THE ‘OPINIONS OF RELIGION AND DIVINE WORSHIP’ IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH FROM AN ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH PERSPECTIVE

Abstract
The article analyses English and Scottish travellers’ accounts of interdenominational relations, and specifically religious toleration, as observed in the seventeenth century Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth. It traces the changing British perception of these matters over time, from when toleration was a subject of admiration until it began to be seen as a sign of anarchic religious liberty, a weakness; something to be, as Gilbert instigated, ‘abolished and removed from the body and the bounds’ of the English monarchy.

Key words: Poland-Lithuania; English and Scottish travel accounts; religious toleration

Seventeenth century English and Scottish travellers’ accounts of their visits to the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth (PLC) and the Est Partis were preoccupied with descriptions of its lands, people and customs, and/or the political, economic and religious situation; they concentrated primarily on recording the curiosities, and thus the differences, between the two parts of Europe.1 One of the more polarising issues between the inhabitants of Poland-Lithuania and visitors from the British Isles was, as Scottish traveller and

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1 The term ‘Est Partis’ appearing in the 16th and 17th century Scottish documents, e.g. an inventory of the birth briefs from Aberdeen, was used to describe territories east of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, usually Muscovy. See “Testimonial Issued in the City of Aberdeen on 18 July 1590,’ The Miscellany of the Third Spalding Club [hereafter MTSC] (Aberdeen: 1940), vol. 2, no. 3.
celebrated satirical writer John Barclay (1582-1621) described, ‘opinions of Religion, and heavenly matters.’ The commonly exaggerated accounts of Poland-Lithuania – ‘a Nation borne to cruelty and licentiousnesse’ – evoke an image of an exotic, distant and isolated part of Europe. Yet this was not necessarily the perception of contemporary Commonwealth inhabitants. During the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, when English interests took a definitive turn towards England’s new colonies and especially opportunities on the other side of the Atlantic, both states established much closer contacts than possibly any other previous period in history. Political, economic and cultural exchanges, which were heavily influenced by English and Scottish trade as well as English economic interests in this part of Europe — such as the formation of the Eastland Company in 1579, or migration from Scotland between the 1590s and 1650s — also involved more personal connections. Of particular significance is immigration. At approximately this time, a considerable group of Scots, and some English, migrated to Poland-Lithuania, in the process forming several larger communities. The region witnessed an influx of an array of different traders, soldiers, students, theologians, academics and intrepid travellers who, in the tradition of the Grand Tours, ventured into ‘Polonia and the Provinces thereof.’ At its peak, by the 1640s, the Scottish diaspora in Poland-Lithuania may have consisted of several thousand individuals. While

3 Ibid., 186.
5 Agnieszka White, Obraz kultury Rzeczypospolitej w angielskich relacjach podróżniczych: (koniec XVI i XVII wieku) [The Depiction of the Culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in English Travel Accounts Towards the End of the Sixteenth- and During the Seventeenth-Century] (Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2014); David Worthington, British and Irish Experiences and Impressions of Central Europe, 1560-1688 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012); Cf. John Stoye, English Travelers
many stayed temporarily (having generated enough income, some Scots returned home), others settled permanently and exercised commercial business and crafts. Their decision to migrate was heavily influenced by the economic opportunities then available in the Commonwealth but also, although to a lesser degree, by the state’s tolerance of different creeds and its distinct multi-ethnic character. The migration slowed significantly only after the Swedish Deluge (1655-1660), before coming to a halt in the first decades of the following century.\(^6\)

The fall in the number of migrants — as reflected, for instance, by the substantial 50-60 per cent or above decrease of Scottish names appearing in the vital records and lists of communicants of all Polish Protestant parishes between the early 1650s and 1660s — was symptomatic of Poland-Lithuania’s economic decline and its attitude towards nonconformists.\(^7\) Several accounts have been published of the conflicts between local Protestants, who the immigrants overwhelmingly joined, and those ‘addicted to the Roman See’. Other writings concerning the religious developments in Poland-Lithuania also reached Britain. Examples of these will be examined to see how they may have influenced the way the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was perceived and gradually estranged in the minds of the general public, not only in the British Isles but also in other parts of Western Europe.

It appears that the developments of Protestant thought in the Commonwealth, including the Antitrinitarian ideology, had been acknowledged in the British Isles since the 1550s. The Polish brand of Protestantism was first introduced there by Jan Łaski, better known in England as John a Lasco (1499-1560). After being expelled from his post of

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\(^7\) Detailed analysis of records of major Reformed parishes of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, carried out in order to estimate the number of immigrants, has been presented in: Bajer, *Scots in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, op.cit., 235-301.
superintendent of all East Friesian churches, he was invited to England by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. Łaski was asked to participate in a doctrinal colloquy summoned by Cranmer as part of his programme of religious reform. In 1550, the Archbishop appointed him superintendent of the Dutch Strangers’ Church in London, which served as a place of worship for Protestant refugees mainly from the Low Countries and France. It has been suggested that the ceremonies used by Łaski’s congregation, described in his most famous work *Forma ac ratio* (1555), may have had some influence upon *The Book of Common Prayer* (1552), especially on penitential rites. More direct lines of influence have been traced to John Knox’s *Scottish order* (1560–61) and to the *Middleburg ordinal* (1602), later used by English Puritans.8

