrates a new progressive perspective:

Question: Is it possible that a converted Catholic can remain in the Catholic Church?

Answer: Yes, I hope so. When one looks at the history of the Catholic Church you can find many that have been converted and yet remained in that Church; very often they were called saints. Various examples are Charles de Foucauld: his conversion was revolutionary, through sickness he came to Christ. Later, he died at the hands of Mohammedans. I understand in conversion, that the most important thing is that Jesus is the first. According to your question, of course, a converted Catholic can still remain in the Catholic Church.⁵²

⁵² *Slowo Prawdy*, February 1980. 18.

V. Summary

This chapter has examined the development of the Polish Baptist movement in post-war and Marxist Poland. In 1945, after the six years of the German occupation, Baptist churches were largely devastated. The following year, however, official recognition by the Marxist government inaugurated a new period of identity within ranks of the Polish Baptists.

A half century later, the Baptist tradition in Poland has great resources, organization and influence. Baptists have begun to build churches in locations designed to promote centrality and visibility. The local congregations and districts have cooperated to develop an overall Union. Thus centralization strengthened and coordinated Baptist work in Poland. Added to this, Polish Baptists have established relationships with the larger Baptist family around the world, and they have worked out their theology and mission by establishing Baptist institutions within Poland.

Alliances with other religious groups in the Polish Ecumenical Council, and cooperation with Evangelical groups within other unions has increased the status of Baptists and their influence. Furthermore, the developing dialogue between exponents of culture and counter-cultural movements has increased toleration of Baptists.

Having looked at the development of the Polish Baptist identity in its historical context, one may ask where the

Polish Baptist movement is headed. The general conclusion which follows argues that Polish Baptist identity is still being formed, and that Baptists in Poland have to search further for a full sense of denominational identity.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

My aim in writing this thesis has been to describe and analyze the unique nature of Baptist identity in Poland within an historical context. In order to discuss the uniqueness of the Polish Baptist movement, we must answer three questions about the Polish Baptists; (1) What is their origin?, (2) How has the historical context from which the Polish Baptist movement originated influenced its development? and (3) What must Polish Baptists do in the future to nourish and support their unique identity?

During the history of the Polish Baptist movement, their identity has changed and is still being shaped by many factors. Initially, Polish Baptists struggled to be recognized within the larger Polish Catholic community. The Catholic religion had been established in Poland many centuries before and dominated all aspects of Polish life. This was the hard soil that the Polish Baptist movement took root in.

Polish Baptists have been influenced by two streams of Christian thought. Initially, Baptist churches were built in Poland by German Baptists. They gave the Poles a confession of faith, structure and discipline of the church, educational

model (Hamburg seminary), as well as introduced Polish pastors to German theological books and literature.

Within Poland, if one professed to be a Baptist, one was assumed to be German. To be a Pole was to be Catholic. As a result of their identification with Germans and the oppressive German regimes, Polish Baptists were viewed by the Catholic community as traitors to Poland. To be a part of this "German-born", Polish Baptist body was to identify and ally oneself with a minority religious group.

As a religious minority, the voice of Polish Baptists was silenced and the body of the Polish Baptist movement was persecuted. Not surprisingly, relations between Polish Baptists and their oppressors (initially the Lutheran and Catholic churches and later the Marxist government) were antagonistic. Persecution only served to strengthen the Polish Baptist identity, allowing Baptists to survive and to understand themselves primarily as servants of God. Further, this self-identity of Polish Baptists meant that they separated themselves from the social traditions and customs of the wider Polish society and embraced a "Puritanical" ethos; they did not drink alcohol, dance or smoke. This separation from the larger Catholic society meant that, as a sect, Polish Baptists had little impact on their fellow countrymen. Separation, coupled with a lack of legal recognition in Poland, meant that their voice was not heard until 1946 when the Marxist government registered the Polish Baptists as an

official church under the constitution. The character of Polish Baptists has been influenced by their official acceptance as a Polish denomination by the state. This status gave them a stability which they previously did not have when they were seen as a sect. From that moment, the goal of the Polish Baptist movement was to thrive, not merely to survive.

