



*Ekumenizm jako dialog
oraz spotkanie religii i kultur
Wokół teologii ekumenicznej
ks. prof. Józefa Budniaka*
[Ecumenism as dialogue
and the meeting of religions and cultures
Around the ecumenical theology of
Rev. Prof. Józef Budniak]
Eds. W. ŚWIĄTKIEWICZ, A. KASPEREK
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The reviewed multi-author work, edited by W. Świątkiewicz and A. Kasperek, was initiated by significant academic circles in Poland: the Commission for Polish-Czech and Polish-Slovak Relations of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Katowice Branch; the Faculty of Arts and Educational Sciences of the University of Silesia in Katowice; and the Sociology of Religion Section of the Polish Sociological Association. The aim is to honour the distinguished Polish ecumenist Rev. Prof. Józef Budniak, PhD, on the occasion of his 70th birthday. “The leading idea of the Jubilarian’s scholarly activity is reflection on the meeting and dialogue of religions and cultures” (p. 7), where ecumenism in its broad sense, with its historical, cultural and social connotations, occupies a special place. The scientific editors of the work are Prof. Wojciech Świątkiewicz, PhD, and Prof. Andrzej Kasperek,

PhD. The general structure of the publication is as follows: editorial pages (pp. 1–4), table of contents (p. 5), introduction (pp. 7–11), congratulatory letters (pp. 13–27), biography of Rev. Prof. Józef Budniak (pp. 31–33), eight substantive studies (pp. 35–107), an interview with Rev. Prof. Józef Budniak (pp. 109–117), notes on contributors (p. 119), conference programme (pp. 121–122), photo gallery (pp. 123–126).

In the “Introduction,” its authors (W. Świątkiewicz, A. Kasperek) outlined the connections of Rev. Prof. Józef Budniak with the initiating bodies of this project. They emphasised that for many years Rev. Budniak served as chairman of the Commission for Polish-Czech and Polish-Slovak Relations of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Katowice Branch. He collaborated scientifically, didactically and organisationally with the units of the University of Silesia branch in Cieszyn (now the Faculty of Arts and Educational Sciences). He also actively participated many times as a speaker and expert in projects carried out by sociologists of religion (see p. 7). Thanking Rev. Prof. Budniak for his creative contribution to the development of Polish science and his multifaceted activity in promoting it, the editors invoked the Seneca’s maxim: *Memoria gratiam facit* – ‘Memory gives rise to gratitude’ (see p. 10).

The first part of the publication consists of “Congratulatory Letters” from eminent representatives of Polish science and church-ecumenical bodies: the President of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Katowice Branch, Prof. Andrzej Więcek, MD, PhD (p. 14); the Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Rev. Prof. Przemysław Kantyka, PhD (p. 15); the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Silesia in Katowice, Prof. Zenon Gajdzica, PhD (p. 16); the Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Silesia in Katowice, Rev. Jacek Kempa, PhD, Associate Professor (p. 17); the Rector of the WSB Academy, Zdzisław Dacko-Pikiewicz, PhD, Professor of AWSB (p. 18); the Chairman of the Sociology of Religion Section of the Polish Sociological Association, Rev. Paweł Prüfer, PhD, Associate Professor (p. 19); Archbishop Prof. Alfons Nossol, PhD, a distinguished ecumenist and long-standing chairman of the Polish Episcopal Conference’s Council for Ecumenism (p. 20); the Metropolitan of Katowice, Archbishop Wiktor Skworc, PhD (p. 21); the Metropolitan of Wrocław, Archbishop Józef Kupny, PhD (pp. 22–23); the Coadjutor Archbishop of the Diocese of Katowice, Adrian Galbas, PhD (p. 24); the Chairman of the Council for Ecumenism of the Polish Episcopal Conference, Bishop Jacek Jezierski, PhD (p. 25); the Bishop of the Evangelical-Augsburg Church in Poland,

Jerzy Samiec (p. 26); and the Bishop of the Evangelical-Augsburg Diocese of Katowice, Marian Niemiec, PhD (p. 27).