The interest in Protestant religious doctrines developed in Poland-Lithuania increased in England during the first half of the seventeenth century. This curiosity was fuelled by a reaction against the revival of Catholicism during the Stuart era, as well as growing divisions between King James VI (I) (1566-1625), a firm supporter of the High Anglican Church, and the Puritans who controlled Parliament. The Polish Antitrituitarians, otherwise known as the Polish Brethren (*Bracia Polscy*), judged this situation to be a perfect opportunity to present their own beliefs to the monarch and to the wider English audience. In 1609, Hieronim Moskorzewski dedicated the Latin translation of *Katechizm Rakowski* (first published in 1605) to King James.9 It appears that the Unitarians completely misread James’ intentions. The king took such offence at the radical views presented in the publication that he ordered all copies of it to be confiscated and burnt. According to Teslar, however, the monarch’s swift attempt to stop the publication was not embraced

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by a Parliament hostile to him. A lack of action over the following years allowed for the book’s wide publication and a number of reprints and later translations. When in 1652 Parliament finally passed a resolution commanding the ‘Blasphemous, Erronious and Scandalous’ catechism to be seized and burnt at the Old Exchange in London, it was all too late. The attempt to suppress the book was unsuccessful, and merely sparked new endeavours to make it available. This and other works had a considerable influence on the philosophical and theological ideas of John Locke (1632–1704) and Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727). Newton in particular had a considerable interest in the ideas of the Polish Antitrinitarians. It has been noted that in his private collection, Newton had eight

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11 Catechesi ecclesiarum quae in regno Poloniae & magno ducatu Lithuaniae, & alii ad istud regnum pertinentibus provinciis, affirmant, neminem aliun praeter patrem Domini nostri Iesu Christi, esse illum unum Deum Israelis: hominem autem illum Iesum Nazarenum, qui ex virgine natus est, nec aliquem, praeter ante ipsum, Dei filium unigenitum & agnoscentur & confessionem. Cui accedit Fausti Socini Senensis vita. Et dissertatio operibus suis ab Equis Polono praemissa. Cum catalogo operum ejusdem Fausti Socini. Dissertatio quam Fausti Socini operibus praemitti voluit. Dissertatio quam Fausti Socini operibus praemitti voluit, Raco viae [i.e. London: Printed by William Dugard], anno Domini M.DC.LI. [1651]. The Racovian catechisme wherein you have the substance of the confession of those churches, which in the kingdom of Poland, and great dukedom of Lithuania, and other provinces appertaining to that kingdom, do affirm, that no other save the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is that one God of Israel, and that the man Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of the Virgin, and no other besides, or before him, is the onely begotten Sonne of God. [Apparently translated from the Latin version], (Printed at Amsterledam [sic] for Brooer Janz, 1652).


13 Apart from the catechism several works of an influential Socian theologian S. Przypkowski have been translated into English. His Dissertatio de pace has been translated and published in London in 1653, 1684 and 1688. Przypkowski prepared also a volume dedicated to the life and work of Faustus Socinus. Cf. S. Przypkowski, Dissertatio de pace, &c. Or, A discourse touching the peace & concord of the Church. Wherein is elegantly and acutely argued, that not so much a bad opinion, as a bad life, excludes a Christian out of the kingdom of heaven; and that the things necessary to be known for the attainment of salvation, are very few and easie; and finally, that those, who pass amongst us under the name of hereticks, are notwithstanding to be tolerated (London: printed by Ja: Cottrel, for Rich. Moone, at the seven stars in Pauls Church-yard., 1653); idem, Dissertatio de pace, &c. Or, A discourse touching the peace and concord of the Church wherein First, is elegantly and accurately argued, that its not so much a bare error in opinion ... secondly, that the things necessary ... Lastly, that those who pass amongst us ... (London: printed and sold by Andrew Sowle ..., 1688); idem, The life of that incomparable man, Faustus Socinus Senensis, described by a Polonian knight. Whereunto is added an excellent discourse, which the same author would have had premised to the works of Socinus; together with a catalogue of those works (London: printed for Richard Moone, at the seven Stars in Pauls Church-yard, neer the great north-doore, 1653).
of their books, and that he most likely accessed the anthology of Unitarian writing, the famous *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*.  

It appears that the eventual banishment of the Polish Brethren from Poland in 1658 (members of the Brethren were given two years to embrace Catholicism and stay, or sell their belongings and go into exile), did not cause much controversy in the British Isles. When it came to Arianism, both Poland-Lithuania and England, despite dissimilar views on religion, showed a comparable disapprobation towards this particular theology. An article from *Moderate Intelligencer* about the exclusion of the sect from the *Colloquium Charitativum* (English: Brotherly Conversation) conference organised by Władysław IV in Toruń on 28 August 1645, which aimed to bring agreement between Catholics, Calvinists, and Lutherans of Poland, perfectly illustrates this situation. Apart from making a note of the episode, the author of the commentary has actually validated the position of the King of Poland in not inviting the Arians. Their doctrine, reported the correspondent, was ‘most to be feared of all others that have, since the redemption of mankind, infected the Church’.

This was neither the first nor the last account in England of the religious developments in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In 1645, for example, a royal edict of Władysław IV, King of Poland, directed at the religious dissidents among his subjects, was published in London.

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15 The author of the article mistakenly reported that the Arians were expelled from Poland, when in fact, at this stage, they were simply refused the opportunity to partake in the conference. Among the guests there were 26 Catholic, 28 Lutheran and 24 Calvinist theologians. Among those who attended were notable men such as the Moravian educator Jan Ámos Komenský and the Lutheran theologian Georg Calixt. The conference ended up in disappointment. Rather than discuss reconciliation, a number of the delegates engaged in doctrinal disputes. Although the negotiations continued until 24th November, no progress was achieved. ‘The banishment of Arianism out of Polonia: with the entertainment of a Polonian Embassador in Muscovia, *Moderate Intelligencer* (Thursday, June 17, 1645), Issue 119, 1134-1135. Cf. Edmund Piszcz, *Colloquium Charitativum w Toruniu A.D. 1645: geneza i przebieg* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Konserwatora Diecezjalnego, 1995).