After the Second World War, the German influence was replaced with an American presence. Baptists from the United States built a seminary in Rueschlikon, Switzerland; other American groups supported seminaries in Wroclaw and Radosc where Polish Baptist leaders were able to study. American professors and their theological emphasis had a tremendous impact on the Polish Baptist pastors and laity. The infusion of American religious liberty had a renewing effect on Polish Baptists, who have tried to find a balance between their own unique Polish identity and Western influences and trends.

Contacts with European and Baptist groups from the United States fostered a feeling that they had effectively carved out their own niche within the Polish religious scene. Visits by Dr. Billy Graham and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter (both Baptists) gave them a sense of belonging to a larger Baptist family around the world. This new Baptist identity sponsored a sense of self-worth which was felt internally and was acknowledged by others in Polish culture (such as the Catholic Church and the government). Further, by belonging to the Polish Ecumenical Council, the Baptist voice

was heard on a larger scale than was previously hoped to be possible. By working in alliances with other religious groups, Baptists have worked to dissolve historical stereotypes and to establish new and helpful connections. Participation in the social and political life of Poland became more of a priority, as they became involved in the work done through the Ecumenical Council.

From the beginning of the Baptist movement in Poland, the Baptist leaders were searching for their own identity. Since they were a minority group they adopted the theology and practices of the larger world-wide Baptist body which often did not reflect Polish culture and custom. However, if Polish Baptists are to have an impact on the Polish nation, they must create an identity relevant to Polish culture. This is not to say that Polish Baptists should shield themselves from outside influences, but that they should attempt to focus on reaching people in their own country on the basis of national culture and thinking. Polish Baptists should continue to search for new ideas and strategies, looking to other Baptist Union and Evangelical circles, and revise these ideas in a way that is relevant to Polish religious life.

Polish Baptist leaders must not fall prey to the same mistakes made by the Protestant Reformers in Poland during the sixteenth century. They must take steps to ensure that their leadership is well educated and effective. They need to avoid conflicts with other Protestant groups and they must continue

to develop their own Polish identity as well as strategies that will make their missionary work relevant to Polish culture. Changes that are too radical or happen too quickly will not be accepted by Polish society. This is the lesson that Polish Baptists can learn from the Socinians of the sixteenth century, whose program was rejected by the majority who held tenaciously to their Catholic traditions.

In a sea of Roman Catholic universities and theological schools, the Polish Baptist educational system is small. Baptists must work to strengthen their educational system along the same lines as the Catholics. They must place greater emphasis upon Baptist doctrine and polity, pastoral care, and missiological strategies in order to assert an indigenous Polish Baptist educational program. Educated leaders must learn to build bridges with the Catholic community and to engage in cooperative ministries such as chaplaincies. Polish Baptists need to become as effective as the Jesuits were in previous centuries.

One of the ways to build bridges between Polish Baptists and Catholics is to encourage dialogue despite the difficulties involved. It is possible to enter into dialogue with the Catholic community because of a fundamental shift in the Catholic perspective; Polish Baptists are now seen by Catholics as their "separated brothers," and not as members of a sect. Conversely, Polish Baptists must leave behind the "sectarian" mindset they have developed through the years of

persecution and have an appreciation for the Catholic heritage of Christianity. Notwithstanding the "David and Goliath" character of the relationship, even Pope John Paul II recognized that,

what unifies us is much more important than what divides us. We all believe in the same Christ.... We have a foundation to dialogue and to promote unity which in our understanding, has occurred because of the pride of groups who feel that they are in the right.¹

Even though Polish Baptists will continue to be a minority movement, they must always remember the words of Dr. Oskar Bartel who said, "the history of the Christian Church is not solely the history of the orthodox, but also the history of the opposition."²

A Personal Note

My experience in Canada has given me a fresh perspective on the relationship between Catholics and Baptists in Poland. As an individual, my relationship with my Catholic peers has been influenced by the historical antagonism between these two traditions. Being outside of Poland for three years and having had the opportunity to do research and to reflect on this relationship, has changed my perspective. I have come to

¹ Jan Pawel II, *Przekroczyć Prog Nadziei* (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1994), 117.

