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Jerzy Kloczowski
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A HISTORY OF POLISH CHRISTIANITY

This is the only single-volume history of Christianity in Poland, a subject at the core of religious history and European secular history alike. The book covers the development of Polish Christianity from the tenth century to the present, placing it in the broader context of East-Central European political, social, religious and cultural history. Jewish–Christian relations, and the problematic religious history of the Jews in the region, play an important part in the story, and there are pervasive references to countries historically linked to Poland, such as Lithuania, Belarus and the Ukraine. Jerzy Kloczowski shows how the history of Poland, and Polish Christianity, are embedded in the complex systems of relations with other countries and religious denominations. *A History of Polish Christianity* should be read by anyone interested in the confrontation between Christianity and the totalitarian systems of the twentieth century, and in the interplay between eastern and western Christianity.

JERZY KLOCZOWSKI is Director of the Institute of East-Central Europe in Lublin, Poland; Chairman of the International Federation of Institutes of East-Central Europe; Chairman of the Polish Committee for UNESCO; Chairman of the Polish CIHEC (Commission Internationale d'Histoire Ecclésiastique Comparée) Committee; and Vice-chairman of the International Polish CIHEC Committee. Formerly Professor of History at the Catholic University of Lublin, he has written a number of books on Christianity in Poland. Professor Kloczowski was honoured by the University of Grodno with the degree of Doctor honoris causa in 1993; with the same degree by the Academy Kiev-Mohyla and the Free University of Berlin in 1997; and by the University of Paris-Sorbonne in 1999.

