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FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
TRIDENTINE REFORM TO “THE ENLIGHTENED
AGE”: CHALLENGES FACED BY THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH IN THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY*

Most scholars of early modern Catholicism would now agree that the implementation of the Tridentine reform was a long-drawn out process, reaching well into the eighteenth century. Much depended on the energy and commitment shown by individual bishops – few of whom could approach the prototype – Saint Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan.¹ If the mid-eighteenth century in France saw “the termination of a long Counter-Reformation in which the Gallican Church at last drew breath from its work of inculcating the faith of the Tridentine Fathers”, as Nigel Aston has put it,² then it was not yet time to pause in East-Central Europe. Much work remained to be done, for example, in the Kingdom of Hungary. Following the Habsburgs’ reconquest of the central part of the kingdom from the Ottoman Empire at the end of the seventeenth century, monasteries needed repair if not complete reconstruction, and the parish network had to be rebuilt from scratch. In Transylvania the Catholic Church of both rites – Latin and

* This paper draws on parts of the Polish edition of my forthcoming book, *Polska Rewolucja a Kościół katolicki 1788–1792*, Kraków: Arcana, 2012.

¹ See J. Bergin, “The Counter-Reformation Church and its Bishops”, *Past and Present*, 165 (1999), p. 30-71.

² N. Aston, *Religion and Revolution in France, 1780–1804*, Basingstoke, 2000, p. xi. See also *Idem.*, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe, 1750–1830*, Cambridge, 2002, p. 2-3 and part 1, *passim*.

Uniate – encountered strongholds of various Protestant confessions and Orthodoxy alike. The policies of re-Catholicization violently imposed on the Habsburgs' Austrian and Bohemian lands had to be pursued much more circumspectly in the Kingdom of Hungary.³

Following an immensely destructive cycle of wars, lasting from the 1650s to the 1710s, a generally similar situation applied in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Catholic Church embarked on a long period of expansion and recovery. But it did so from a less favourable starting point than in the Kingdom, or Crown of Poland, with which the Grand Duchy was joined in the Commonwealth of the Two Nations. Protestant nobles retained their numerical and political significance for a longer time than in the Polish Crown. Orthodoxy remained strong in parts of the south and east. Not only was the proportion of Catholics lower in Lithuania than in the Kingdom of Poland, but also the majority of the Catholics were of the Ruthenian, or Uniate rite. Even among the ordinary flock of the Latin rite, mostly Lithuanian speaking and mostly located in the north and west of the Grand Duchy, successive bishops of Samogitia and Vilnius (or Wilno) complained of the ignorance of the basic tenets of the Faith and the persistence of pre-Christian beliefs and practices. So the Catholic Church in many areas was, as in Hungary, a missionary Church. And that meant there was much work for the religious clergy.

Derek Beales's comment on the Catholic clergy in the Habsburg Monarchy – “the relatively meagre corps of regulars made an exceptionally large contribution to the relatively still more meagre overall provision of clergy” can be applied to the Latin rite in the Commonwealth – and especially to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.⁴ Much of the expansion of Catholicism in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was carried out by

³ See R. J. W. Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs: Central Europe c. 1683–1867*, Oxford, 2006, p. 7-9, 25, 54, 149-150; D. Beales, *Joseph II*, vol. 2, *Against the World, 1780–1790*, Cambridge, 2009, p. 298-300; J. Bahlcke, *Ungarischer Episkopat und österreichische Monarchie. Von einer Partnerschaft zur Konfrontation (1686–1790)*, Stuttgart, 2005.

⁴ D. Beales, *Prosperity and Plunder: European Catholic Monasteries in an Age of Revolution, 1650–1815*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 180.

thee religious orders – notably the Jesuits, the Priests of the Mission (or Lazarists), the Dominicans, and the Basilians. Much of this effort was focused on bolstering the position of the Uniate Church at the expense of Orthodoxy; the Latin-rite orders played a supporting role to the Uniate Basilians. Several Dominicans were prominent in seeking to convert Jews, although the proportion of Jews who agreed to baptism remained very small. The Mariavite nuns, founded in the mid-eighteenth century looked after converted Jewesses, and these young women often became Mariavites in their turn. However, most parish missions in the central and northwestern parts of Lithuania concentrated on basic levels of catechization and religious observance among the peasantry. The orders ensured that some at least of their missionaries could communicate with the populace in the language of the latter – dialects of Lithuanian in the northwest, Ruthenian (or Belarusian) further south and east. The colorful and theatrical spectacle of baroque Catholic worship, appealing to the senses and the emotions, could, especially when periodically repeated over several decades in a prolonged and concerted missionary effort, bring the rural masses somewhat closer to what the ecclesiastical hierarchs wished them to be.⁵

