

Józef Budniak

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Encyklopedia ekumenizmu w Polsce (1964—2014)
[*Encyclopedia of Ecumenism in Poland (1964—2014)*]
Eds. J. BUDNIAK, Z. GLAESER, T. KAŁUŻNY, Z. KIJAS
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The second millennium of Christianity went down in history as a period marked by division of the Church of Christ. However, in recent times, more than ever before, divided Christians feel remorse for their division and long for a visible unity in the Church. The intensity of this longing is proved by the work of the Second Vatican Council. In the decree *Unitatis redintegratio*, the Council says about “the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church” (UR 2), which “finds its highest exemplar and source in the unity of the Persons of the Trinity: the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, one God” (UR 2). John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut unum sint*, saying that “ecumenism is the way of the Church and a duty of the Christian conscience enlightened by faith and guided by love” (US 8), stressed that the process of building a unity between Christians is a duty of ecclesial mission.

The call of the Second Vatican Council for an increased involvement of all Christians in ecumenical activities of the Churches received a definitely positive response in Poland. After the Council all Churches and Christian communities undertook an intense cooperation whose fruits were many visible ecumenical initiatives. They were described in the literature concerning this issue. The comprehensive scientific description of Polish ecumenical initiatives can be found in the work called *Encyclopedia of Ecumenism in Poland (1964—2014)* edited by distinguished Polish the-

ologians: Professor Józef Budniak from the University of Silesia in Katowice, Professor Zygfryd Glaeser from the Opole University, as well as by Professor Tadeusz Kałużny SCJ and Professor Zdzisław Kijas OFMConv, both from the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków.

The encyclopedia contains 560 pages and is divided into three main parts preceded by the following editorial pages: Contents (pp. 5—8), List of abbreviations (pp. 9—14), and Introduction (pp. 15—21).

The first part called “The General Characteristics of Polish Ecumenism” consists of the following subsections: “The Beginnings and Development of the Ecumenical Movement in Poland” (Chapter 1), “Current Ecumenical Structures in Poland” (Chapter 2), “Spiritual Aspects of Polish Ecumenism” (Chapter 3), and “Interfaith Doctrinal Dialogues in Poland” (Chapter 4). The second part deals with “Profiles of Polish Ecumenists” (pp. 121—412). The third part is the Appendix (pp. 413—530). All of the parts have a three-point structure, according to which the documentation concerning the ecumenical structures in Poland, documents of Christian Churches and ecumenical institutions in Poland, and documents of ecumenical dialogues in Poland were systematized. At the very end of the book is a list of publications (pp. 531—540), Index of names (pp. 541—550), and Subject index (pp. 551—560).

The idea to compile the *Encyclopedia...* was inspired by the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* by the Second Vatican Council. The authors of the encyclopedia point out rightly that the mentioned conciliar document became “crucial for the development of joint work between the Roman Catholic Church and non-Catholic Churches and Christian communities. [...] It is often referred to as *Magna Carta* of both the Council’s and Roman Catholic engagement in the unity of Christians” (p. 15). This document defines the fundamental rules concerning the Roman Catholic ecumenical theory and practice. A new language was proposed in relations among Christians. A language free of words condemning and excluding those who “believe in a different way” and expressing respect and appreciation for the faithful from the Churches and Christian communities. “In the Decree on Ecumenism it was officially admitted that in non-Catholic Churches and Communities there exist essential elements of truth and goodness, and also ‘real life of grace’” (p. 15). One of the essential elements of the Church’s new ecumenical logic presented in the decree *Unitatis redintegratio* was a call for a dialogue among Christians and among the Churches because “the division [among Christians] openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature” (UR 1). The fact that “ecumenism is the work of the Holy Spirit” (UR 1; 2) was fully accepted. “Catholic princi-

ples of ecumenism were expounded (see UR 2—4). It was stressed that Catholics should undertake ‘every effort to avoid expressions, judgments, and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult’ (UR 4)” (p. 5). The Council reminds that “all Christians, also Catholics, are responsible for the division, which means, that all are called to undertake with vigour the task of renewal” (p. 16).

The ecumenical programme for the Church worked out by the Second Vatican Council, which was also the priority for the pastoral activities of post-conciliar popes (from John XXIII to Francis), was an inspiration for the authors of the reviewed book. The premise of the work is to “chronicle” the events and people, institutions and works which were and are engaged in ecumenical activities in Poland over the past half century.

Encyclopedia of Ecumenism in Poland (1964—2014) is a joint work of three academic centres: Kraków, Opole, and Katowice-Cieszyn. The editorial project was carried out as part of the research grant of the National Science Centre (decision no. DEC — 2013/09/B/HS1/00483). What makes this work even more valuable is the fact that the authors cooperated fully and closely not only with different environments within the Church but also with non-Catholic circles. This kind of research hermeneutics helped to present a very objective approach to ecumenism which is a very sensitive matter.

Encyclopedia of Ecumenism in Poland (1964—2014) is not only an academic work that widely uses source documents relating to the history of Polish ecumenism, but also the fruit of openness and common effort of Polish (not only Roman Catholic!) ecumenical circles. This book has a genuinely innovative character and its singularity in the world literature makes it worth recommending to anyone interested in the problem of ecumenism and a widely understood dialogue in the Church and in the modern world.

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