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JERZY KLOCZOWSKI

Institute of East-Central Europe, Lublin



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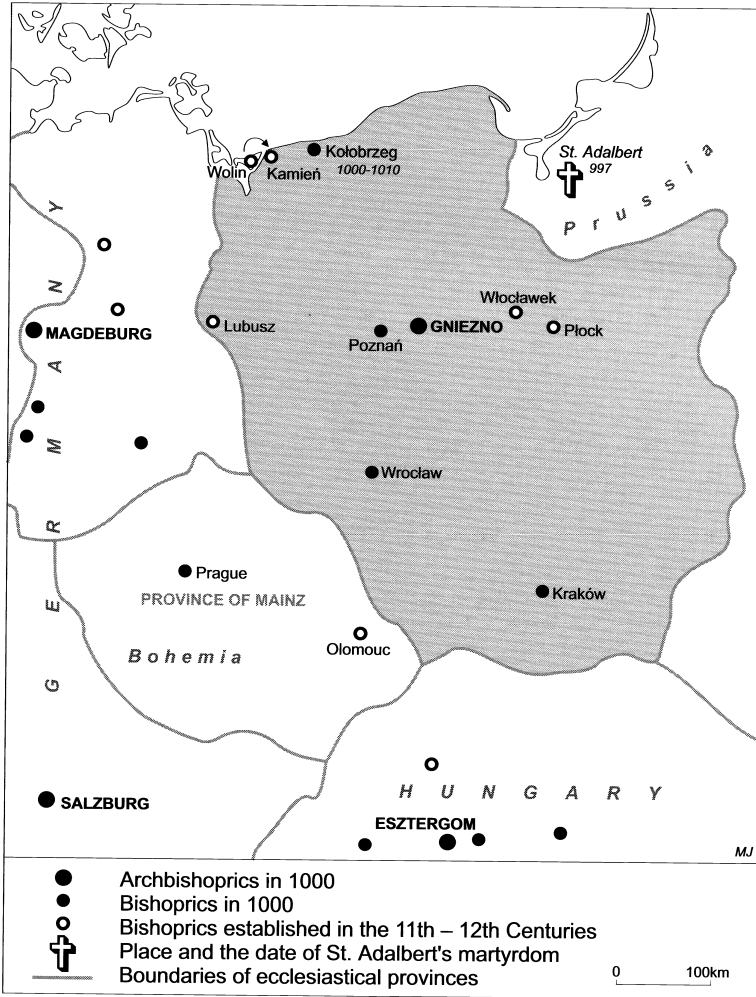
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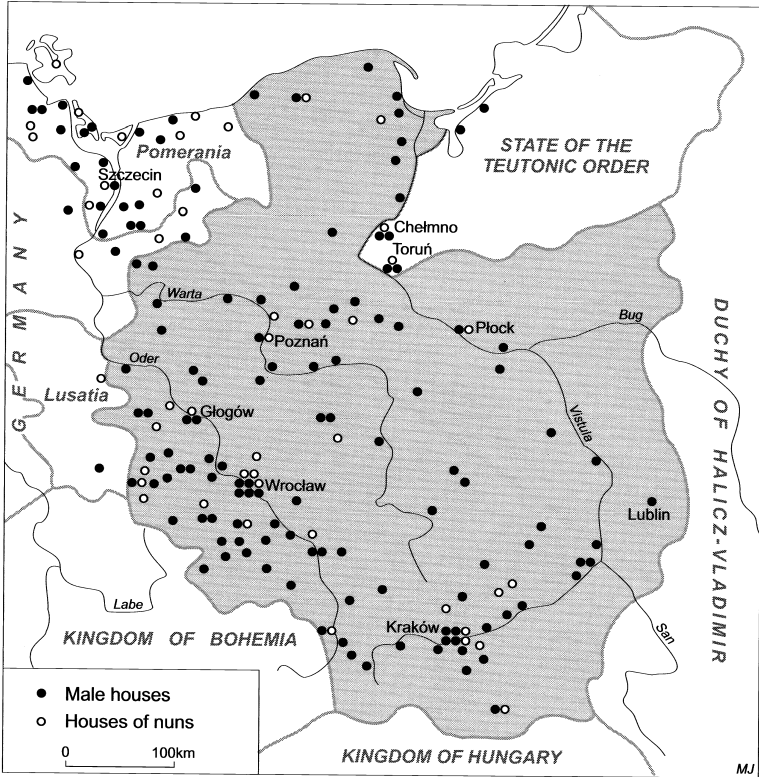
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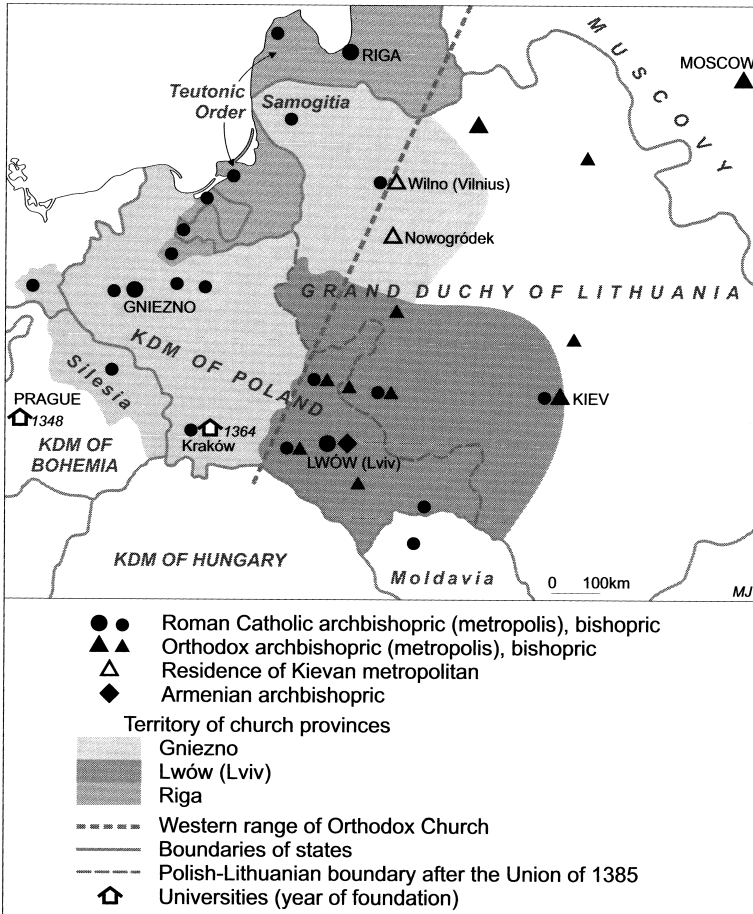