Among the Polonophone Lithuanian nobility – virtually all of whom embraced the Latin rite of the Catholic Church – were many benefactors of monasteries. Latin-rite noble families were often willing to aid the Basilians of the Ruthenian rite. In turn, a number of noble families developed a strategy whereby one son would be baptized, confirmed or ordained in the Ruthenian rite, so that they could advance within the elite Basilian order and in time wear an episcopal or even metropolitan miter.⁶ Wealthier noble (especially in outlying areas) were

⁵ See J. Flaga, *Działalność duszpasterska zakonów w drugiej połowie XVIII w. 1767–1772*, Lublin, 1986. A model mission is recorded in “Missia Bialska XX. Bazylianów przez Tymoteusza Szczurowskiego Z. S. B. W. ułożona i do druku podana roku 1792”, ed. A. Weiss, *Wiadomości diecezjalne podlaskie*, 61 (1992), 10, p. 328–49.

⁶ On the Basilians, and the Uniate Church more generally, see L. Bierikowski, “Organizacja kościoła wschodniego w Polsce”, in: *Kościół w Polsce*, ed. J. Kłoczowski, vol. 2, *Wiek XVI–XVIII*, Kraków, 1969, p. 779–1049; M. Piđtypczak-Majerowicz, *Bazylianie w Koronie i na Litwie. Szkoły i książki w działalności zakonu*, Warsaw and Wrocław, 1986;

keen to employ regular clergymen, usually mendicant friars, as domestic chaplains and tutors.⁷ But whether at home or at school, most nobles from at least moderately wealthy families received their education from the religious clergy. Radiating out from their academy in Vilnius, founded in 1579, the Jesuits were extremely successful in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – significantly more so than in the south and east of the Polish Crown. Those of other orders, notably the Piarists and the Basilians, supplemented well-frequented Jesuit colleges and schools. The latter educated many more noble youths of the Latin rite than trainee priests in their own, Ruthenian rite.⁸

Besides providing spiritual and educational services to nobles, conducting missions, and helping out at times of particular need (such as in hearing confessions before Easter), the religious orders had direct charge of many Latin-rite parishes. In the Grand Duchy of Lithuania the diocesan network was underdeveloped compared to the Polish Crown. Lithuania had only four dioceses – plus a part of the diocese of Lutsk that covered the Grand Duchy's southwestern corner. Of the Lithuanian dioceses, that of Samogitia was of medium size – by the Commonwealth's standards – and averagely endowed. However, the bishopric of Smolensk (cut down following the loss of vast swathes of territory to Muscovy in 1667) contained just three parishes, but they were gigantic – over 4000 square kilometers each. The bishop of Livonia ministered to about thirty parishes in the Lithuanian-Polish condominium of Livonia and the

B. Skinner, *The Western Front of the Eastern Church: Uniate and Orthodox Conflict in 18th Century Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia*, DeKalb, IL, 2009, p. 76-87.

⁷ Flaga, *Działalność duszpasterska zakonów*, p. 128-38; J. Kłoczowski, "Zakony męskie w Polsce w XVI–XVIII w.", in *Kościół w Polsce*, vol. 2, p. 483-730, at 632-33, 714-17.

⁸ There is a vast literature on the Jesuits and their schools, including S. Bednarski, *Upadek i odrodzenie szkolnictwa jezuickiego w Polsce* [1933], repr. Kraków, 2003; *Jezuici a kultura polska*, ed. L. Grzebień and S. Obirek, Kraków, 1993; *Z dziejów szkolnictwa jezuickiego w Polsce. Wybór artykułów*, ed. J. Paszenda, Kraków, 1994; *Wkład Jezuitów do kultury i nauki w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów oraz pod zaborami*, ed. I. Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, Kraków and Warszawa, 2004. On the Piarists see *Wkład pijarów do nauki i kultury Polsce XVII–XIX w.*, red. I. Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, Warsaw and Kraków, 1993.

