Bem Kazimierz

Calvinism in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth 1548–1648: The Churches and the Faithful (St Andrews Studies in Reformation History). Leiden: Brill, 2020, Pp. liv, 322, Hb, € 125,00.

Pastor Kazimierz Bem's latest book deals with the establishment and the development of the three Calvinist churches in the early modern Polish-Lithuanian State: the Czech Brethren of Greater Poland, the Reformed Church of Lesser Poland, and the Reformed Church of Lithuania.

The book consists of twelve chapters, arranged in three parts, along with an introduction and conclusion. While the first section of the book, including Introduction and Chapter 2, provides a general picture of the political and social system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the age of the Reformation, the two further parts focus respectively on the Reformed churches (Chapter 3 to 7) and the faithful (Chapter 8 to 13). Chapter 3 deals with church polity and follows the development of Reformed ecclesiology from the mid-sixteenth century to the Włodawa General Congregation of 1634 and its implementation. Chapter 4 focuses on liturgy, while Chapter 5 deals with church discipline. Chapter 6 is devoted to the ministers, their formation, and their role within Evangelical communities. Chapter 7 presents the piety of Polish-Lithuanian Calvinists. Dealing with the Reformed faithful, the author primarily focuses on the nobility (in Polish, *szlachta*) whose support was essential to the development of the Reformed Church. Chapter 8 analyzes the mechanisms of conversion, both other confessions to Calvinism and from Calvinism to Catholicism. The following chapter deals with attempts to convert burghers and peasants. Chapter 10 analyzes the Reformed congregations in royal towns, while Chapter 11 discusses the rivalry between Lutherans and Calvinists in the cities of Royal Prussia. Finally, Chapter 12 focuses on the role of women and their support to the Reformed Church.

Bem challenges the prevailing opinion among Polish historians that Reformation was a failure. Though not denying that the Calvinists always remained a tiny minority among the Polish-Lithuanian society due to the lack of royal support and the strong influence of the Roman Church, the author argues that indeed the Reformed Church could win over not only noblemen but also burghers and to some extent even peasants. This particularly applied to the private towns where the Calvinist owners did not convert to Catholicism and managed to suppress the influence of the Catholic clergy. Bem also questions the opinion of the historians sympathetic to Counter-Reformation, according to whom the Polish-Lithuanian Reformation was theologically superficial and mainly depended on the nobility's economic interest in a "cheaper" church. In

reality, the author shows that the Polish-Lithuanian Calvinist clergy studied abroad and was well acquainted with the works of their Western European colleagues. Moreover, by the mid-seventeenth century, maintaining a Reformed congregation had become rather expensive due to the lawsuits brought by Catholics against them. The financial commitment of many nobles was therefore a product of religious conviction, and not of financial interest.

The most serious weakness of the book is the author's selectiveness of primary and secondary sources. This becomes apparent already in the introduction, which neither sketches the historiographical context nor provides a general overview of the extant archival sources. The book is based mainly on published historiography and sources. No significant attempt has been made to penetrate archival documents. Moreover, Bem relies almost exclusively on Polish authors, while he ignores Lithuanian and Belarusian ones, such as Ingė Lukšaitė (*Reformacija Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje ir Mažojoje Lietuvoje XVI a. trečias dešimtmetis–XVII a. pirmas dešimtmetis* [Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1999]), Deimantas Karvelis (*Iš Radvilų giminės istorijos: Biržų kunigaikštystė ir jos visuomenė 1547–1655 metais: Monografija* [Vilnius: Lietuvos edukologijos universiteto leidykla, 2015]), Sjamion Podokshyn (*Філасофская думка эпохі Адраджэння ў Беларусі: ад Францыска Скарыны да Сімяона Полацкага* [Minsk: Навука і тэхніка, 1990]; *Беларуская думка ў кантэксце гісторыі і культуры*, [Minsk: Бел. навука, 2003]), and Ljudmila Ivanova ("3 гісторыі Менскага кальвінскага збору," *Спадчына* 1 [2003]). This particularly weakens the author's remarks on the history of the Reformed Church in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The use of Polish historiography proves also incomplete. For instance, Bem does neither refer to Rafał Degiel's *Protestanci i prawosławni: Patronat wyznaniowy Radziwiłłów birżańskich nad Cerkwią prawosławną w księstwie stuckim w XVII w.* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2000) nor to the volume *Ewangelicyzm reformowany w pierwszej Rzeczypospolitej: Dialog z Europą i wybory aksjologiczne w świetle literatury i piśmiennictwa XVI–XVII wieku*, ed. Dariusz Chemperek (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2015).

Another weakness of the book is the lack of clear definitions. This has been already noted by Maciej Ptaszyński in his remarks on a Bem's former publication on the Calvinist Church polity („O znakach kościoła i ich znaczeniu: Polemika z Kazimierzem Bemem,” *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 58 [2014]: 153–75). A similar problem emerges regarding periodization. While the year 1548 can be considered as a starting point because of the death of King Zygmunt I, it is not clear why Bem chooses the year 1648 as the *terminus ad quem*. Although the outbreak of the Cossack uprising was a catastrophe for the Commonwealth, it did not directly affect the Reformed Church. The year 1655,

marking the beginning of the Swedish “Deluge,” would be more appropriate as a closing date.

The book provides some valuable material on the history of the Society of Jesus. Chapter 8 is particularly interesting since it reflects the Calvinist point of view on the conversions. Jesuits played an important role in winning back Reformed aristocrats and noblemen to the Roman Church. As preachers and confessors, they exploited their close relationship with social elites, as well as their family connections with the nobility. Another interesting phenomenon was the use of deathbed conversions as a tool of confessional propaganda. Prominent Jesuits like Jędrzej Grodzki (208) and Stanisław Grodzicki (234) are also mentioned.

In conclusion, Bem’s book provides a general overview of the history of Calvinism in Poland-Lithuania to the English-speaking scholars. However, the author’s scholarly workshop leaves much to be desired despite some interesting and innovative theses.

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María Morrás, Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida, and Yonsoo Kim, eds.

Gender and Exemplarity in Medieval and Early Modern Spain. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Pp. xiii + 296. Hb, € 105,00 / \$126.00.

This volume brings together eight essays on Hispanic texts from the late medieval and early modern periods by or about exemplary women. As María Morrás explains in her introduction, the essays explore a family of related genres—life-writing, chronicles, exempla, and romances—that shaped cultural identities within and beyond religious communities. Advocating an elastic notion of exemplarity, she recommends transversal readings of the genres representing virtuous women as well as aspiring saints. Exemplarity encouraged imitation as well as adaptation, according to political and institutional variables. Rather than focusing on gender-specific virtues or carismata, Morrás suggests that the gendered nature of sanctity is manifested in the negotiations required of women in order to avoid accusations of imposture, possession, or heresy.

I will comment briefly on the essays that address medieval texts and give more extensive attention to those corresponding to the early years of the Jesuit