Issues of faith were also the subject of a considerable part of an official report commissioned for Queen Elizabeth I or King James VI (I) in the 1590s. Although *A Relation of the State of Polonia and the united Provinces of that Crown, Anno 1598* did not reach either monarch, it nevertheless arrived in London in 1604 and must have been known to some of the Court officials.\(^{17}\) While in geographical terms Poland-Lithuania was perceived to be, as the report referred to it, ‘the most Easterly region of Europe’, in the religious sense it was described as very much a part of Western Christendom, ‘the Latyn Church’.\(^{18}\) Despite the fact that the report never reached a wider audience, the views presented therein appear to be symptomatic of the way many inhabitants of the British Isles envisaged the religious situation in Poland-Lithuania in the 1580s and 1590s, and in the first four decades of the seventeenth century.

Religion in thyse lande is manifold, bothe for manyfest opposition and diversite sectes which commes, for that it confynes with nations of most contrary rites, all men drawing by nature some novelty from theire neighboures. And therfore borderers uppon severall religions doe never sancrly observe that of theire contrey, but mixe it with borrowed superstitions. [...] besydes the wonderfull nombers of heretikes, especially in the capittall article of the Trinity, there are many *Qui aut nullos, aut Deos tantum colunt impios*, the collission of dyvers opinions easely corrupting, if not altogetheer extinguishing the religious affection of mans mynde. [There are also those who follow] Turcisme, Mahumet, and Judaisme,...\(^{19}\)

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\(^{17}\) ‘A Relation of the State of Polonia and the united Provinces of that Crown, Anno 1598’, *Elementa ad fontium editiones, vol. XIII: Res polonicae ex archivio Musaei Britannici Pars I* [hereafter *EFE*], edited by Carolus H. Talbot (Roma: Institutum Historicum Polonicum Romae, 1965). The authorship of this document remains unresolved. Originally it was attributed by the archivists G. Warner and J. Gilson to Sir George Carew (c.1556–1612), an English diplomat and historian who visited Poland in 1598. A number of Polish historians have expressed a view that Carew was far too young and his stay in Poland was too short to fully comprehend all events described in this report. The scholars concluded that intricate knowledge of the events suggests that the report must have been written by an insider, someone who spent several years in Poland-Lithuania and most probably within the circle of the Court or its top officials. In 1937 Stanisław Kot proposed that the authorship of the report could be attributed to the Scot William Bruce (Brucius) who not only took part in the Commonwealth’s military campaigns, but also was closely connected to the inner circle i.e. Chancellor Jan Zamoyski. Kot’s theory of Bruce’s authorship of the report, however, has been, in turn, recently disputed by Sebastian Sobecki. Sobecki argued that for a number of reasons this hypothesis is ill-founded and the issue of authorship requires further study. Cf. Stanisław Kot, ‘Bruce William’, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [hereafter *PSB*], vol. 3, 3–4 (Warszawa: Ossolineum, 1937); Edward Mierzwa, ‘Angielska relacja o Polsce z roku 1598’, *Annales UMCS*, 17 (1962), 88–96; idem, *Anglia a Polska, op. cit.*, 166–167; Sebastian Sobecki, ‘The Authorship of A Relation of the State of Polonia, 1598’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 18, no. 2 (2003), 172–179.


\(^{19}\) Ibid., 64–67.
The 'Papists', as noted later, may have been the most numerous and the most privileged amongst the other creeds, but, according to the report's author, members of smaller denominations did not need to fear persecution. The Constitution of 1573, proclaiming religious tolerance, encompassed not just the two or three most prevalent Religious groups strong enough to fight for their rights in an open-armed conflict. While other, smaller groups were being prosecuted in some Western countries, this Constitution proclaimed tolerance to all creeds. These 'articles of publice peace', as the Relation called it, secured a unity of the state inhabited for generations by diverse ethnic and religious communities. For obvious reasons, the report concentrated on the situation of the non-conformists.

The Christians are subdevided into the Latyne and orientall Churche. Thys latter into the Greek and the Armenian. The Latyn into suche as have publike churches and those which eyther communicate in Conventicles, or privately mainteyn, and propagate theire opinions. Those which have publike churches are the Papistes, Calvinistes and Luthernes. [...] Of Protestants the Calvinistes in Polonia are in greatest nomber, In Prussia and Livonia the Luthernes [...] In theise contreyes are also greate store of Anabaptistes, Osiandristes [PPB: followers of Andreas Osiander, German humanist, reformer, and theologian, who differed with Luther’s teaching on the question of the relationship between justification and sanctification, the church discipline and private confession], Ebionites (sic), and of all sortes of Antitrinitaries.20

English historian and cartographer John Speed (1551/2-1629) published a very similar account in 1631. While his description of religious matters was not as detailed as that presented in the 1598 Relation, it reached a much larger audience.21