² Tomaszewski, *Wyznania Typu Ewangeliczno-Baptystycznego*, 5.

understand that the Baptist identity in Poland was shaped by its important relationship to the Catholic Church in particular and the larger Christian community. When I return to Poland, I will be able to share my new understanding of Catholic-Baptist relationships with my peers in the Baptist community and encourage them to see the Catholics as part of the larger Christian family and cooperate with them in an attempt to bring the Polish nation to faith in Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX A

In 1874, Gottlieb Liebert published in Poland, the condensed version of J.G. Oncken's and Julius Koebner's "Glaubensbekenntnis der Gemeinden getaufter Christen, gewoehnlich Baptisten genannt" (originally published in German, in 1837). Polish Baptists translated and adopted this Confession in 1930, with only a few minor changes. This 1930 version of the Confession was printed by Ludwik Miksa, editor of the "Kompas" publishing house in Lodz under the title "Konfesja czyli Wyznanie Wiary i Ustroj Zborow Baptistow", (Confession of Faith of the Baptist Churches in Poland).

The Scriptural references listed under each article have been eliminated in this appendix.

1. God's Word

We believe that the holy books of the Old and New Testaments are truly inspired by the Holy Spirit. They contain God's authentic revelation for mankind and are the only accurate source of information about God. Also they include principles and norms of proper faith and conduct.

The Old Testament has thirty-nine books:

<i>Genesis</i>	<i>Nehemiah</i>
<i>Exodus</i>	<i>Esther</i>
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>Job</i>
<i>Numbers</i>	<i>Psalms</i>
<i>Deuteronomy</i>	<i>Proverbs</i>
<i>Joshua</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>
<i>Judges</i>	<i>Song of Solomon</i>
<i>Ruth</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>
<i>1 Samuel</i>	<i>Jeremiah</i>
<i>2 Samuel</i>	<i>Lamentations</i>
<i>1 Kings</i>	<i>Ezekiel</i>
<i>2 Kings</i>	<i>Daniel</i>
<i>1 Chronicles</i>	<i>Hosea</i>
<i>2 Chronicles</i>	<i>Joel</i>
<i>Ezra</i>	<i>Amos</i>
<i>Obadiah</i>	<i>Zephaniah</i>
<i>Jonah</i>	<i>Haggai</i>
<i>Micah</i>	<i>Zechariah</i>
<i>Nahum</i>	<i>Malachi</i>
<i>Habakkuk</i>	

The New Testament has twenty-seven books:

Matthew	1 Timothy
Mark	2 Timothy
Luke	Titus
John	Philemon
Acts	Hebrews
Romans	James
1 Corinthians	1 Peter
2 Corinthians	2 Peter
Galatians	1 John
Ephesians	2 John
Philippians	3 John
Colossians	Jude
1 Thessalonians	Revelation
2 Thessalonians	

2. God

We believe that there is only one living, real, eternal God as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. He is perfect, everlasting and inseparable in his nature and attributes. The Father is the true, everlasting God, the Son, the true everlasting God and the Holy Spirit, the true everlasting God -- in the Holy Trinity. Yet we do not believe in three Gods, but in one who is eternal, almighty, only wise, omniscient, omnipresent God. Man can know God only through God's revelation contained in the Holy Scriptures when it is read with the help of the Holy Spirit.

3. Sin

We believe that God created the first man in His own image i.e., a good, holy and innocent being, which was able to worship Him, to have fellowship with Him and to be happy. However, as soon as man listened to satan and was seduced by him he sinned, drew away from God, lost the image of his Creator and fell with his body and soul in the state of death. Because all people come from Adam's seed they inherit his sinful and utterly depraved nature; they are conceived and born in sin as children of wrath. They lack the capacity and will toward that which is good and are capable of and inclined toward evil.