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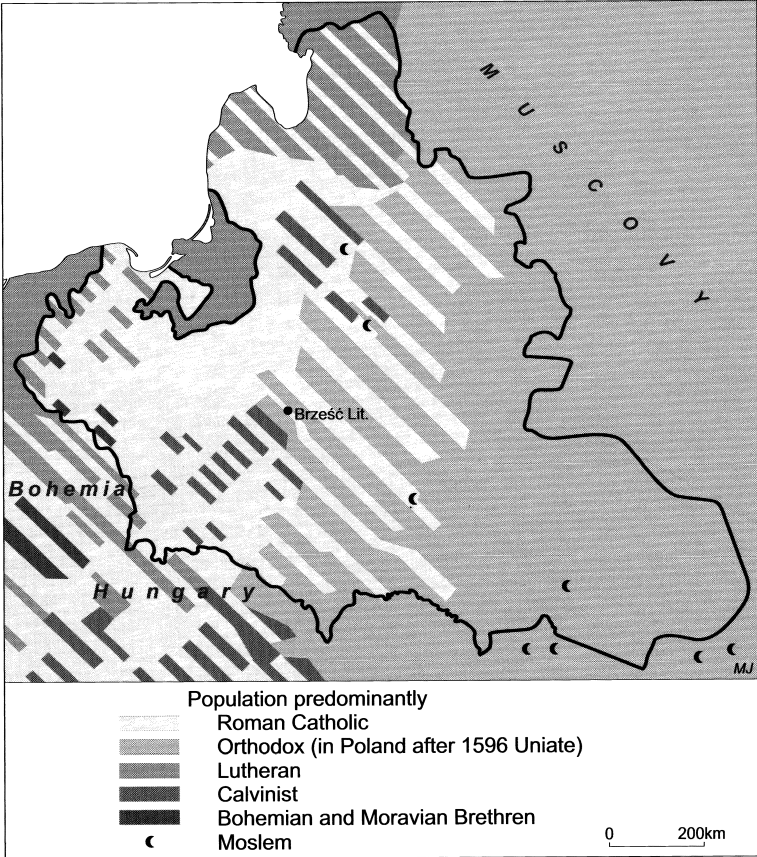
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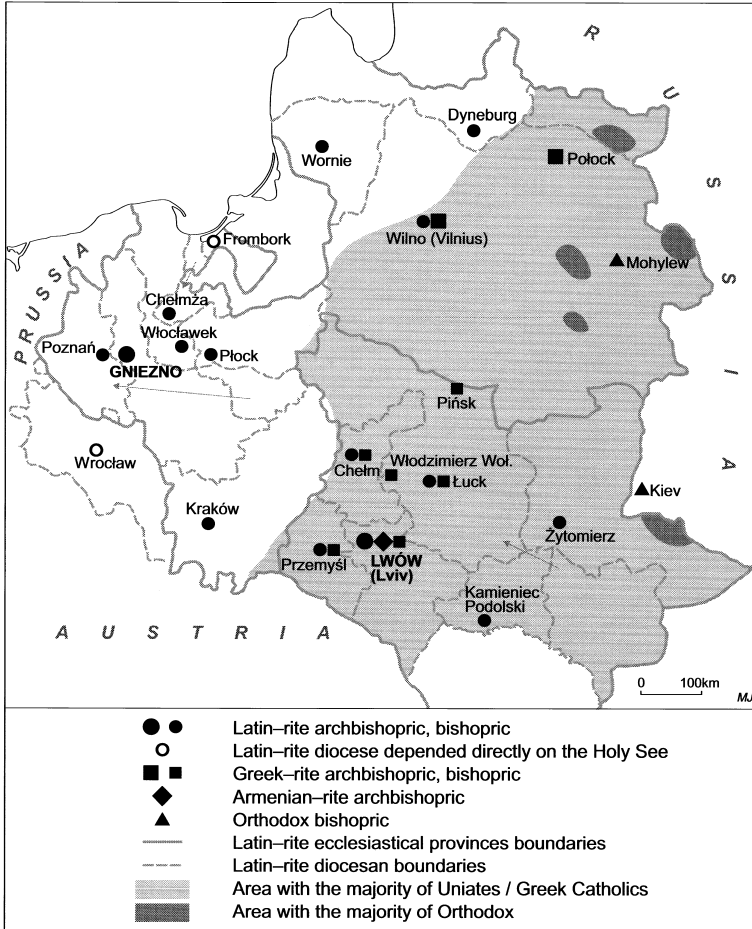
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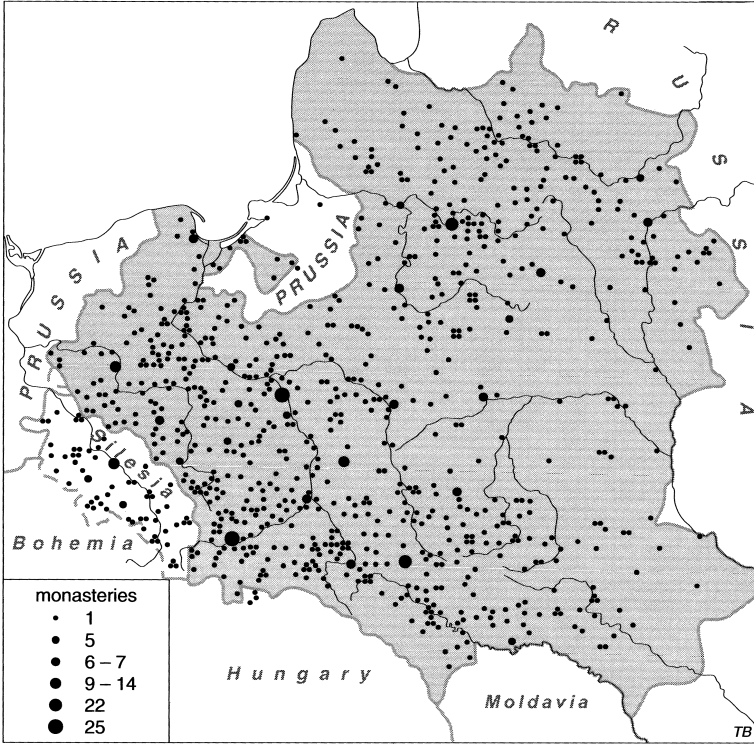
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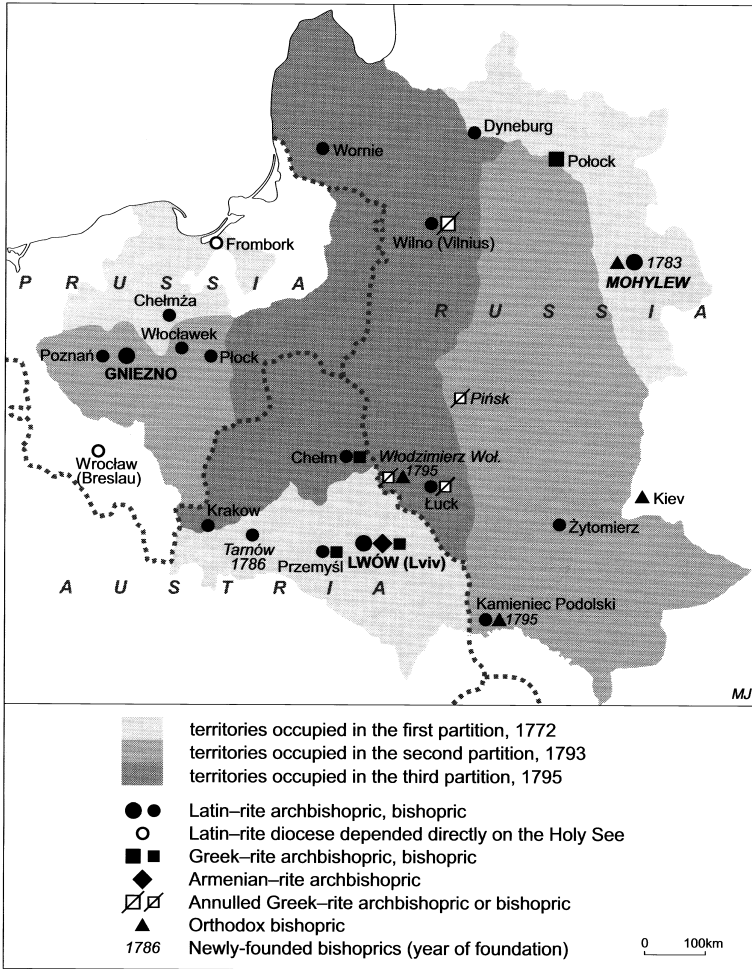