A detailed "Biography of Rev. Professor Józef Budniak" (pp. 31–33) was prepared by Prof. Wojciech Świątkiewicz. It precedes the substantive part of the publication (pp. 36–107), which consists of scholarly studies in the fields of ecumenism, philosophy of religion, sociology of religion and interreligious dialogue. Rev. Prof. Zygfryd Glaeser presented "Ekumenizm w naukowej twórczości księdza profesora Józefa Budniaka" (Ecumenism in the Scholarly Work of Rev. Professor Józef Budniak) (pp. 35–44). He emphasised that "the matter should be treated as a broadly understood 'event' connected with the professor's person, his scholarly work, and his pastoral-social ministry" (p. 35). He justified his conviction by stating that Rev. Prof. Budniak "not only presents ecumenical views [...] of various Churches and social circles, but is an ecumenist as a person: open to the diversity of thought, experience of faith and social attitudes, attentively listening to others, presenting a partnership-based attitude in relations with people, always ready to help everyone without exception who needs spiritual, social, material, or scientific-organisational support. [...] He is therefore an ecumenist to the very core of his life" (p. 35). The author of the study considered the following to be essential components of Rev. Prof. Budniak's scholarly output: publications in the broadly understood field of ecumenism (see p. 39); historical-hagiographical works concerning St. John Sarkander, St. Melchior Grodziecki and St. Adalbert (see pp. 37–38); those related to European integration (see p. 38); the phenomenon of the borderland (see pp. 41–42); and processes of reconciliation (see p. 41). The author concluded his discussion of Rev. Prof. Budniak's scholarly work by stating that this is an outstanding scholar, whom he called "an ecumenist of heart and deed," who "thinks ecumenically, experiences his faith and shapes interpersonal relations" (p. 44).

In the next study, its author, Rev. Prof. Zdzisław Kijas, posed the research question: "Czego nauczył nas dialog ekumeniczny? W związku z sześćdziesiątą rocznicą rozpoczęcia Soboru Watykańskiego II" (What has ecumenical dialogue taught us? On the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the start of the Second Vatican Council) (pp. 45–50). He considered that the most adequate answer to his own question is encapsulated in the word "surprise" (p. 45). What we have experienced in the area of ecumenism over the past six decades has been surprisingly novel and enduring in many ways (see p. 45). He referred here to the monumental work *Encyclopedia of Ecumenism in Poland (1964–2014)*, which documents

many groundbreaking ecumenical events in Poland and the individuals with particular merits in this regard (see pp. 44–45).

Rev. Robert Samsel, PhD, is the author of a text entitled “Ku jedności w różnorodności. Zaangażowanie ekumeniczne księdza profesora Józefa Budniaka na terenie diecezji bielsko-żywieckiej w latach 1992–2022” (Towards Unity in Diversity. The Ecumenical Involvement of Rev. Professor Józef Budniak in the Diocese of Bielsko-Żywiec in the Years 1992–2022) (pp. 51–60). He emphasised Rev. Prof. Budniak’s significant contribution to research on the Cyril and Methodius tradition in the context of the Velehrad phenomenon (see pp. 51–52). His involvement in numerous ecumenical structures at the international and national levels has left a lasting mark on the building of good interdenominational and interreligious relations at the local level. He has been an initiator of significant undertakings of a scholarly, pastoral, and social nature.

The author of the next study, entitled “Człowiek drogą ekumenizmu – doświadczenia Kościoła na Śląsku na tle aktywności naukowej i duszpasterskiej księdza profesora Józefa Budniaka” (Man as the Path of Ecumenism – The Experience of the Church in Silesia against the Background of the Scholarly and Pastoral Activity of Fr. Professor Józef Budniak) (pp. 61–71), is Rev. Adam Palion, PhD, a student of Prof. Budniak. He lists many of Budniak’s valuable ecumenical initiatives, from his period of study at the Upper Silesian Theological Seminary, through his work within the Faculty of Theology of the University of Silesia in Katowice, to pastoral-social initiatives.