4. Redemption

We believe that God could not redeem man from the terrible consequences of his fall in any other way than by satisfying all demands of His own holy justice. Therefore God destined, from all eternity, His only Son, Jesus Christ, to be a sacrifice through which men's sins might be forgiven. When the time that had been foretold arrived, God sent His Son, Christ, to this world. Being in the form of sinful flesh, He combined within Himself eternal divinity and the human nature.

He had a real human soul and body which, however, was and remained completely pure and spotless. Neither in Jesus' heart nor in His body and conduct did ever any sin arise. His obedience was active when He himself had fulfilled the whole of God's law in our behalf; it was passive as He gave His body and soul as a sacrifice for us, taking upon Himself our curse, i.e., God's wrath and the penalty for our sins.

We believe that this perfect and unreserved sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the only basis of our eternal salvation. Only through this one event do we gain forgiveness for all our sins and trespasses, are justified and clothed with the garments of his righteousness, are liberated from the power of death, the devil and hell, and finally obtain eternal life. In addition we are given a gracious power to develop an aversion toward sin, in a way dying to it, and to start loving and practising virtue.

Having completed this redemptive act, Christ rose from the dead on the third day, went up to Heaven and sat at the right hand of God. From there He has sent the Holy Spirit who encourages us to accept by faith the benefits of this redemption. Jesus our great high priest, pleads with the Father on our behalf. Also He is with us always to the end of this age. Finally He will lead us into heaven where He has prepared a place for us.

5. Election to Salvation

We believe that God desires that every man should be saved. Therefore the duty of every man is to accept the gift of salvation by sincere and obedient faith in Jesus Christ. Only a stubborn persistence in sin and a refusal to amend and to submit oneself to Christ may block a sinner's way to salvation. In this matter every man is responsible for himself before God.

6. Regeneration

We believe and confess that man can be aroused from his spiritual death and be brought to recognize his own sin only through the Holy Spirit and God's Word. As soon as he truly repents for his sins, feels guilty and comes to Christ, man receives, through faith in Him, forgiveness and justification before God.

Through this work of the Holy Spirit man is born anew to a living hope and is enabled henceforth to live a new life.

7. Sanctification

We believe and confess that people who are born anew by the Holy Spirit become saints in Jesus. Due to the continuing

influence of Christ's Spirit living in them, they become capable of opposing effectively temptations, from which Christians are not free, of being obedient to God and of presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice to Him.

Sanctification begins at the moment of regeneration and is subject to a growing process throughout a person's life. Its objective is to transform the person into a complete likeness of Christ. God has established certain means aiding the process of sanctification, namely, His Word, prayer and the fellowship of the saints.

We believe that God's law is holy, just and good. The law brings the consciousness of sin and so it leads people to Christ. It remains binding in all its regulations and condemnation for all those who are not in Christ. Christians are set free from the curse and the penalties of the law because they are under the law of Christ.

8. Holy Baptism

The New Testament gives us ground to believe that baptism, ordered by Christ, ought to be performed in the Christian Church until His second coming. It is to be received by those who confess their faith in Jesus.

Baptism is performed in the following way: A servant of God, who has been authorized to do so, immerses a believer once in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and immediately lifts him up. Carried out in such a manner, God's order keeps its original and profound meaning.

The Holy Scriptures give a clear presentation of people who may submit to this ordinance. Regardless of all external differences, such as for example nationality, they are the people who, being attracted and drawn by the Gospel and the free grace of God, turn away from their sins, come to Christ and trust Him wholeheartedly as their personal Saviour.

Baptism is the first proof of a man's faith in Christ and his love for Him, the first step of obedience to the Lord and an act of joining the man to His Church. It is a solemn declaration and confession of a converted sinner, who has at last realized the atrocities of sin and the state of his own condemnation, that all of his hope is now set on the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and that He trusts Him as the One who has set him free from the curse and the penalties for sin. Further, by this act man declares that he surrenders himself wholly, body and soul, to Christ, that he accepts His righteousness and His power, that his old sinful nature (the old man) dies forever and that he desires to live henceforth a new life with Christ.

