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CALVIN AND EASTERN EUROPE: WHAT HAPPENED?

By James R. Payton

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As people in North America think about the Reformation in this 500th anniversary year of John Calvin's birth, their thoughts usually do not head very far eastward from Geneva and Switzerland. We know, of course, that the Reformed tradition took root in Germany and led to the composition of the Heidelberg Catechism in 1563. We may also remember the subsequent tensions the Reformed presence occasioned in the Holy Roman Empire: only Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism had been accepted as legal religions by the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. In 1618 these tensions led to the Thirty Years' War—a three-way, ostensibly religious war. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which brought an end to it, also accorded legal standing to the Reformed. There can be no question that the Reformed version of Protestantism thus had a huge impact, in a variety of ways, in the Holy Roman Empire. But what the eastern limits of the Holy Roman Empire might have been at the time would be a mystery to many of us, so how far eastward Calvin's teaching had traveled would be guesswork. We probably know about the Hungarian Reformed Church, though—so, we know that it spread at least into Hungary.

But in North America, our awareness of Eastern Europe typically stops about there. Like the medieval maps, our minds may note: "Beyond be dragons." Of course, there are no dragons, although there are problems and challenges aplenty as one explores the region's fascinating and complicated history. It is worth noting that the history of the Reformation in the region has not yet attracted much attention from scholars, who have usually stayed on more familiar Western European terrain.¹ But the Protestant Reformation burst into Eastern Europe, and as it did, the Reformed wing of Protestantism was accorded favored status in most of the region. Figuring out why that was the case has been an intriguing quest; understanding why those impressive Reformed beginnings were so quickly rolled back has also been a challenge.

¹ As Andrew Pettegree and Karin Maag comment, "It is a curious fact that one can read most general histories of the Reformation without being strongly aware that there *was* a Reformation in Eastern Europe" ("The Reformation in Eastern and Central Europe," 1-18 in Karin Maag, ed., *The Reformation in Eastern and Central Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), 1; a welcome exception to this observation is Philip Benedict's *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), which includes a chapter, "Eastern Europe: Local Reformations Under Noble Protection" (255-280); as confirmation of the general observation, though, cf. the situation noted in the introduction to Mack P. Holt, ed., *Adaptations of Calvinism in Reformation Europe: Essays in Honour of Brian G. Armstrong* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2007), that Calvinism had entered into Eastern Europe (1) but that the wide-ranging treatment in the volume did not include even one article on that Eastern Europe phenomenon (4); I have expressed cautious hope that over the next few decades Reformation scholarship will pay more attention to Eastern Europe in "The Reformations in Eastern Europe," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 40 (2009):268-270; I have tried to live up to that hope in *Getting the Reformation Wrong: Correcting Some Misunderstandings* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2010).

Beginning in the 1540s, the teaching and influence of Calvin² spread throughout much of Eastern Europe.³ To be sure, the lands historically rooted in Eastern Orthodoxy—using today’s designations, that would include Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia—usually had little direct interaction with Protestantism in any form:⁴ the Protestant Reformation, after all, was a response to the problems within Western Christian teaching and practice, not to Eastern Orthodoxy—which was in most regards significantly “other” than Western Christianity. But the Protestant message took root in all the Eastern European nations which had been drawn within the orbit of Western Christendom: Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bohemia (today’s Czech Republic), Slovenia, and Croatia. The Reformed faith received an especially warm welcome in all these areas. Reformed Protestants in the 21st century may be surprised to discover how widespread and deep that reception was—and how quickly it disappeared. This paper will consider how and why the promising beginnings came to such a startling end. Finally, I will offer some information about the current size and situation of the Reformed denominations in the various nations of Eastern Europe.

EMBRACE OF THE REFORMED FAITH IN EASTERN EUROPE

The first Eastern European country in which we have sure evidence of early welcome of the Reformation is Hungary.⁵ Luther’s writings found numerous readers among the German-speaking inhabitants of the towns and cities. Protestantism took deep enough root that already in 1531 a Protestant seminary was established in Sárospatak⁶—some two years before Calvin became a Protestant himself.

By then, Hungary had been swallowed up into the Habsburg holdings: with the death of the King of Hungary and Bohemia, Louis II, at the Battle of Mohacs in 1526, the throne passed to the Habsburg ruler of Austria, Ferdinand I, in accordance with an agreement reached ten years earlier. Hungary—a state with a glorious past, in which it controlled a substantial portion of Eastern Europe—was thus swallowed up into the growing Habsburg domain. Hungary suddenly found itself with a ruler of Germanic stock. As in other countries, this was unwelcome; it played a role in the way the Reformation spread in Eastern Europe.