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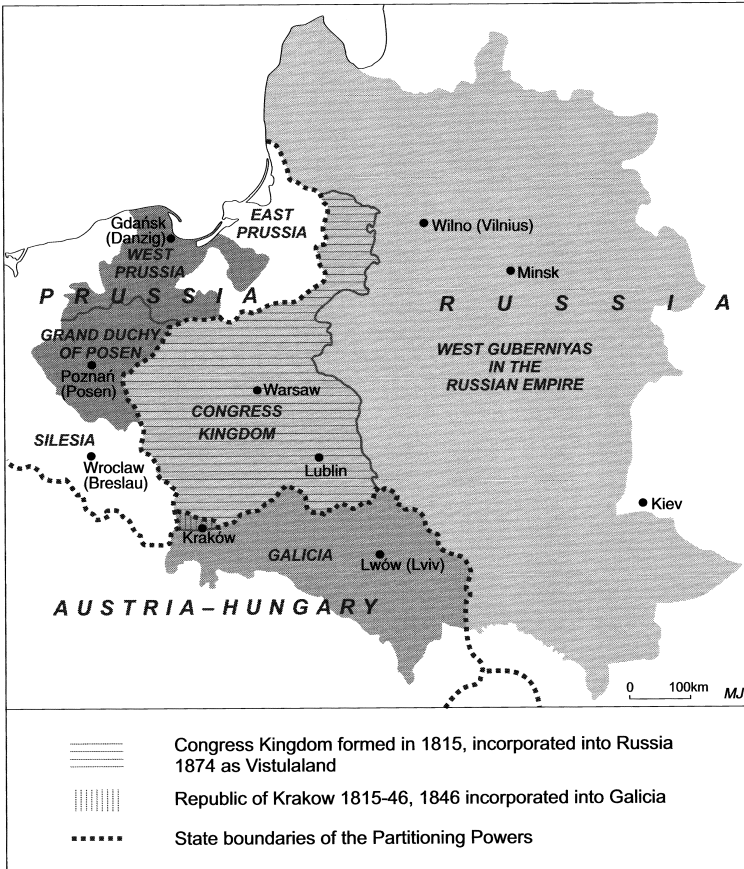
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	Number of convents	Number of religious
Franciscans	291	5308
Jesuits	137	2362
Dominicans	166	2091
Basilians	147	1258
Others – 21 Orders	408	4857
Women's Orders	152	3211

