

Chrześcijaństwo w religijności ludowej—1050 lat po Chrzcie Polski [Christianity in Folk Religiosity. 1050 Years after the Baptism of Poland], edited by Zdzisław Kupisiński SVD, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2017, pp. 262.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18290/rt.2018.65.9-12en>

To mark the 1050th anniversary of the Baptism of Poland, many research centers organized conferences and published occasional works. Here, we should also include the collective work edited by Rev. Zdzisława Kupisiński, CUL professor, entitled *Christianity in Folk Religiosity. 1050 Years after the Baptism of Poland*. The intention of this publication is to reflect on the presence of pre-Christian elements in the folk customs of Poles in an attempt to outline the process of inculturation of Christianity into the cultural specificity of Poland. This goal was only partially possible because we know little about pre-Christian religiosity in Poland and the practical aspects of the Christianization of our country. Keeping this in mind, the authors of the articles contained in the discussed collection based on the available data within the framework of the topic have attempted to show the dynamics of the inculturation process by analyzing only certain aspects and events.

The work is divided into four chapters: “Inculturation of the Gospel,” “Popular Piety in Religious Practices,” “Forms of Folk Religion in Literature” and “Popular piety. Development or regression?”

The first chapter includes five articles. The first one by Jerzy Bartmiński, *The Christianization of Folklore and Folklorization of Christianity*, draws attention to successful and failed attempts to sanctify pagan holidays, carols in the folklorization of the Christian message and Marian holidays. The second article is by Bożena Józefów-Czerwińska, *Country Women of Stone. A Possible Contribution to the Study of Christianity in the Bug Territories*, combines the themes in archeology with ethnology. The author wonders to what extent the symbols of pagan religion have been included in the Christian paradigm.

The third article by Magdalena Zowczak, *Folk or Popular Religiosity? The Fight between Fasting and the Carnival (from an Ethnographic Perspective)* is a loose reflection on Church life in Poland. The fourth article by Zdzisław Kupisiński is a report on sacramental marriage in Polish folk customs. In this article, the author, after recalling the essence of sacramental marriage, presents valuable ethnographic material from field studies conducted in Opoczno region. The last article in this chapter, written by Dominik Zimny, *Folk Piety in South-Eastern Podlasie*, lists the signs, places and texts that express the region’s popular piety. Overall, only the first two articles fall fully within the scope of inculturation described in the title of the chapter.

The second chapter presents factographic material, although these are not always case studies. Franciszek M. Rosiński discusses the folk Christmas customs in Roztocze

in the form of a field report. The next article is a very interesting contribution by Dorota Świtały-Trybek indicating the routes taken by saints in Poland. Unfortunately, due to the limited space, this is basically a “computation list” without any deeper analyzes that could be used in post-modern spirituality, secular religiosity, anthropology of tourism, etc. Among the “counting lists,” we can include the article *The Cult of the Saints in Agrarian Culture* (based on the Polish-Czech borderland) by Marcelina Szymańska, whose work appears in fourth place in this chapter.

Even though the author gives valuable information about beliefs and practices related to the mentioned saints, each of these saints really deserves a separate article. Małgorzata Dziura's article, *Folk Indulgence Customs*, discusses in detail the celebrations with indulgences in the Przemyśl area and contains valuable ethnographic material. This cannot be said about Agnieszka Urbaniak's article *Folk Celebrations of Catholic Holidays*. Although the author announces that she will focus on the customs observed in the village of Michałów Dolny, yet it is difficult to figure out from the text which of the discussed practices relate to detailed research and which are based on literature and refer to all of Poland.

The article by Anna Brzozowska-Krajka begins the third chapter, *Let Everyone Pray as they Can ... Canonicity / Non-Canonicity in the System of Popular Piety*, focusing on private morning and evening prayers. It is a pity that the article was not divided into sections, which would have made reading it easier. The next article in this chapter by Stanisława Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, *From Understanding to Participation. Symbolic and Realistic Ways of Making the Sacred Present*, involves symbolic images that allow us to encounter holiness. The author presents symbols that make the divine present (sun, light, fire, star, dew) and those that constitute the context of manifesting divinity (tree, stone, spring and gold).

Another article, *The Quake's Christmas. Literary Works on the Sacred in Folk Religiosity Based on Selected Examples* by Beata Walęciuk-Dejneka, presents an in-depth analysis of two stories in which a healer appears, indicating that the discussed literary figures correspond to the beliefs drawn from folk traditions. The last article of this chapter, *People's Reception of the Truths of the Christian Faith in the Living Tradition of Polish Religious Songs* by Kinga Strycharz-Bogacz, is a valuable contribution to learning about the folk reception of the truths of the faith in traditional Polish religious songs. According to the author, singing is a kind of catechesis that strengthens people's knowledge of the truths of the faith and shapes their moral attitudes.

The last chapter of the reviewed collective work is a kind of culmination of the whole. The article by Eugeniusz Sakowicz is an attempt to put forward a thesis about the existence of folk theology, which the author afterward refutes. Jan Perszon, citing his research carried out among young people in the Hel Peninsula, indicates that although popular religiosity seems to give way to the development of modern forms of piety, it still has meaning for experiencing the transcendent.

The articles in this collective work convince us that the subject of religiosity and popular piety is still valid and very rich. These articles are not all equally important, and appear in diverse forms. There are texts of a general nature, reflections that do not bring much to the development of knowledge, as well as valuable contributions rich in content and reflection, helping us to get to know the religious reality. The whole is interwoven in the title “Christianity in Folk Religiosity...” In fact, Christianity, as a living religion experienced in Polish culture, is expressed through rich habits and customs in everyday life. For some, it is a lifestyle based on patterns inherited from tradition, and for others, they are reproduced gestures without any religious interpretation.

Reference to the 1050th anniversary of Poland’s Baptism is only rhetorical, because none of the authors or even the editor in the introduction reflected on religiosity before or after the baptism of Mieszko I. How much does our folk religion refer to the religion of the Slavs? Is it possible to trace the evolution of its forms? Should it be treated as a relic or as a dynamic reality? Certainly, the distinction between religiosity and popular piety contained in the *Directory of Popular Piety and the Liturgy of 2002* could help us in our analysis. The authors use these terms interchangeably, which introduces confusion in some places. Would occultism and sensualism typical of folk religiosity also be a feature of piety? Do hybrid forms like a “gateway confession” also belong to popular piety? To what extent does the vitality of folk religiosity in Poland inhibit the development of practices belonging to the New Age movement? Although the reviewed work edited by Rev. Zdzisław Kupisiński does not answer many questions about folk religiosity, it is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to our knowledge on various forms of experiencing the sacred and preserving our immaterial cultural heritage.

Jacek Jan Pawlik SVD
Faculty of Theology UWM
Faculty of Theology UWM in Olsztyn
e-mail: jacek.pawlik@uwm.edu.pl

Translated by Jan Kobyłecki



The preparation of the English version of *Roczniki Teologiczne (Annals of Theology)* and its publication in electronic databases was financed under contract no. 836/P-DUN/2018 from the resources of the Minister of Science and Higher Education for the popularization of science.