21 “They have a good minde to Religion, but cannot fasten vpon one to their liking; and therefore they will try all Christians, they have bee neuer since the yeare 965, but from that time, they haue scarce any slipt any error, schisme, or heresie, which hath crept into the Church. Here are Jesuites, and other of Romish sects. Here are Lutherans and Calvinists, and Arians, and Anabaptists, and Antitrinitarians: none allowed, but tolerated: and indeed Poland had the senioritie of Amsterdame for that old saying: that if a man had lost his Religion, here he might finde it. They haue one ancient custome in their Churches which me thinkes may well interpret our standing vp at rehershall of the Creed: whe the Gospell is reading, the Nobilitie & Gentry vnsheath their swords, and stands as it were prepared to defend it with their liues against any which dare violate it.” – J. Speed, A prospect of the most famous parts of the world Viz. Asia, 3 Affrica, 5 Europe, 7 America. 9 VVith these kingdoms therein contained, Grecia, 11 Roman Empire, 13 Germanie, 15 Bohemia, 17 France, 19 Belgia, 21 Spaine, 23 Italie, 25 Hungarie, 27 Denmarke, 29 Poland, 31 Persia, 33 Turkish Empire, 35 Kingdo: of China, 37 Tartaria, 39 Sommer Ilands, 41 Ciwll Warres, in England, Wales, and Ireland. You shall finde placed in the beginning of the second booke marked with these [3 asterisks in triangle formation] and (5) Together with all the provinces, counties, and shires, contained in that large theater of Great Brittanies empire. Performed by John Speed (London: printed by John Dawson for George Humble, and are to be sold at his shop in Popes-head Pallace, 1631), 32. Cf. Sarah Bendall, 'Speed, John (1551/2-1629)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Sept 2004); online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26093, accessed 16 May 2010].
The ‘Opinions of Religion and Divine Worship’...

The observations described in the 1598 Relation as well as Speed’s account reappeared in several other reports of visits to the Commonwealth. Worthy of note is a lesser known account left by Eleazar Gilbert, a Scottish minister sent in 1638 to Kėdainiai (Polish: Kiey-dany), a private city of the Duke Radziwiłł family and an important Calvinist centre, to look after the Scottish and English Reformed congregation residing there. Gilbert noted in his book Neves from Poland that Vilnius (Polish: Wilno) was a town ‘little inferior to the City of London’ and ‘...a City [of] sumptuous Churches, faire buildings, multitude of people, frequency of commerce, and in a word, abundance of all good things’.22 Preceding giving a detailed report of an assault on the local Reformed church, Gilbert favourably assessed the overall religious situation in the city.

There be also therein many Religions professed and tolerated, whereunto also belong many Churches and places of Divine worship, as a Synagogue to the Jewes, whereof there be many thousands in that City; a Ruthenian Church to the Russians, a Mahumetan Church to the Tartarians; a Church to the Lutherans; all which doe enjoy their exercises of Religion without trouble or interruption.23

An analogous description of Vilnius appeared in 1648 in a London based newspaper:

There is no place in the world wherein God is prayed unto in more fashions then in this Towne; for besides that there be in it great store of goodly Catholike Churches, well served, the Graecians United with the Church of Rome, have likewise many fair ones within it; as likewise the Schismaticall Graecians, The Calvinists, Lutherans, and Arminians have there their severall Temples; the Jews their Synagogues; and the Turks their Mosques.24

This state of affairs had not gone unnoticed by John Durie (1596-1680), the eminent Scottish preacher and ecumenist, who between 1627 and 1630 ministered to the English and Scottish Calvinists in Elbląg. While the influences of David Pareus and William Forbes, recognized for their campaigns of ecclesiastical reconciliation and search for religious tolerance, likely played a considerable role in the formulation of Durie’s irenic doctrine, it has been argued that Durie’s experience in Poland was equally significant. Biegańska suggested that the well-published Durie several times in his correspondence emphasized

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22 Eleazar Gilbert, Neves from Poland wherein is declared the cruell practice of the popish clergie against the Protestants, and in particular against the ministers of the city of Vilna, in the great dukedome of Lithuania, under the governement of the most illustrious prince, Duke Radzizwell / faithfully set downe by Eleazar Gilbert... (London: by E.P. for Nathanael Butter, and are to be sold at his shop, 1641), 6. Cf. Ayre, The Scottish Community, op. cit., 51-99, 293-294.
23 Gilbert, Neves from Poland, op. cit., 7.
24 Moderate Intelligencer (London, Thursday, April 20, 1648), Issue 162, 1282.
the favourable positions of the dissenters in Poland-Lithuania, and praised the state’s tolerance and security. According to Durie, such auspicious circumstances enabled the non-conformists to enjoy a relatively peaceful coexistence with followers of other creeds and maintain a dialogue with members of other Protestant denominations.25

The rise in the migration of Scots and, to a lesser degree, Englishmen to Poland-Lithuania during the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century seems to indicate that a large section of contemporary English and Scottish society was well aware of the religious tolerance in the Commonwealth. While decisions to migrate were fundamentally influenced by the considerable economic opportunities available in the Commonwealth at that time, the state-guaranteed tolerance of diverse faiths and its distinct multi-ethnic character could have likewise appealed to some prospective immigrants. Poland-Lithuania may have specifically attracted individuals whose opportunities for employment or a career progression might have been closed off in Britain because of their religious beliefs, or who were religious refugees.26 The considerable denominational violence and persecution in Scotland forced, for example, young Scottish Catholics to continue their education at the Jesuit seminary and college in Braunsberg (today Braniewo). Although it is impossible to assess how many Scots were actually enrolled in the college, as its records no longer exist, the example of its pupil, Patrick Gordon, indicates that around the 1650s some of his compatriots were certainly enrolled there.27 More is known about the Papal Seminary which was established in 1575 with the idea of preparing the men from countries engulfed by Protestantism for priesthood. Between 1580 and 1659, around 45 novices from Scotland were recorded.28


27 ‘Braniewo’, Encyklopedia wiedzy o Jezuitach na ziemiach Polski i Litwy 1564-1995, ed. Ludwik Grzebień (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1996), 63-66. In his diary Gordon specifically mentions that his enrollment at the college was pre-planned, suggesting an undescribed link to that school. Among possible students of the college was for example his countryman Thomas Menzies with whom Gordon travelled to Braniewo. Gordon, ‘Diary 1659-1667’, RSAMH, Fond 846, op. 15, vol. 1, fol. 4-5.