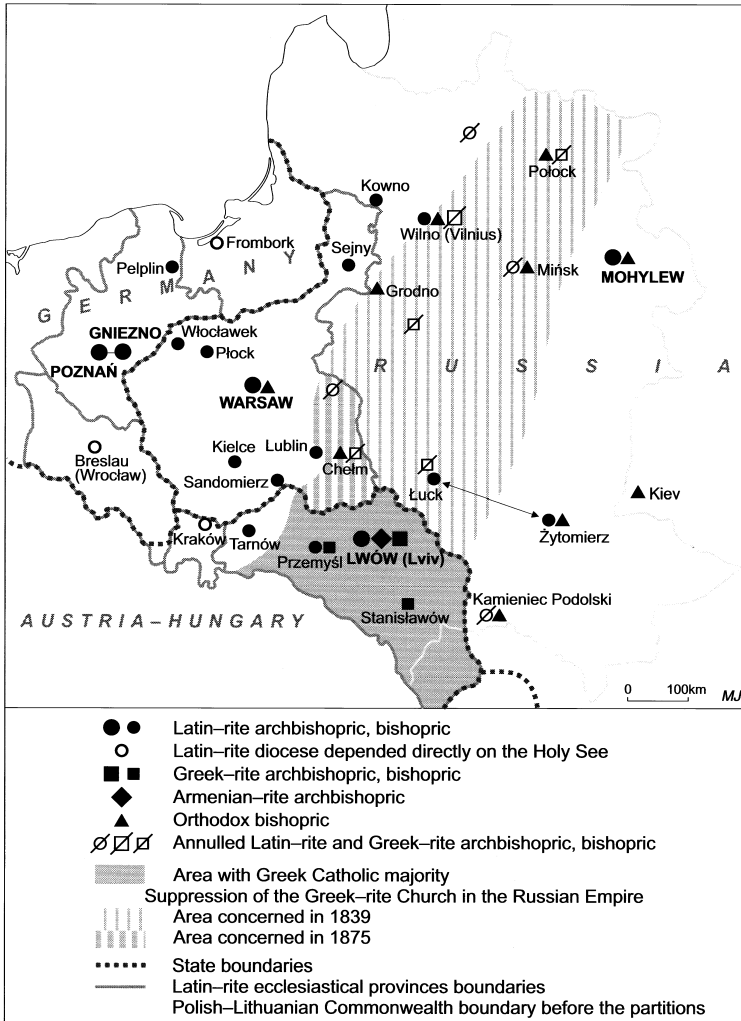
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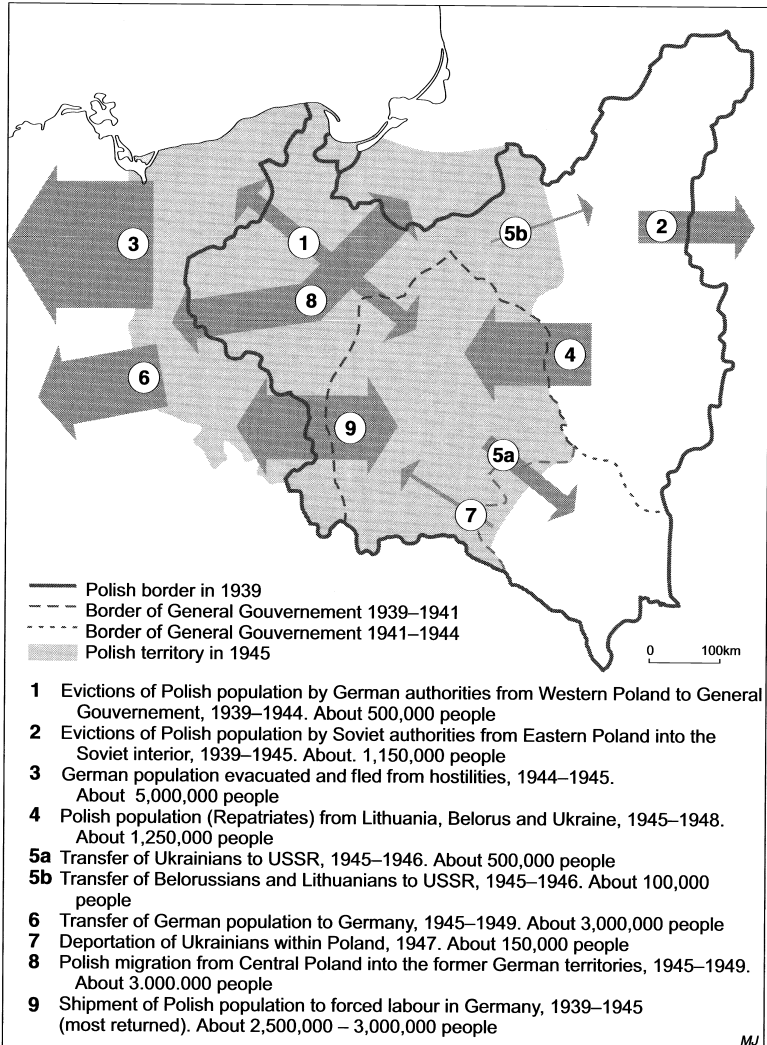
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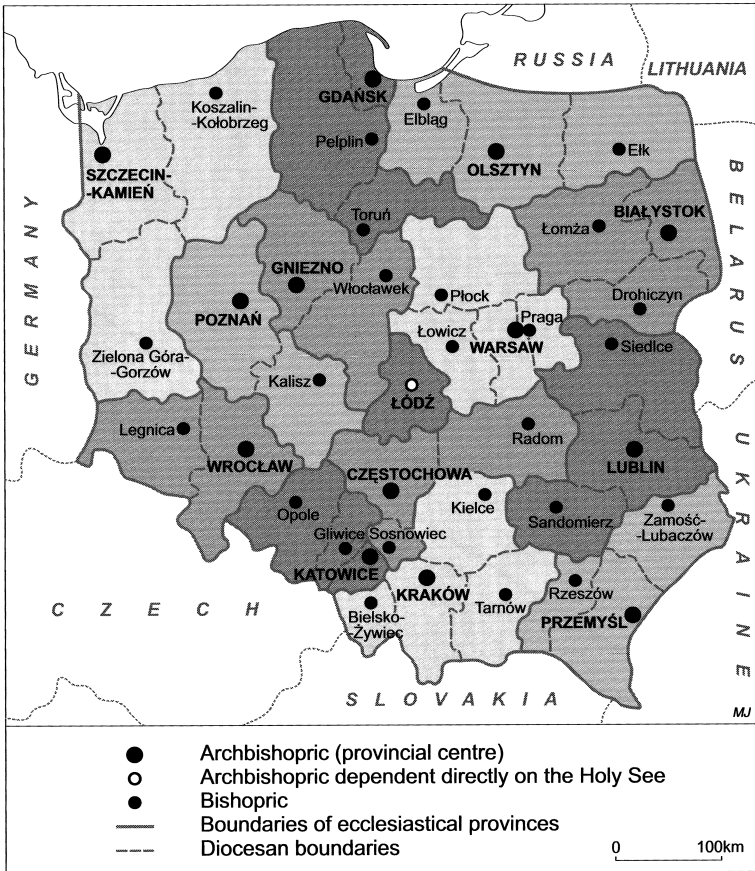
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Foreword