predominantly Lutheran vassal Duchy of Courland. The diocese of Vilnius, covering most of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was quite enormous. Within the Commonwealth as a whole, the only comparable diocese was that of Lutsk, which sprawled in two disjointed parts from Podlasie to the southeastern extremities of the Polish Ukraine. As one traveled southeastwards from a line connecting Grodno, Vilnius and Dyneburg, the parish network of the Latin-rite thinned out. As the distances between parishes increased – reaching above one hundred kilometers in places, so did the proportion of parishes consigned to the regular clergy. On the eve of the first partition, the diocese of Vilnius contained no less than eighty-eight parishes run by the orders – about a fifth of the total and twice the average for the Commonwealth as a whole. Even in the Ruthenian rite, dioceses were fewer and parishes significantly larger in most of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania than in the lands further south.⁹

Successive Latin-rite bishops of Vilnius, aided by their suffragans and other helpers, expended much effort in founding new parishes, raising standards of education and conduct among the diocesan clergy, and enhancing their own authority – with regard to the religious orders, and also to non-Catholics – called “infidels” (Jews, Muslims and Karaites), “heretics” (Protestants), or “schismatics” (Orthodox and Old Believers). The last synod before the partitions in the diocese of Vilnius, called by Bishop Michał Zienkowicz in 1744 passed several provisions aimed at the Jews and Protestants, while also extending episcopal control over exorcisms and the trial of suspected witches. Most of the synodal decrees expected tighter discipline and godlier conduct among the clergy, and higher standards of pastoral care.¹⁰

⁹ See S. Litak, *Atlas Kościoła łacińskiego w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów w XVIII wieku*, Lublin, 2006; W. Kolbuk, *Kościół wschodnie w Rzeczypospolitej około 1772 roku*, Lublin, 1998. As yet there is no Lithuanian counterpart to B. Szady, *Geografia struktur religijnych i wyznaniowych w Koronie w II połowie XVIII wieku*, Lublin, 2010. See also J. Flaga, *Zakony męskie w Polsce w 1772 roku*. t. 2, cz. 1, *Duszpasterstwo*, Lublin, 1991, *passim*.

¹⁰ J. Kurczewski, *Biskupstwo wileńskie od jego założenia aż do dni obecnych, zawierające dzieje i prace biskupów i duchowieństwa djecezji wileńskiej, oraz wykaz kościołów, klasztorów, szkół i zakładów dobroczynnych i społecznych*, Vilnius, 1912, p. 137-40.

The essentially post-Tridentine character of such reforms was not abandoned, but modified during the long pontificate of Zienkovicz's successor, Ignacy Jakub Massalski (1762–94). Although he called no diocesan synod, Massalski issued many decrees and pastoral letters on his own authority.¹¹ Expansion continued. Fifty-two new parishes were founded in the Diocese of Vilnius between the First Partition in 1772 and the Third Partition in 1795.¹² The great eighteenth-century expansion of the religious orders in the Commonwealth is usually thought to have come to a halt around the time of the First Partition, but the building work undertaken or continued in the 1770s and 1780s suggests that the mendicant orders in particular had plenty of confidence in their future. Gradually, sinuous late baroque and rococo splendor – epitomized by so many churches in this city – cooled into a more austere, but elegant and monumental classicism. The finest example of all is Vilnius cathedral.¹³

There were new emphases, as well as a new architectural style. Massalski's policies, like those of several bishops from the Polish Crown, can be helpfully analyzed in the wider European contexts of “enlightened Catholicism” and “Catholic Enlightenment”. The latter term remains more popular among scholars, but I would distinguish between the two.¹⁴ When Catholic goals were pursued by “enlightened” means and expressed in “enlightened” rhetoric, I would call this tendency “enlightened Catholicism”. When the goals were essentially those of an essentially secular Enlightenment, but were furthered using ecclesiastical resources in the context of a Catholic state, this is better described as “Catholic Enlightenment”. In either case, it seems essential to me to assess

¹¹ See T. Kasabuła *Ignacy Massalski, biskup wileński*, Lublin, 1998; E. Raila, *Ignotus Ignotas. Vilniaus vyskupas Ignotas Jokubas Masalskis*, Vilnius, 2010.

¹² Kasabuła, *op. cit.*, p. 388-92.

¹³ See *Lietuvos architektūros istorija. Nuo XVII a. pradžios iki XIX a. vidurio*, ed. A. Laganavičius, vol. 2 Vilnius, 1994; T. Račiūnaitė and A. Sverdiolas, *Baroque in Lithuania: Guide*, Vilnius, 2007.