On the other hand baptism is also God's solemn

declaration and His assurance that by the acceptance of baptism man has indeed hidden himself in Christ Jesus, i.e., he has died together with Him, has been buried and has been raised from the dead, and that his sins have been washed away and that he has become a beloved child of God with whom God is well pleased.

Baptism should prompt within a baptized person a clear and firm awareness of being redeemed and saved. This awareness is caused by God, who has sealed the believer with the Holy Spirit, for, indeed, it was through the Spirit that God first awakened that man to the genuine and saving faith in the Son of God, and in the power of His death and resurrection.

A peculiar notion about baptism is that it can be received only once, whereas other means of grace can be renewed and repeated in the course of the whole life of the Christian. It should therefore be made sure that this unrepeated ordinance is carried out in a proper manner.

9. The Lord's Supper

We believe that Jesus Christ has established the Lord's Supper for His Church in order that the believers, by breaking and eating bread and by drinking wine from the cup, may receive His body and blood in a spiritual way, and proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. While celebrating this ordinance the believers remember the painful passion and death of their Saviour and realize that they themselves, as the Church, make up His holy body. We maintain that the way in which Christ's ordinance is observed must be strictly apostolic.

Since a participation in the Lord's Supper should be preceded by a thorough self-examination of those who would take part in it, the Lord's Table ought to be reserved for those who have, by the grace of God, become His own and have been duly baptized.

10. The Lord's Church

In accordance with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures we believe and confess that all believing Christians make One Body of Christ. We also believe that, according to the will of the Lord Jesus and teaching given by the Apostles, all believing Christians have a duty to unite themselves in local churches in order to maintain closer fellowship with one another.

Churches are communities composed of voluntarily gathered disciples of Jesus, who, being baptized as believers, separate themselves from the world and submit to the will of Christ in order to encourage one another to live a life of

sanctification, to spread the Kingdom of God on earth and to worship Christ.

a. Offices in the Church

The supreme and the only head of the Church is Jesus Christ; the church has no visible head on earth. The New Testament acknowledges only two offices in the church: the office of an elder, i.e., a presbyter, or a bishop, and the office of a deacon. A church itself elects elders (preachers, bishops, teachers, pastors, leaders -- all these are the names of one and the same office) and servants (deacons), who receive their authority through the laying on of hands by elders (ordination).

They must possess certain qualities listed in the Holy Scriptures and perform their duties in accordance with the New Testament teaching. Like all other members of the church they must be liable to church discipline, taking however into consideration 1 Timothy 5:19.

b. Duties of the members of the Church

Church members have the following duties: to love one another, to endeavour to procure spiritual and physical well-being for all, to use conscientiously the gifts of God's grace and to observe the commandments which the Lord Jesus, as the Head of the body, has left for the Church. It follows that each member of the community has a duty to participate in the Lord's Supper, to attend worship services and other church meetings regularly and to contribute as much as he can to the building up of the Kingdom of God.

c. Business Meeting

All church matters are settled at a business meeting, possibly by voting, in which all members exercise equal voting rights. All matters ought to be discussed in the atmosphere of the mind of Jesus, so that freedom and order are preserved in the house of God.

d. Reception of New Members

New members are received by voting at a business meeting and then by baptism, after the congregation has had an opportunity to learn about their spiritual standing and to hear their confession of faith. It is desirable that the voting is unanimous.

e. Church Discipline

The teaching of Christ in Matthew 18: 15-17 concerns each member. It is a responsibility of each member of the community both to accept brotherly admonishments and to admonish others if necessary. Admonishments should be given in the spirit of love.

The congregation has the right and the moral obligation to exclude from its number those members whose life

contradicts their professed faith, providing they refuse to repent and amend, i.e., those members who consciously remain in their sins. The members who commit major sins causing others to stumble, or who continue committing sins in spite of their repeated pledges not to do so, definitely should be excluded from the church.

A new reception of a former (excluded) member should follow a normal procedure for receiving members, i.e., after the case has been examined, a decision should be taken by vote.