By Christopher Brooke

My wife and I first met Jerzy Kloczowski in August 1968 – well over thirty years ago – at the legendary Conference Centre of the Catholic University of Milan on the dizzy heights of La Mendola in the Dolomites. The meeting of scholars from east and west of the Iron Curtain was still a notable event in 1968, and the Polish scholars there, Jerzy himself and Therese Dunin-Wasowicz, brought a new perspective on European studies, new insights, and knowledge of work hidden from us by distance and our ignorance of Polish – and on the urgent need of Polish scholars, long cut off from western libraries and literature, for such encounters. Jerzy also brought his characteristic combination of warmth and charm and dedication with the courage of the young heroes of the Warsaw uprising of 1944 – a memory calculated to give its survivors a strong wish to be independent of Poland's neighbours of west and east alike – and a deep, reflective scholarship. Since the death of Stalin in 1953 some travel has been possible for Polish scholars, even for those who teach at the Catholic University at Lublin; and in more recent decades he has travelled widely in Europe and America, bringing his own perceptions of the role of central and east-central Europe in the history of the continent and of Christendom, and his unique combination of fair-mindedness and charity towards all – and listening too to the leaders of historical thought of our world. He is now the doyen of Polish ecclesiastical historians, and his recent Honorary Doctorate at the Sorbonne was a fitting tribute to his international fame.

Jerzy Kloczowski is first and foremost a medievalist. But in this book he shows an exceptional breadth of learning and insight into the history of the Church in modern times. A large part of the book is devoted to his own lifetime, which he can view both with the detachment of the scholar and the involvement of a participant. He combines an ecumenical

sympathy with all forms of Christian experience and with a wide variety of Christian churches with personal friendship with Pope John Paul II, long his colleague in the Catholic University at Lublin.