28 Die Matrikel des päpstlichen Seminars zu Braunsberg 1578-1798, ed. Georg Lühr (Braunsberg und Ermländische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1925); Uczniowie – Sodalisi gymnasiijum jezuitów w Brunswerdze (Bra-
According to the most recent estimate, when migration was at its peak in the fourth decade of the seventeenth century, the diaspora of predominantly Scottish immigrants consisted of perhaps as many as 5,000 to 7,000 individuals.\textsuperscript{29} Large congregations formed around the local Calvinist parishes in the major cities of Poland-Lithuania in Gdańsk, Kraków, Elbląg, Lublin, Wilno and Kieydany. Several accounts of the Scottish expatriate community, written by Scottish and English travellers like Mundy\textsuperscript{30}, Bargrave\textsuperscript{31}, and Roberts\textsuperscript{32} were published in Britain.

Not all English and Scottish writers looked favourably on Polish tolerance, however. The previously mentioned Barclay, author of the famous \textit{Icon Animorum} (1614), while describing the character and manners of the European nations reserved very harsh comments for the national traits of Poles. In particular, Barclay heavily criticised their religious views and practices.\textsuperscript{33}

They are [the Poles] wedded strangely to their own fancies; nor doe they take to themselves a greater licentiousnesse in manners and unciuill conversations, then in their opinions of Religion, and heavenly matters; of which, euery man without any feare, will both thinke and speake as himselfe likteth: Which proceedeth surely from an abominable confidence they haue of themselues, and are ashamed to learne the best wisdom from another mans direction, from

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    \item Bajer, \textit{Scots in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth}, op. cit., 102.


    \item Lewes Roberts, \textit{The merchants mappe of commerce wherein, the universall manner and matter of trade, is compendiously handled.} The standard and currant coines of sundry princes, observed. The reall and imaginar coincs of accompts and exchanges, expressed. The naturall and artificiell commodities of all countries for transportation declared. The weights and measures of all eminent cities and townnes of traffique, collected and reduced one into another; and all to the meridian of commerce practised in the famous citie of London. By Lewes Roberts, merchant. Necessary for all such as shall be employed in the publique affaires of princes in foreigne parts; for all gentlemen and others that travell abroad for delight 386 or pleasure, and for all merchants or their factors that exercise the art of merchandizing in any part of the habitable world (London: Printed by R. Oulton, Eliot's Court Press, Thomas Harper, and Felix Kingston] for Ralph Mabb, MDCXXXVIII [1638]), 166.

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hence is, that their mindes at this day are diuided into many schismes, and haue among them all the heresies which polluted former times... 34

Although the extent to which this negative stereotype affected the perception of Poles in Britain is open for discussion – the book had numerous reprints – the real shift of the public opinion towards the religious situation in Poland-Lithuania became apparent in the 1650s. At its root was the disastrous Swedish invasion and occupation of the country from 1655 to 1660, better known in Polish history as Potop (the Deluge), which was responsible for increasing differences between denominations (confessionalisation). A large group of dissidents — amongst them Scots and English who were potential supporters of Cromwell, who himself favoured the Swedes — were accused of conspiring with the enemy.

The accusations were not ill-founded. A number of first-hand reports which appeared in the English press during Cromwell’s protectorate strongly indicate Polish Scots’ approbation towards the invaders. News about the conflict reaching Britain was, it seems, sent directly to London by Scottish merchants from Poland. 35 While the majority of the intelligence originated in Gdańsk, correspondence was also sent from Elbląg, Głogów, Cracow and Warsaw. 36 Furthermore, as the example of the Scottish Reformed of Cracow indicates, many of the Scots not only offered counsel but actually spied for the Swedes, possibly even prior to the invasion. It appears that some Scots also assisted the occupiers in the government. They were involved in extracting compulsory contributions from the local inhabitants during the Swedish rule and collaborated in the looting of Catholic churches. 37

The eventual victory of the revolt against Swedish rule, under the banner of a defence of Roman Catholicism, did more damage to the Protestant cause than perhaps the Counter-Reformation itself. A conventional notion which equated ‘heretics’ to traitors led to retaliation, like the destruction of Leszno and the church in Skoki, and the formation of a society less tolerant than before. Fearing retribution, many Scots and English fled Poland-Lithuania along with the retreating Swedish army. 38