¹⁴ Compare, for example, the various usages adopted in *A Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe*, ed. U. L. Lehner and M. Printy, Leiden and Boston, MA, 2010. I make this case at greater length in my own contribution to the *Companion*: “Catholicism and Enlightenment in Poland-Lithuania”, p. 297-358, here at 307-11.

eighteenth-century discourses of “enlightenment” or the “enlightened age” in their own terms. From the 1760’s onwards the Polish word “enlightenment” (*oświecenie*) was increasingly used to mean education and rational thinking rather than as a traditional metaphor for the light of Divine revelation. Its opposite, “unenlightenment”, was associated with superstition, prejudice, ignorance and barbarity.¹⁵

Massalski was the first chairman of the Commonwealth’s Commission for National Education, established in the aftermath of the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773. He had met some of the group of *philosophes* known as the Physiocrats during his voyages to France.¹⁶ With his imagination fired by their enthusiasm for lifting the rural population out of ignorance, squalor and superstition, he threw himself into the work of founding parish schools. By 1777 he claimed there were 330 such schools in his diocese. It is noteworthy that over a quarter of the newly founded schools taught girls as well as boys. During the autumn and winter months, they were taught to read and write – in Polish and either Lithuanian or Ruthenian, depending on the location – and arithmetic as well.¹⁷ The campaign was accompanied by sermons preached on public occasions by the bishop’s chief protégés – Michał Karpowicz and Wilhelm Kaliński – who under the partial influence of Physiocratic doctrine challenged the religious, moral and economic basis of serfdom.¹⁸ Moreover, a senior

¹⁵ See R. Butterwick, “What is Enlightenment (*oświecenie*)? Some Polish Answers, 1765–1820”, *Central Europe*, 3 (2005), p. 19-37; T. Kostkiewiczowa, *Polski wiek światła. Obszary swoistości*, Wrocław, 2002, p. 399-432.

¹⁶ A. Jobert, *Magnats polonais et physiocrates français (1767–1774)*, Paris 1941, *passim*.

¹⁷ Kasabuła, *Ignacy Massalski*, p. 561-83. E. Raila, “Vilniaus vyskupas Ignotas Masalskis ir katališka apšvieta: edukacijos ir pastoracijos simbiozė”, in: *Kultūros istorijos tyrenėjimai*, Vilnius, 1997, vol. 3, p. 92-146. See also A. Jobert, *La Commission d’Education Nationale en Pologne (1773–1794). Son oeuvre d’instruction civique*, Paris, 1941, p. 203-10; I. Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim, Wrocław, 1973, p. 97-116, 230-39; S. Litak, *Parafia w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku. Struktura, funkcje społeczno-religijne i edukacyjne*, Lublin, 2004, p. 299, 315-16.

¹⁸ See M. Ślusarska, “Powinność i należytość. Wzajemne relacje między właścicielami dóbr a społecznością wiejską w świetle kazań z epoki stanisławowskiej”,

clergyman in the diocese of Vilnius – Reverend Paweł Brzostowski, conducted the Commonwealth’s best-publicized experiment in enlightened rural reform, encompassing cash rents, education, and even a peasant militia.¹⁹ Few lords were prepared to follow his example. Many of the schools founded by the bishop failed to survive – victims of peasant indifference and economic interests, noble hostility and intimidation, and the diocesan clergy’s own lack of enthusiasm.

The Educational Commission was more interested in secondary schools – for nobles. Massalski was ousted from the helm of the commission when financial malefactions came to light. Within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania the main educational impetus now came less from the bishop than from the reformed university of Vilnius – formerly the Jesuit’s principal academy in the Commonwealth, now renamed the Principal School of Lithuania. Among the professors there were many ex-Jesuits, who on the whole worked harmoniously with Piarists, secular priests, and laymen. Many former Jesuits continued their work in secondary schools, and most of the school visitors were also former members of the Society of Jesus. As a result, the conflicts between ex-Jesuits and other teachers, and between the expectations of noble parents and reformist pedagogues, were far less intense in the Grand Duchy than they were in the Polish Crown.²⁰ As Massalski’s moral authority among both clergy and laity eroded in later years, so the star of the rector of Vilnius University rose. Marcin Poczobut was widely respected – as a famous astronomer (a Fellow of the Royal Society in

in: *Dwór, plebania, rodzina chłopska. Szkice z dziejów wsi polskiej XVII i XVIII wieku*, ed. M. Ślusarska, Warsaw, 1998, p. 69-102.