The book will be a revelation to many English-speaking historians and to a wider audience of the rich variety of the Polish experience, ranging from Poland's entry into Christendom in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and the relative triumphalism of its late medieval expansion, to the heroic sufferings of the last two hundred years. In the last two centuries it has been subject first to the tyranny of its neighbours, then (from 1945 to 1989) to the tyranny of its own Communist regime and Soviet imperialism. The book will appeal to all to whom this story has meaning; it will appeal especially to the many millions of Polish origin in America and Britain; it will appeal to very many who wish to understand the role of Poland and the other countries of central Europe in the history of the continent – and above all to those like myself who fancied ourselves historians of Europe while paying little more than lip-service to a great part of it. The rich tapestry woven by Jerzy Kloczowski reveals to us how much we have missed.

The mingling of peoples and languages and cultures makes the history of any part of Europe sensitive and contentious; for a variety of reasons this is especially true of Poland. The notorious interplay of German and Slav in central Europe has many times shifted its western frontiers, while the mingling of cultures, peaceful and violent, has given much variety to many of its frontiers. To the east, Poland has had the most intimate relations with Lithuania, Byelorussia and the Ukraine – in its greatest extent absorbing all these regions. These shifts have profoundly affected – and been affected by – its religious history. Historians of the churches have much to learn from the example of Poland. Its links with eastern Europe have involved a mingling of the traditions of eastern and western Christendom: the Poles have been used to seeing Orthodox and Catholic churches side by side – and in more recent centuries many Protestant churches too. Coexistence has been a fact of life – marred at times by persecution; but yet a normal part of the experience of this segment of Europe in a measure it has often not been elsewhere. At the same time, the relations of the Polish Catholic Church with western religious movements and with the papacy have been intimate. In the year 1000 the archbishopric of Gniezno was established by Pope Sylvester II and the Emperor Otto III, then on a pilgrimage to Poland. In 1221 St Dominic died and in the same year his friars first settled in England; by the end of 1222, in all probability, they

were in Krakow. In 1978 the first Pole – for several centuries the first non-Italian – was elected Pope. These were striking moments in a long history of close relations – with many shifts and changes, and ups and downs – which has helped to shape the destiny of Poland and of European Catholicism alike.

Finally, many readers will find in this book a model of the historian's craft: a survey broad in its interests and sympathies, exceptionally fair-minded, yet involved – by a historian able to feel and experience the meaning of much of what he describes – at once sympathetic and critical of all the manifestations of the Christian faith in Polish history. Indeed, he makes it abundantly clear that his sympathies range wider – as some moving and trenchant words on the tragic history of the Jews in Poland make manifest. To all of us sadly ignorant of his native language, this is a wonderful opportunity to sit at the feet of Jerzy Kloczowski.

To the many acknowledgements made by the author I should like to add my own. To Ruth Parr (formerly religious studies Editor at Cambridge University Press) and Kevin Taylor and his colleagues in the Press, all of us involved in the making of this book are greatly indebted. Dr Jocelyn Pye has done noble service in copy-editing a difficult text; and Peter Andrews has shown great care in preparing the index. Edna Pilmer has given invaluable help in deciphering and processing my revisions to the translation. The Bibliographical Essay specially prepared for this translation is the work of Dr Pawel Kloczowski, the author's son, and his wife Magdalena: it will be especially helpful to students not versed in Polish. Finally, the author himself, a kind and generous friend for over thirty years, has inspired me by his enthusiasm and the quality of his work to my share in seeing the book into print – and he and his colleagues in Lublin have been generous in answering our queries and patient of our unavoidable delays.

Preface to the Polish edition (1987)

This book about the history of Christianity in Poland has been written in direct response to the profound interest the subject has evoked especially in recent years within Polish society, and partly also in those groups in the outside world who wish to learn about Polish affairs. One could write at length about the large gaps, left by generations of historians, in the study of the history of the Christian Churches and communities, and more generally of religious groups and indeed of non-religious groups as well. This area of study in the field of socio-religious history has been rapidly advancing in many other countries. This does not mean that there has been no research in Poland of the history of religion at all. Poland has a very ancient tradition of enquiry into the Roman Catholic Church, its dioceses, religious orders, its saints and distinguished bishops and others, as well as into the Eastern Church, the Protestant communities, the Jews, the Karaites and the Moslems of Poland, the Masonic lodges, and so forth. Nor has there been a dearth of controversy, which continually re-surfaces from generation to generation, regarding the special role Catholicism has played in Polish life and culture. One could make a long list covering the full spectrum of opinion juxtaposing the diverse observations made – from a range of extreme idealisations of Poland as ‘ever loyal’, as ‘the Christ of Nations’ (Mickiewicz, Krasinski), to the exact opposite, the absolute denial of such a role and the identification of Catholicism as the force responsible for the nation’s downfall and the series of disasters vexing it (‘Poland, thy downfall dwelleth in Rome!’ (Slowacki)). One could quite easily write a whole book on the fascinating subject of Poland’s internal squabbles over her own Christianity and religion; while another book might relate the story of how Polish Christianity has been perceived by outsiders, foreigners, and the adherents of other religions and ideologies.