34 Barclay, *Icon animorum*, op. cit., 187-188.
36 For example a report from Cracow appeared in *Publick Intelligencer* (1655) (London, England, Monday, April 14, 1656), Issue 29, 486.
38 A similar argument was advanced by Mierzwa. Mierzwa, *Anglia a Polska*, op. cit., 193.
There is no denial that tensions between different creeds did exist in Poland-Lithuania prior to the ‘Swedish Deluge’. It has been well documented that despite the prevailing spirit of tolerance, the majority of members of all denominations believed that only their own doctrine pointed the way towards eternal salvation. Gilbert, who in 1638 illustrated the peaceful coexistence of different denominations in Vilnius, in the same report dismissively characterised other non-Protestant creeds as being ‘either of Idolatory, superstition or errors, in league and consanguinity joined with the Papists’. Moreover, in conclusion to his testimony, while condemning the actions of Catholics in Vilnius, he contradictorily criticised the religious tolerance. Gilbert emphatically encouraged the establishment to ‘exterminate and extirpate’ from the British Isles all the non-Reformed churches (most of all, the Romanists), other Christian sects and non-Christians. His opinions were symptomatic of views held by the majority of followers of each of the respective creeds. This largely explains why, at times, there were indeed more serious, well-documented discriminations and persecutions, some of which also involved the immigrants from Britain. It should be mentioned that confessional divisions also plagued the expatriate Scottish community. An inquiry into the organisation of Scots in Poland showed that their brotherhoods, controlled by the Protestants, discriminated against their ‘Popish’ compatriots.

While the reports of sporadic denominational clashes in Poland-Lithuania received relatively little attention in either England or Scotland up until the fourth decade of the seventeenth century, the interest in the situation of the Protestants in Poland-Lithuania heightened substantially during the second half of the seventeenth century. This increase has been linked to the success of the Counter-Reformation in Poland-Lithuania and the alleged growing influence of the Jesuits on the kingdom’s social, political and cultural life. Consequently, once favourable opinions of Poland-Lithuania, such as the ‘Mother and

39 Gilbert, Neues from Poland, op. cit., 7.
40 ‘...let us be carefull in our best devotion and prayers to sollicite and implore the favourable assistance, and gracious presence of the Almighty, who hath the hearts of Kings and great men in his hands, urning them (like the rivers of water) which way he listeth: That he may be pleased so to affect and dispose the hearts of the Peers and Princes, Magistrates of this Land, that they may speedily bethinke themselves of some opportune way and means, whereby all fractions, and factions, schisms, separations, sidings and backslidings, contentions, combustions, confusions, prevarications, finally all Antichristian, polypragmaticall, tyrannicall, and trecherous heresies, schisms, practices and professions, and enterprises may be quite, or at least as much as is possible, abolished and removed from the body and the bounds of this Monarchie, and that all his Majestis subjects here and elsewhere, may from henceforth concurre and consent, in unity of mind, opinion, judgement...’, ibid., 29-30.
42 The attacks on the Protestant church in Kraków in 1587 and 1591 (the author mistakenly noted 1592) have received a low key treatment in the Relation of 1598. – ‘A Relation of the State of Polonia’, 64.
43 Beata Cieszyńska, ‘Polish Religious Persecution as a Topic in British Writing in the Seventeenth and Ear-
Nurse for the youth and younglings of Scotland, were gradually replaced in English and Scottish literature by descriptions such as the ‘Popish Clergie’s’ kingdom. Satires aimed at Poland-Lithuania like that of Sir James Sempill’s *The Packman Pater Noster or A Dialogue betwixt a Chapman and a Priest* (1624) or Richard Burridge’s *An Apostate Prince or a Satyr Against the Present King of Poland* (1700), gained notoriety. Along with these, reports of discrimination and persecution of Polish Protestants, such as Gilbert’s *Nevves from Poland* (1641), began to dominate the portrayal of the kingdom. This negative depiction of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has also been linked to the growth of anti-Catholicism at all levels of English and Scottish society, which is believed to be one of the most noticeable characteristics of the British Isles in the seventeenth century. Moreover, it appears that many publications describing and magnifying the maltreatment of dissenters by those ‘addicted to the Roman See’ in Continental Europe were issued for propagandist purposes, in the same way as graphic descriptions of the massacres of Protestant settlers in 1641 were designed to legitimize the cruel treatment of Irish Catholics. It can be argued that the sudden rise in popularity of such texts coincided with Cromwell’s attempts to justify atrocities committed by his army in Ireland during the English Civil War (1641-1651) and especially after the massacre at Drogheda. Anxious about the public reaction to this particular episode and displeased by the onslaughts of both radical pamphleteers and Royalist newspapers, in September 1649 Parliament passed a rigorous printing act which effectively put an end to all the licensed newspapers.

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44 Later he also calls it “the mother of our commons, and the first commencement of all our best merchants’ wealth, or at least most part of them.” – William Lithgow, *The Totall Discourse of the Rare Adventures and Painefull Peregrinations of Long Nineteene Yeares Travayles from Scotland to the Most Famous Kingdomes in Europe, Asia and Africa* [London: Nicholas Okes, 1632], reprint, (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons 1906), 368.

45 Gilbert, *Nevves from Poland*, op. cit..

46 [James Sempill], *A Pick-tooth for the Pope: or, The pack-mans pater noster. Set downe in a dialogue, betwixt a pack-man, and a priest. Translated out of Dutch by S.I.S. and newly augmented and enlarged by his son, R.S.* (Glasgow, 1642); Richard Burridge, *An Apostate Prince or a Satyr against the Present King of Poland* (London, 1700), cited in Cieszyńska, ‘Polish Religious Persecution’, 244-247, 255.


Moderate Intelligencer, Mercurius Politicus and Publick Intelligencer, as expected, presented an anti-Polish profile.

One of the first publications overemphasizing the mistreatment of Protestants coming out of Poland-Lithuania was the previously mentioned Gilbert’s description of ‘the cruel practice of the Popish Clergie against the Protestants’, an account of the assault on the Reformed church in Vilnius in 1639. According to Mierzwa, Gilbert’s Névves from Poland (1653) not only increased English and Scottish awareness of the situation of the Polish Protestants but also rekindled an interest in Polish anti-Catholic thought. This is perhaps why exposure was also given to a description by Jan Ámos Komenský of the destruction of Leszno in April 1656.