Rev. Marek Jerzy Uglorz, PhD, is the author of a text entitled “Znaczenie religijnych wspólnot dla światowego pokoju” (The Significance of Religious Communities for World Peace) (pp. 73–78). He draws attention to the great and causative power of religious communities in civilisational transformations, especially in building world peace.

The Chairperson of the Jewish Religious Community in Bielsko-Biała, Dorota Wiewióra, described the important achievements of Catholic-Jewish dialogue in the Diocese of Bielsko-Żywiec (pp. 79–82). She outlined the historical contexts of the Jewish community’s settlement in the Cieszyn Silesia region (see p. 79) and contemporary local initiatives for building good Christian-Jewish relations, especially those initiated by or with the participation of Rev. Prof. Józef Budniak (see pp. 80–82).

The author of the next text is Ondrej Štefaňák, PhD, from the Faculty of Philosophy of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. He describes “Kult męczenników koszyckich na Słowacji” (The Cult of

the Košice Martyrs in Slovakia) (pp. 83–90), in particular, Stefan Pongracz, Marek Križ, and Melchior Grodziecki. He presented their profiles and the special places and forms of their veneration. He noted that in Slovakia these martyrs are always venerated together (see pp. 83, 90), unlike in Croatia, where Marek Križ is venerated primarily. In Hungary, the cult of Stefan Pongracz is particularly alive, while in Poland it is Melchior Grodziecki (see p. 90).

The scholarly part of the work under discussion concludes with a chapter by Prof. Janusz Mariański from the Catholic University of Lublin on “Godność osób w starszym wieku i osób z niepełnosprawnościami w narracji społecznej...” (The Dignity of Elderly People and People with Disabilities in Social Narrative...) (pp. 91–107). This is a sociological-theological study, concluding with the following statement: “Respecting human dignity offers a chance to build a society guaranteeing a good and happy life, in which people make free and responsible choices in accordance with moral values of a universal nature. It is also important that the specific individual expression of one’s own dignity should not be freed from the normative dimensions of the dignity of the human person” (p. 107).

The final part of the work is an interview entitled “Wokół ekumenizmu” (Around Ecumenism), conducted by Prof. Wojciech Świątkiewicz with Rev. Prof. Józef Budniak. He posed several important questions about the essence of understanding ecumenism, its theological assumptions and socio-ecclesial implications. Rev. Prof. Budniak also answers questions related to difficulties in ecumenical relations. He also presents the ecumenical situation in Cieszyn Silesia.

The presented publication is a collective work. It is an expression of recognition for the achievements of Rev. Prof. Józef Budniak, an outstanding Polish theologian and activist, multi-dimensionally engaged in processes integrating Christians and aiming to actually actualise the full visible unity of Christ’s Church. It was prepared and published on the occasion of Rev. Prof. Budniak’s seventieth birthday. The studies included in it are substantively focused on ecumenism as a space for dialogue between different denominations, religions, and cultures, particularly in the context of Cieszyn Silesia. The authors of individual chapters analyse the theological, sociological and historical aspects of interdenominational, interreligious, and social cooperation, citing numerous initiatives of the Jubilarian that promote peace and mutual understanding among people and communities. The publication includes both scholarly studies and personal congratulatory letters in which various circles expressed their appreciation and respect

for the Jubilarian as well as an extremely interesting interview with Professor Budniak on his vision of ecumenism. The publication in its entirety presents a portrait of a scholar and pastor who devoted his life to building bridges and fostering unity in diversity. Through this multifaceted narrative, the reader has the opportunity to learn not only about the biography of an outstanding ecumenist, but also about the contemporary challenges facing both Churches and communities: globally, internationally, and locally.

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