A historian must observe that in relation to the importance of the themes and the debates the effort to conduct objective and impartial

research has for many years been exiguous. The causes of this have been various: they deserve separate attention. But one of the major outcomes of this state of affairs has been the absence of serious and trustworthy attempts to present syntheses capable of engaging the attention of large circles of readers, of the full history of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, not to mention the full history of Christianity in Poland. The most serious endeavour in this field was undertaken in the early decades of this century by a German scholar, Karl Völker, who knew Poland well, in his book *Kirchengeschichte Polens* (Berlin, 1930), but none of the distinguished Polish specialists in the field, such as Wladyslaw Abraham at Lwow or Jan Fijalek in Krakow, followed in his footsteps. As a rule, Christianity has not commanded a substantial amount of attention in the general compendia of Polish history either. Often stereotyped judgements – usually negative, and not infrequently malicious or sarcastic – would be all that was given. An example from our own times would be the notorious presentation of the Counter-Reformation as a ‘reactionary force’, with the obloquy with which this term was charged in official parlance. In studies of the history of particular places and regions, Christian and religious matters in general tended to be omitted, with exceptions only insofar as particular church buildings, for instance, had to be mentioned as the most characteristic monuments of a given age’s achievements in the arts. What was true of scholarly works was also true of school textbooks of history and the presentation of history in the media. Such a summary and grossly incomplete and deformed image was addressed to millions of people, and to successive generations in the schools, colleges and universities. Here, too, there is a need for a separate book on the image of the Church, of Christianity, and of religious groups in general, as presented in the official historiography; and also as emerging from the Church’s own teaching, filtering through the sermons, the preaching and the pastoral letters and through other less direct channels to society in general. In writing about the Polish communities, the Poles and the people of Polish origin throughout the world one should never forget the millions who, in the course of this century, found themselves outside the land of their birth or beyond the borders of the Polish State. These people were continually being faced with situations in which their religious traditions were remote from the ones they encountered in their new environments. The interesting questions for us are what the outcomes of such confrontations were and how they affected the picture we are concerned with here.

Academic enquiry into the past of Poland’s Christianity, especially in

its Roman Catholic section, has been given a significant impetus in recent decades, principally (but not exclusively) in the Catholic University of Lublin. Recent years have spectacularly revealed the enormous role of Roman Catholicism in Poland, drawing the attention of a wide circle of historians to a subject they have been consciously or unconsciously overlooking. The close contacts established between Poland's major centres of historical research and international organisations – and their active contribution, especially in the last few years, to international meetings and joint enterprises for historical research – have been of crucial significance in comparative socio-religious studies, now of such paramount importance. The Congress of the International Commission for the Comparative History of the Churches which was held in Warsaw in the summer of 1978, wholly organised by the Polish hosts and attended by hundreds of the world's foremost historians, was a manifest sign of Poland's new place in this branch of research. But in practice there is still a great deal to be done to allow the social history of religion to assume its rightful place in the universities, in the Polish Academy of Sciences, in the colleges and academies, in the seminaries of the various denominations, and in the curricula at all levels of teaching. To put it in a nutshell, there can be no talk of a good history of Poland and the Polish people without the history of the Commonwealth of Poland, Lithuania and Ruthenia; and of the Roman Catholics of the Latin and of the Byzantine rite, of the Orthodox Christians and the Protestants, or of the followers of Judaism, and likewise of the agnostics and the atheists.

This book has been very widely conceived, and yet is naturally still not all that a social history of religion in Poland should be; in particular, we may justifiably query the proportions it observes between the history of the Catholics of Poland and the other Christian groups. The predominant role Roman Catholics have played in Polish history and the progress over the last few years of studies in this field have been the decisive factors determining this presentation. However I would very much like my own sense of insufficiency to serve as the point of departure for the discussion, and for it to lead eventually to a thoroughly satisfactory approach in the spirit of ecumenism, mutual understanding and sympathy, and in the meaning of the postulates which are employed in modern, open-minded historiography. The prospective extension of the socio-religious subject-matter, especially as regards the religious history of the Jews of Poland, will be a task as vital as it will be taxing – but all the more pressing in view of the accumulation of controversies, calumnies, half-truths and manipulations which surround this theme.