PART TWO

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MANY NATIONS AND FAITHS
A caveat: although the phrase identity-formation is used in the title, there will be no discussion here of the theoretical dimension of this problem. There is a voluminous literature on the subject, but this article is devoted to telling the story of certain historical events and attempting to suggest their significance. There is a disputation to be discussed, as will be seen, but it happened in the eighteenth century.

The purpose of this article is to illustrate the contention that we can see in the relations between the Church and Jews in eighteenth-century Poland–Lithuania an aspect of the beginnings of what Karin Friedrich, in her book, called the transition from a constitutional and political concept of the nation to an ethnic and linguistic one. More particularly, the focus of concern will be Bishop Franciszek Kobielski (1679–1755). He studied in Rome, 1710–1712, but took no degrees. Well-connected, he became Bishop of Kamieniec in 1736 and of Brześć and Łuck in 1739. One of his main concerns was the conversion of Jews to the True Faith.

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