¹⁹ Compare: E. Rostworowski, “Reforma pawłowska Pawła Ksawerego Brzostowskiego (1767–1795)”, *Przegląd Historyczny*, 44 (1953), p. 102-152 with J. Bartyś, *Rzeczpospolita Pawłowska na tle reform włościańskich w Polsce w XVIII wieku*, Warsaw, 1982; M. Górka, “Paweł Ksawery Brzostowski – autoportret ustawodawcy i mecenaś”, in: *Dwór, plebania, rodzina chłopska*, p. 103-21.

²⁰ Some older work, including that of Ambroise Jobert, was heavily influenced by the “black legend” of the Jesuits and ex-Jesuits that gained currency in the early nineteenth century. But see Szybiak, *Szkolnictwo*, and J. Kamińska, *Universitas Vilmensis. Akademia Wileńska i Szkoła Główna Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego 1773–1792*, Pułtusk and Warsaw, 2004.

London), as a priest known for his undemonstrative but genuine piety, as a patriot, and as a leader.²¹

The new style was also felt in inter-confessional relations. Massalski insisted that parish missions should avoid abuse of non-Catholics.²² The greater degree of toleration in the later eighteenth century did not please all clergymen – the sixty-five-year old rector of Kaunas complained in 1782 that Lutheran and Calvinist immigrants from the Kingdom of Prussia were buying up houses in town from Catholics, and employing Catholic servants, who “having heard heretical errors from their masters, weaken greatly in the true religion and boldly assert, that the Lutheran faith is as good as the Catholic.”²³

The enthronement of Massalski in Vilnius cathedral also coincided with a significant relaxation of attitudes towards Jews among the higher clergy in the Commonwealth. This followed the report by Cardinal Lorenzo Ganganelli (the future Pope Clement XIV) which condemned the blood libel – the belief that Jews ritually murdered Christian children.²⁴ Massalski rarely refused such requests to build or extend synagogues, although he also liked to show who was in charge – he would usually specify that the synagogue should not compete with the town’s church in size or style.²⁵

Massalski also discouraged efforts to convert Jews to Catholicism, believing that the converts were not worth the trouble.²⁶ Many of

²¹ See M. O’Connor, “Oświecenie katolickie i Marcin Poczobut SJ”, in *Jezuici a kultura polska*, ed. L. Grzebień and S. Obirek, Kraków, 1993, p. 41-49; E. Rabowicz, “Poczobut, Marcin”, *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 27, Wrocław, 1982, p. 52-62. The many letters addressed to Poczobut as rector and so preserved in Vilnius University Library (Fondas 2) testify to his exceptional moral authority.

²² Kasabuła, *op. cit.*, p. 440-49.

²³ *Vyskupo Ignoto Jokūbo Masalskio Kauno dekanato vizitacija 1782 m.*, ed. V. Jo-gėla, Vilnius, 2001, p. 88-90.

²⁴ See Z. Guldon and J. Wijaczka, “The Accusation of Ritual Murder in Poland 1600–1800”, *Polin*, 10 (1997), p. 99-140.

²⁵ Kasabuła, *Ignacy Massalski*, p. 477-84. Cf. M. Grzybowski, “Kościelna działalność Michała Jerzego Poniatowskiego biskupa płockiego”, *Studia z Historii Kościoła w Polsce*, 7 (1983), p. 5-225, here at 46, 154.

²⁶ Quoted after Kasabuła, *Ignacy Massalski*, p. 484.

those who converted could not cope with uprooting and exclusion from their own communities. From 1783, the bishop laid down formal procedures for the examination of all Jews (and Muslims) wishing to be baptized in the diocese of Vilnius. He also forbade his priests to baptize Jewish children without their parents' consent.²⁷ Massalski even tried – not entirely successfully – to suppress the Mariavites in 1773.²⁸

Changes were also felt in the style of worship. Although Massalski was personally fond of ceremonious liturgy and rich musical accompaniment, for others he favored the simpler, more participatory style advocated by Ludovico Muratori. Indeed, Muratori's *Della regolata divozione dei Cristiani* was translated into Polish in Massalski's circle.²⁹ The bishop's salon gathered a sometimes worldly circle of learned clergymen for stimulating conversation and discussion, as well as cards.³⁰ Massalski strongly opposed ascetic practices such as flagellation, and, like some bishops in the Polish Crown and elsewhere in Europe, sought to turn devotional and penitential (or hooded) confraternities into charitable ones. Visitation records show the effects. We can read, for example, that in the parish of Kavarskas in 1784 "after the hoods had been abolished

²⁷ See *Ibidem*, p. 484-91, and J. Goldberg, "Żydowscy konwertyci w społeczeństwie staropolskim", in: *Spółczesność staropolskie. Studia i szkice*, vol. 4, ed. A. Izydorczyk and A. Wyczański, Warsaw, 1986, p. 195-248, here at 218-29.