11. The Christian Day of Rest

We believe and confess that the principle of keeping one day in the week as holy comes from the will of the gracious Creator, who ordered it for the benefit of people. God gave the seventh day of the week to the Israelites as the Sabbath and as the sign of the covenant between Himself and that nation. As the people of the New Covenant, we follow the pattern set by the first Christians and observe the first day of the week as dedicated to the Lord in a special way, because God Himself consecrated it by raising His Son from the dead, as well as by sending the Holy Spirit on that day. We feel obliged to work diligently and conscientiously fulfilling all the duties derived from our earthly citizenship on all six days of the week, but to dedicate Sunday completely to God. This means ceasing from all work which is not necessary or which does not come from the command to love one's neighbour.

The Lord's day should be spent in increasing the knowledge of God and true piety, in sharing Christian fellowship in a heartfelt and intelligible way, as well as contributing to the work of spreading the Kingdom of God on earth.

Furthermore we emphasize that on the Lord's day every Christian should spend more time reading the Holy Scriptures for himself and teaching his children from the book; he should also regularly attend all church services on the day. All this leads us to consider the Lord's day to be God's precious gift to the Church, absolutely necessary to its very existence.

12. Marriage

We believe and confess that God established marriage in which man and woman relate to each other in a physical and moral way and educate their children. As long as both husband and wife live, the man cannot marry another woman, and the woman another man. Because marriage is also a legal status it can take place only according to the legal statutes of the given country. In spite of that the church wedding ought to be held too. According to our principle, Christians should

get married only in the Lord, i.e., between believers.

We state that divorce, due to reasons not conformable to God's Word and the remarriage of divorced persons, is not allowed according to the New Testament. In the case of adultery or malicious desertion by the husband or wife, we believe that divorce is allowed according to God's Word.

13. Civil Authority

We believe and confess that God has established civil authorities and has authorised them to defend honest and upright people and to punish evildoers. We feel obliged to be absolutely obedient to all their rules, providing they do not limit us in our endeavour to fulfil all our Christian duties, and to be cooperative and help by living a quiet, peaceful and godly life.

We also feel obliged to pray for the authorities so that they may use their power in accordance with the will of God and that they might, under His leadership, keep peace and justice in the country.

We believe that swearing is forbidden by our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Apostles. Therefore in cases of need, taking full responsibility for the truthfulness of our statements, we are ready to confirm them with simple "Yes, yes" or "No, no," just as it is recommended in the Gospel.

We also believe in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, that "the sword is not worn in vain by authorities." The authorities have the right and duty to punish evil-doers as well as to use the sword when the country needs defense. We consider it our obligation, therefore, to place ourselves at our country's disposal in the times of war if we are called to do so.

We do not see any hindrance -- so far as our conscience is concerned -- to hold any office with the civil authorities.

14. The Last Things

We believe and confess that our Lord, Jesus Christ, will come again in great power and glory. We believe that the day of His appearance will be the final consummation of His redeeming work. The whole world will then know its reality and importance. Those who died in Christ will be raised again in an unblemished glory. Then the believers who are still alive shall suddenly be changed and, together with the risen ones, shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord. There we shall always be with the Lord, see Him as He is, become like Him and rule with Him in His Kingdom. We also

believe in the general resurrection and the judgment of the world to which all people shall have to come and stand before Christ, the Judge, and to receive wages for all they did in the days of their flesh. The Son of God will first vie eternal glory to the believers and then he will pronounce a verdict of eternal condemnation on all godless. We believe, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, that both these conditions will be eternal.

We believe that certain signs of time point to the near end of the present aeon. We remember the words of our Lord, who said: "Yes, I am coming soon," and we are waiting for Him with the prayer: "Amen. Come Lord Jesus."

**Italics represent additions by the Polish Baptists in 1930 and later*

APPENDIX B

Total number of regular students from Poland at Baptist Theological Seminary, Rueschlikon, Switzerland: 19.