Although the information about religious affairs in the English press was eclipsed by politics and economics, sporadic events were nevertheless reported. In February 1656 an exaggerated account of the retaliation against the Protestants of Wieluń for accepting the Swedes appeared in the London-published Mercurius:

...Great tyranny is used in Great Poland and about Cracovia, for, when the Pols fall upon the Swedish Souldiers, never were greater Butcheries acted: The children are divided and cut under like so many sheep, womens breasts are cut off, and afterwards dissected in four Quarters, they take our Protestant Ministers, and cut off their hands and feet, and afterwards chopp of their heads, divide the body into severall quarters; in the mean time the Hogg do dragg along the bowels in the streets, and that the villainous actors may not miss the Pleasure of the Tragedy, they fling Corn upon the slain mens flesh, and thus let the Hogs run into it: Such a Tragicomedy was lately acted at Wielun, where many of my Lord Steinbocks Regiment, being raised about Stettin, have been destroyed in this manner.

While reporting about the change of fortunes in the Polish-Swedish war, an alarmist prediction about the religious situation in Poland-Lithuania appeared in the Publick Intelligencer. An informant from a largely Protestant Gdańsk, which sided throughout the conflict with the Polish Crown, speculated that once the Swedish invasion was totally repelled the ‘Protestants are to be rooted out in all Poland’. In such circumstances, a voice questioning the notion that the Swedes were promoting the Protestant cause in Poland-Lithuania was, it seems, lost in bleak prognosis for the Polish and Lithuanian Calvinists.

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50 Mierzwa, Anglia a Polska, op. cit., 193.
51 John Amos Komenský, Lésnae excidium, anno MDCLVI in Aprili factum, fide historica narratum (Amsterdam, 1656), cited in Mierzwa, Anglia a Polska, op. cit., 194.
52 ‘A report from Breslau, dated 21 February 1656’, Mercurius Politicus Comprising the Summ of All Intelligence (London, Thursday, February 21, 1656); Issue 298, 5987.
53 Publick Intelligencer (1655) (London, Monday, May 5, 1656); Issue 32, 540-41.
54 Anon., The Promotion of the Protestant cause in Poland by the ármes of His Majesty the King of Sweden / fully translated (London printed: [s.n.], 1659).
The predictions must have been amplified by direct appeals made by the Polish Reformed Church to the English monarch or other organisations for financial aid and political support. Several such pleas have been recorded. In 1657, Samuel Boguslaw Chyliński, a minister from Lithuania, sought and received financial assistance from the Reverend Doctors of the Oxford University. A dramatic supplication to the English and Scottish Protestants by Kraiński was published in 1661.

Our very Neighbours do hate, and persecute the Remenant of us still, with much eagerness. As our foreign Enemies did: they deprive us of our Churches yet remaining [...] our Ministers are banished; and such, as remain are beaten, and misused: the Threatnings of our total Exilment are encreased. [...] Look therefore, we beseech you, upon us, as Objects of Pitie, and for the Love of God, for the sacred bonds of unity in Christ Jesus, stretch forth your hands [...] Send suitable comfort to those, that are comfortless...56

By the late 1650s the news about the worsening situation of the Protestants in Poland-Lithuania, amongst them those of Scottish or English extraction, reached a wider audience in the British Isles. In response, first Cromwell57, and later King Charles II announced collections towards the relief of the Protestant churches.58 Aid in providing appropriate education for ministers from Poland-Lithuania was also offered. In 1680, the Reformed of Greater Poland acquired £200 for sending four students to universities in England59, while in 1681 the Calvinists from Little Poland were offered two places at the college in Glasgow.60

55 Chyliński undertook a project of translating the Bible into Lithuanian. – Samuel Boguslaw Chyliński, An account of the translation of the Bible into the Lithuanian tongue, into which language the Scriptures were as yet never translated with a copy of the testimoniall given to the translator: and of the approbation of his undertaking, by several reverend doctors of divinity, with the professors of the same, and other persons of note in the University of Oxford, November 15, 1659 (Oxford: printed by Hen. Hall ..., 1659), 5-6.

56 John de Kraino Kraiński, A relation of the distressed state of the church of Christ professing the protestant religion in the great dukedom of Lithuania, presented to the view of all compassionate Christians (London: printed in the year of our salvation, 1661).

57 A declaration of His Highness, for a collection towards the relief of divers Protestant churches driven out of Poland; and of twenty Protestant families driven out of the confines of Bohemia (London: printed by Henry Hills, and John Field, Printers to His Highness, 1658). Cf. 'John Thurloe to the lord embassador Nieuport, dated Westminster, 19th April, 1658. [N. S.]. A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, ed. Thomas Birch (London, 1742), vol. 7 (March 1658 – May 1660), 61-62.

58 Charles II, Letters patent for a collection for the Protestants of Lithuania (London: Printed by John Bill and Christopher Barker, printers to the Kings most Excellent Majesty, 1661).