²⁸ Goldberg, "Żydowscy konwertyci", p. 212-13. The Mariavite congregation, despite its rapid growth, still had only sixty sisters and very few material resources. The order's visitor journeyed to Rome, whereupon the Apostolic See refused to recognize the bishop's suppression. Finally in 1788 Massalski agreed to a renewal of the congregation's activity within the Diocese of Vilnius. M. Borkowska, "Dzieje zgromadzenia Mariae Vitae czyli mariawitek", *Nasza Przyszłość*, 93 (2000), p. 107-152, here at 124-33. Eadem, *Zakony żeńskie w Polsce w epoce nowożytnej*, Lublin, 2010, p. 348-55.

²⁹ Ludovico Muratori, *O porządnym nabożeństwie chrześcijan*, trans. Mateusz Tokało, Vilnius, 1787. On Muratori and his influence elsewhere, see O. Chadwick, *The Popes and European Revolution*, Oxford, 1981, p. 395-402; J. Van Horn Melton, *Absolutism and the Eighteenth-Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria*, Cambridge, 1988, p. 76-83.

³⁰ The atmosphere was recorded by one of those talented priests, W. Kaliński, in his *Dziennik*, ed. Łukasz Kurdybacha, Wrocław, 1968, *passim*.

they neglected the confraternities, and they only manage to assemble to assist at monthly processions.”³¹

For several decades, the interests of the Catholic Church in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania seemed compatible with the cause of “enlightenment”. A synthesis between the tasks set down by the Tridentine Fathers and the fashionable discourse of light, reason and even tolerance seemed achievable.³² Of course there were tensions, but compared to the situation in France, and still more so to the confrontational atmosphere of the nineteenth century, such tensions could still be managed. Freemasonry provides a good example.

For more than two centuries Freemasonry has been condemned as anti-Christian, and in particular, anti-Catholic. A respected historian of Polish spirituality could not conceive how a Freemason, Tadeusz Matuszewic, could translate the *Imitatio Christi* by Thomas à Kempis into Polish.³³ Before the French Revolution, such things were less surprising. As Derek Beales has argued, citing two abbots of Melk who were buried in their masonic aprons, “Many modern writers cannot shake themselves free from the assumption that all Freemasons must have been anti-Catholic, anti-clerical and, still more, anti-monastic [...] In the 1780s it was clearly possible to be both a Mason and a pillar of the Catholic Establishment.”³⁴

In the Commonwealth, during the second half of the eighteenth century, Freemasonry facilitated contacts between Poles and foreigners, soldiers and civilians, royalists and republicans, laymen and clergymen, Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox, patrons and poets, and nobles and wealthy burghers, albeit in a strictly hierarchical environment.

³¹ *Ukmergės dekanato vizitacija 1784 m.*, ed. S. Jegelevičius, Vilnius, 2009, p. 29. Cf. *Vyskupo Ignoto Jokūbo Masalskio Kauno dekanato vizitacija 1782 m.*, p. 108. For European comparisons, see Chadwick, *The Popes and European Revolution*, p. 33-41.

³² M. Ślusarska, “Oświeceniowe modele biskupa, plebana i parafii. Kontynuacja czy zmiana tradycji?”, in: *Dwór, plebania, rodzina chłopska*, p. 37-53.

³³ K. Górski, *Zarys dziejów duchowości w Polsce*, Kraków, 1986, p. 266.

³⁴ D. Beales, “Mozart and the Habsburgs”, in: *Idem, Enlightenment and Reform in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, London, 2005, p. 99-100. See *Idem, Joseph II*, vol. 2, p. 526-43.

Ladies had separate lodges. Freemasonry undoubtedly carried the cachet of “enlightenment”, it was fashionably philanthropic, and was a form of sociability for those considered themselves opposed to “fanaticism”, “superstition” and “dark ignorance”. Its language and symbols were full of light – not least the triangular eye of Divine Providence. However, not everything that was “enlightened” was rational, let alone materialist. Freemasonry was in its own way liturgical and even mystical. Some masons were keen on alchemy and the occult. Such tendencies had as little in common with a rationally defined Enlightenment as they did with the orthodox teaching of the Catholic Church.