Blank, Bogumila Blazowska	77-78
Blank, Edmund	83-84
Dajludzionek, Piotr	76-77
Goetz, Richard	60-63
Jarmola, Darek	81-85
Karel, Zygmunt	82-83
Kazek, Tadeusz	49-53
Kircun Jr., Aleksander	58-63
Kircun Sr., Alexander	1958
Neu, Ernst	62-64
Piasecki, Marcin	77-81
Radomski, Zbigniew	58-63
Rogaczewski, Stefan	67-68
Schulz, Astrid Anna	62-65
Stankiewicz, Michal	67-68
Szajner, Marian	65-66
Trusiewicz, Daniel	82-83
Wakula, Wladyslaw	69-70
Wiazowski, Konstanty	63-65

APPENDIX C

Total number of S.I.T.E. students from Poland at Baptist Theological Seminary Rueschlikon, Switzerland: 57.

Barna, Igor	1981, 1986, 1988
Bednarczyk, Grzegorz	1983, 1986
Bednarczyk, Krzystof	1982
Ber, Krystian	1981
Blank, Edmund	1980
Bland, Stanislaw	1980
Blazowski, Aleksander	1985-1987
Blazowski, Thomaz	1989
Blazowski, Joanna	1989
Blazowski, W.	1984
Brzechczyn, Jacek	1984
Cenian, Adam	1984
Cieslar, Anna	1994
Cieslar, Gustaw	1988
Dajludzionek, Piotr	1979, 1985
Dawidowicz, Ireneusz	1992
Drzewiecka, Bogumila	1986
Ekong, Stephen	1989
Fierenczuk, Anna	1979
Gutkowska, Ewa	1994
Gutkowski, Ryszard	1989
Jedras, Wieslaw	1980
Kalisz, Tadeusz	1981
Karel, Zygmunt	1979, 1982
Kircun, Aleksander	1980
Kircun, Halina	1980
Kolodziej, Jaroslaw	1990
Kowalczuk, Ruth	1982
Koziej, Wacław	1980
Krolak, Pawew	1980
Macuta, Jan	1979, 1989
Maksin, Ruta	1980
Mroczek, Jan	1985
Mroczek, Stanislaw	1981
Otremba, Adam	1980, 1988
Piasecki, Adam	1979
Piotrowski, Grzegorz	1983, 1985
Piotrowski, Jan	1985
Piotrowski, Mieczyslaw	1989
Rogaczewski, Jerzy	1990
Rudnicki, Boguslaw	1979
Seweryn, Andrzej	1983
Skoczen, Ireneusz	1987, 1990
Skoczen, Malwina	1990

Skoworodko, Anatol	1982
Skrzypkowski, Henryk	1992
Stebelski, Stephan	1982
Malgorzata, Stupnicka	1991
Swirydziuk, Wlodzimierz	1982
Trusiewicz, Daniel	1982
Wakula, Wladyslaw	1981
Wiazowska, Grazyna	1987
Wiazowski, Konstanty	1981
Wiazowski, Piotr	1987
Zarecka, Walentyna	1984
Zareki, Piotr	1982
Zwierzchowski, Janusz	1981, 1985

APPENDIX D

Total number of regular students who studied from 1947 until 1948 at Baptist Theological Seminary, Malbork, Poland: 16

Januszkiewicz, Michal	(1929-)
Kuprianow, Mieczyslaw	(1925-)
Lepa, Stefan	(1919-1985)
Luksza, Mikolaj	(1923-)
Mackiewicz, Jan	(1925-1989)
Oswiecimka, Edmund	(1922-)
Pawlik, Zdzislaw	(1928-)
Popko, Mikolaj	(1911-)
Poziomkiewicz, Piotr	(1923-)
Rogaczewski, Stefan	(1929-)
Stankiewicz, Michal	(1923-1985)
Stebelski, Mikolaj	(1929-)
Szajner, Marian	(1923-)
Zachanowicz, Piotr	(1922-)
Zoltko, Jan	(1926-1992)
Wojciechowski, Longin	(1927-)

Alfred Wladyslaw Kurzawa (1905-1973) was Dean of the first Baptist Theological Seminary in Poland after the Second World War. Rev. Stefan Rogaczewski is the only one from the list above who continues to work in Poland.

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