59 Mierzwa, Anglia a Polska, op. cit., 197.

60 “In ansuer to the letter direct to the magistratis and counsell of this burgh be the ministeris in Little Poland, it is concluded that ane letter be sent in name of the toun to James Cornwall of Bonhard, to be transmitted to the saids ministeris, declareing that the toun hes condescended and aggried to accept of such twa young men as the said ministeris shall think fitt to send hither for the colledge, and that they will mentain and keep them at the colledge ay and quhill they shall be found qualified for being ministeris of the gospell.” – ‘Ansuer to the
Some of the earlier mentioned accounts have in turn inspired other works. A description of the destruction of Leszno by Komenský reappeared some forty years after it happened in a well-read register of persecutions against the Protestants compiled by Clarke. Later still, it was repeated and further exaggerated in at least two other London-published volumes, *The Scarlet Whore, or the cruelties of the Church of Rome* (1690), and subsequently in *Martyrs in flames, or, Popery (in its true colours) displayed* (1693).

**CONCLUSION**

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the religious developments therein were not unfamiliar to an educated seventeenth century English or Scottish person. A range of accounts available in Britain presented the public with an array of opinions and points of view. As those changed over time, so did the perceptions formed in the process. The religious toleration in Poland-Lithuania and the ideology of the Polish Antitrinitarians captivated the attention of the public in the British Isles until well into the 1630s, leaving a lasting impression on English and Scottish philosophy and theology. The fame of the Polish Brethren, however, and interest shown in peaceful coexistence of various creeds in Poland ebbed after the triumph of Protestantism in England and Scotland, and the Counter-Reformation in the Commonwealth. From the 1640s onwards, impressions of Poland-Lithuania from the English and Scottish perspective were primarily formed based on religious conflict and denominational differences. The earlier admired toleration began to be seen as a sign of anarchic religious liberty, a weakness; something to be, as Gilbert insisted, ‘abolished and removed from the body and the bounds’ of the English monarchy. In 1683, in the same

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61 Samuel Clarke, *A generall martyrlogie containing a collection of all the greatest persecutions which have befallen the church of Christ from the creation to our present times, both in England and other nations: whereunto are added two and twenty lives of English modern divines ...: as also the life of the heroidal Admiral of France slain in the partisan massacre and of Joane Queen of Navar poisoned a little before / by Sa. Clarke* (London: printed by Tho. Ratcliffe for Thomas Underhill and John Rothwell, 1660), 452-462.

62 Anon., *The Scarlet Whore, or the cruelties of the Church of Rome for many hundred years past dispay'd in Piedmunt, Bohemia, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, France, Italy, Portugal, Holland, Scotland, Ireland and England etc.* (London, 1690), cited in Mierzwa, *Anglia a Polska*, op. cit., 194; *Martyrs in flames, or, Popery (in its true colours) displayed. Being a brief relation of the horrid cruelties and persecutions of the Pope and Church of Rome for many hundred years past, to this present age, inflicted upon Protestants in Piedmont ...: With an abstract of the cruel persecution lately exercised upon the Protestants in France and Savoy, in the year 1686 and 1687.: Together with a short account of Gods judgment upon popish persecutors. / Published for a warning to all Protestants, [!] what they must expect from that bloody generation of Antichristians. By R.B.* (London: printed for Nath. Crouch ..., [1693]), 42-45.

spirit, an anonymous Tory propagandist made Poland the setting for a satirical scheme of toleration for Presbyterian nonconformists. Furthermore, despite the fact that until the end of the seventeenth century various creeds were tolerated and continued their relatively peaceful existence in Poland-Lithuania, English and Scottish observers were more inclined to note negative stereotypes. Various publications circulating during this period, as well as oral commentaries of the returning migrants, must have consolidated the image of Poland-Lithuania as a land suffering from Catholic fanaticism. Even the widely published late seventeenth century reports of the victory over the Turks by Jan III Sobieski at the Siege of Vienna were unlikely to have had much impact on the negative portrayal of Poland. The Commonwealth may have been proclaimed the Antemurale Christianitatis, but at the same time it was described as a staunchly Catholic state, hostile to the Protestants. The denominational differences between the two states that emerged deepened in the following century, further reinforcing the negative perceptions of Poland-Lithuania, and estranging it in the minds of English and Scottish Protestants.

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64 Anon., The Saints liberty of conscience in the new kingdom of Poland: proposed for the consolation of the distressed (Warszawa [i.e. London]: [s.n.], 1683).

65 Anon., The Christian conquest. Being an account of the great overthrow of the Turks before the imperial city of Vienna, in Germany, who, by Gods blessing and the happy conduct of the King of Poland, the Duke of Lorain, &c were totally routed; having lost near one hundred thousand men in the field, sixty thousand tents and two millions of money in the Grand Viziers tent. &c. Tune of, When the King enjoys his own again ([London]: printed for J. Wright, J. Clark, W. Thackery, and T. Passinger, 1681-1684); Anon., True news of another bloody battle, of the King of Poland with the Turks and also an account of the taking of the Great Vizier and divers other Turkish lords, and great commanders, and of the redeeming many thousand Christian captives from slavery (London: printed for R. P., 1683); H. G., Scanderbeg redivivus an historical account of the life & actions of the most victorious Prince John III, K. of Poland: containing an exact and succinct series of affairs from his cradle to this present day, with a particular account of the many great and signal victories obtained by him against the Turks, from the time he was first made crown-general, and afterwards elected King of Poland: dedicated to the Lord Landsdowne, Count of the Holy Empire (London: printed by H.C. for Tho. Malthus..., 1684); John III Sobieski, A speech delivered by the King of Poland to his army before the battle, September 12th, 1683 ([London: printed by N. Thompson ... , 1683]); A. Whitebrook, A true copy of a letter from an English gentleman in the Emperour’s army, to an English officer in Holland concerning the total rout of the Turks by the united forces of the Christians, commanded in person by the Emperour, the King of Poland, and Duke of Lorain (London: Printed by E. Mallet, [1683]?).

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