Popes Clement XII and Benedict XIV condemned membership of or assistance to masonic organizations in 1738 and 1751. In 1780 the chapter of the Vilnius cathedral quoted these bulls, when it stated that rumors that some canons and prelates were Freemasons were a “calumny”. However, the chapter added prudently that if any of its members was a Mason, he should immediately abandon “this shameful sect.”³⁵ The rumors were well founded. Canons, prelates and other senior clergymen in the diocese of Vilnius held high office in Lithuanian Freemasonry – which was growing rapidly at this time.³⁶ Although some Polish-

³⁵ Jan Kurczewski, *Kościół zamkowy, czyli katedra wileńska w jej dziejowym, liturgicznym, architektonicznym i ekonomicznym rozwoju*, vol. 3, Vilnius, 1916, p. 372-73. The author’s sulphurous commentary reveals just how difficult it was after the French Revolution to accept that a priest could be a Mason, or sympathize with Freemasonry: “in the eighteenth century the chapter had to cast off the suspicion of supporting Freemasonry and prevent this delusive and harmful sect from spreading. It had spread itself in the Crown, and transplanted to Lithuania found here numerous devotees, fantasists and idlers, fond of novelties and comedies. When Freemasonry acquired status among intellectuals and in the salons of the great lords, it began to be murmured, not only in the salons, but among the populace, that some members of the Vilnius chapter belonged to this sect and frequented masonic meetings.” Kurczewski, *Biskupstwo wileńskie*, p. 121-22.

³⁶ They included the canons of Vilnius Nikodem Puzyna and Antoni Michniewski, and Massalski’s helpers Ignacy Houwalt and Stefan Roussel, both canons of Livonia. However, Hieronim Stroynowski, who would later become Bishop of Vilnius himself, left the movement when he took higher orders. S. Małachowski-Lempicki, *Wolnomularstwo na ziemiach dawnego Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego 1776–1822. Dzieje i materiały*, Vilnius, 1930, repr. Warsaw, 2005, p. 3-10, 158, 165.

Lithuanian clergymen, and even some laymen, were already denouncing Freemasonry as a conspiracy against the Catholic Faith, such polemicists were at the margins of the Church, and not, as in the early nineteenth century, in its mainstream. Even those hierarchs who were ill-disposed towards Freemasonry, such as the papal nuncio Giovanni Archetti, preferred to avoid confrontations with the movement.³⁷

However, by the last years of Massalski’s pontificate, coinciding with the French and Polish Revolutions, the dangers presented to the Church by the “enlightened age” came to seem greater than the opportunities it offered to advance the cause of religion. In Warsaw, the Commonwealth’s parliament imposed double taxation on the clergy, compared to the lay nobility, and moved to confiscate some episcopal property to pay for a larger army.³⁸ Although the anti-clericalism of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility had a long and traditional pedigree, clergymen increasingly associated criticism of the clergy and calls to reorder its property with the baleful influence of an age that had the presumption to call itself “enlightened”.

One example must suffice here. On the feast of Saints Peter and Paul in 1789 Michał Karpowicz used strong language, partly borrowed from a pamphlet, when he accused critics of the clergy of seeking to overthrow religion in the name of a so-called “enlightenment”:

These unbelieving debauchees sow their opinions, infected with the venom of debauchery, under the appearance of enlightenment, they undermine virtue, they inflame and unchain all the passions of hearts, they set alight the most dreadful intentions and crimes, they break the bonds of human society, they bring honest souls to fear and despair, and covering all this with the mask of zeal for the public good, they place the

³⁷ On April 5, 1780, G. Archetti reported the progress of Freemasonry, especially in Vilnius, to the secretary of state, Cardinal Opizio Pallavicini. The nuncio warned that because, among other things, of the many “*Moscoviti*”, especially army officers, in Vilnan lodges, publishing “*le fulminate scomuniche*” in churches would be “*un espediente quanto inutile, altrettanto pericoloso*”. The Bishop of Poznań and Warsaw, Antoni Okęcki, was said to hold a similar opinion. *Ibidem*, p. 167-68.

³⁸ See W. Kalinka, *Sejm Czteroletni*, 2 vols., 4th edn, Warsaw, 1991; R. Butterwick, *The Polish Revolution and the Catholic Church, 1788–1792: A Political History*, Oxford, 2012.

flattering perspective of the happiness of the Fatherland in the overthrow of the authority of the Church, in the dissolution and oppression of the altar, and in the absorption of the properties and estates of the clergy!³⁹

This did not mean, however, that Karpowicz had abandoned the discourse of “enlightenment”. Preaching a sermon to the Lithuanian Tribunal, when it swore to uphold the Commonwealth’s new constitution on March 15, 1792, he set out a vision of almost unlimited progress: “Enlightened *education* under the supervision of the nation, then, is confirmed by our happy Constitution; what happy posterity does it promise to future centuries?”⁴⁰

The endorsement of the Commonwealth’s new Constitution as a monument to the nation’s “enlightenment” was tinged with warnings that irreligion might provoke the withdrawal of Divine favor. But ambivalence towards the tendencies of the age could cut both ways. The counter-revolution that triumphed in the summer of 1792 tried to harness religious discourse and fear of the French Revolution in its propaganda. Bishop Massalski issued a strongly worded pastoral letter against irreligious books. In warning his clergy against political agitation, he also stated that “the Word of God is strong and wisest in

³⁹ M. F. Karpowicz, *Kazanie o władzy Kościoła, jak jest narodom zbawienna, i o majątkach Kościołów, jak narodom są użyteczne w dzień ŚŚ. Apostołów Piotra y Pawła w Wilnie na Antokolu w Kościele Kanoników Lateranenskich miane 1789*, p. 9-10. For a bilingual edition of some of Karpowicz’s sermons, see M. P. Karpavičius *Rinkiniai pamokslai*, ed. and trans. Kristina Mačiulytė and Regina Jakubėnas, Vilnius, 2003. W. Skarszewski, *Odpowiedź plebana na nowe zarzuty przeciwko duchowieństwu polskiemu*, s.l. 1789, p. 3. See M. Ślusarska, “Sejm Czteroletni w okolicznościowym kaznodziejstwie lat 1788–90”, in: *Ku reformie państwa i odrodzeniu moralnemu człowieka. Zbiór artykułów i rozpraw poświęconych rocznicy ustanowienia Konstytucji 3 Maja 1791 roku*, ed. Piotr Żbikowski, Rzeszów, 1992, p. 65-80, here at 69-70; R. Butterwick, “Between Anti-Enlightenment and Enlightened Catholicism: Provincial Preachers in Late Eighteenth-Century Poland-Lithuania”, in: *Peripheries of the Enlightenment*, ed. R. Butterwick, S. Davies and G. Sánchez Espinosa, *SVEC*, 2008:1, p. 201-28, here at 216-18.

⁴⁰ M. F. Karpowicz, *Na zaprzysiężeniu uroczystym Ustawy Rządowej 3. i 5. maja od Trybunału G. W. X. L. jego palestry, kancelaryi, y chorągwi trybunalskiej w dniu 15. marca roku 1792. w Kościele Akademickim S. Jana w Wilnie Kazanie...*, Vilnius, 1792, p. 9-10.

its Evangelical simplicity” – just as he had been urging for decades. In some ways the Bishop of Vilnius continued to promote an enlightened strain of Catholicism.⁴¹

The model priest promoted by “enlightened Catholicism” was expected to care for the bodies and minds, as well as the souls, of his parishioners, and to contribute to the “enlightenment” of his own flock and perhaps even the public at large. He should live respectably but not luxuriously, perform public duties, and comfort the afflicted and oppressed, while convincing peasants to obey their masters. He should live on polite terms with those of other confessions, but he was also to uphold religious observance, and preach the Gospel with “Evangelical simplicity”, setting a moral example in his own lifestyle.

The enlightened Catholic response, first to the challenges presented by the implementation of the Tridentine reform, and later to the excesses of the “enlightened age” itself, continued well into the nineteenth century. Of course Catholic and “enlightened” discourses underwent severe polarization from the 1790’s onwards. But pastoral work changed much less, even after the destruction of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. While Russian rule placed Catholicism of both rites on the defensive against Orthodoxy in the Ruthenian parts of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in the north and west of the country the Catholic Church of the Latin rite was well placed to extend its qualitative hold on its flock, well beyond the noble elite. The characteristic popular piety of the mid- and later nineteenth century – among speakers of both Lithuanian and Polish – was built on foundations laid in the “enlightened age.”⁴²

⁴¹ I. Massalski, *Calemu duchowieństwu...*, Vilnius, September 21, 1792.

⁴² See, *inter alia*, A. Prašmantaitė, *Žemaičių vyskupas Juozopas Arnulfas Giedraitis*, Vilnius, 2000.