The Habsburgs proved to be champions of the Roman church. Ferdinand I ruled the expanded Austrian realm; his brother Charles V had become Holy Roman Emperor in 1520. The Habsburgs were not uncritical supporters of Rome, to be sure: they wanted to see significant reform within the Roman communion. This did not make them sympathetic, though, to the Protestant movement: at every turn, they sought to thwart it.

² Focusing on Calvin is not meant to overlook the significant contributions of Heinrich Bullinger in disseminating Reformed teachings in Eastern Europe, which deserves more consideration than scholars have given to it to date. Even so, Calvin’s influence ended up predominating in Eastern Europe as the Reformed faith took root in the region.

³ For much of the material in this presentation, I am indebted to the introduction in Maag, 1-18.

⁴ This is not to say that there was no influence: in this regard, see my “The Influence of the Reformation on the History of Ukraine,” *Journal of Ukrainian Studies* 28 (2003):105-117.

⁵ I am indebted for some of the following material on the progress of the Reformation in Hungary to Ferenc Szakály, “The Early Ottoman Period, Including Royal Hungary, 1526-1606,” in Peter F. Sugar, Péter Hanák, and Tibor Frank, ed., *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 93-94.

⁶ This seminary continued to train ministers until 1948, when the Communist rulers closed it down; the seminary’s library holdings, which include some important early Protestant writings, were protected, however. In 1989, with the collapse of Communism in Hungary, the seminary in Sárospatak was returned to the Reformed Church of Hungary; since that time, students are again being prepared there for ministry. M. Eugene Osterhaven has produced an informative brochure of twenty-seven detailed pages, “Kollegium: The story of Sárospatak” (Holland, Michigan: Holland Litho Services, n.d.), on which I rely for much of the information on the spread of the Reformed faith in Hungary.

In the face of this – and, given the Hungarian resentment toward their Germanic Habsburg rulers, perhaps even because of it – Protestantism continued to grow in Hungary. The fact that Lutheranism found its mainstay in another German, Martin Luther, served to take the sheen from Lutheranism for most Hungarians, though. This was at least a significant factor in making the Reformed tradition more attractive, for it came with no German “baggage.”⁷ Calvinism also allowed for resistance toward unjust rulers in a way that Lutheranism did not; the resentment toward the Habsburgs, both as champions of Rome and as Germans, served to make the Reformed tradition more appealing.

When Calvin’s teachings began entering Hungary in the late 1540s, they quickly attracted large numbers to the Reformed banner. By 1600, 90% of the population had embraced the Reformed faith; in the same year, the Roman Catholic Church had one printing press producing its literature in Hungary, while the Hungarian Reformed Church had twenty-eight of them. Of the 275 religious books published in Hungary between 1527 and 1600, 244 were by Protestant (mostly Reformed) authors. The Reformed presence in Hungary was so overwhelming that in 1608, the Habsburg ruler – like his forebears, vigorously committed to Rome – found it necessary to legalize Protestantism in Hungary.

Bohemia (approximately the contemporary Czech Republic) also found itself within the Austrian realm because of the death of Louis II in 1526. This was even less welcome in Bohemia than in Hungary. By then, Bohemia already had a long history of resentment toward Germans, dating back to the 12th century, when Bohemia’s king had invited German merchants and factory owners to settle in his country and build up its economy. This led eventually to German dominance within Bohemia in the economy, the hierarchy of the Church, and the upper echelons of government. Resentment grew among the Bohemians and reached a fever pitch in the early 15th century, when the vigorous preaching and writing of John Hus galvanized their indignation: while Hus did not directly engage the German issue, his criticism of corruption in the Church was taken by many Bohemians also as opposition to the Germans who dominated the upper levels of the Bohemian church (and everything else). Hus’ execution in 1415, in violation of the safe conduct promised by the Holy Roman Emperor – ironically, the ruler of the chief *German* state – led to armed conflict: the Hussites broke out in rebellion and established their independence for a time.

Eventually, the hostilities died down and the Hussite rebellion came to an end. Suspicion of Germans nonetheless remained high, and Bohemia turned to the Polish royal house for its rulers – including the ill-fated Louis II, who died in 1526 at the Battle of Mohacs. With this, Bohemia found itself again under German rule. By then, Luther’s teachings had begun to make inroads in Bohemia. Similarities between Luther’s and Hus’ teachings initially attracted numerous Bohemians, and the opportunity to resist their Habsburg rulers by becoming Protestant made the option even more appealing to the leading cadres of Bohemian society. Even so, the Germanic connection in Luther left a significant portion of these Bohemian Protestants uneasy; when Calvin’s teachings began to enter Bohemia in the 1540s, increasing numbers of them embraced the Reformed faith. By 1600, virtually the entire noble class had become Reformed. This was unwelcome to their Habsburg rulers; the tensions which ensued boiled over a few years later in what proved to be the beginning of the Thirty Years’ War.

As the 16th century began, Poland was one of the largest of the nations in all of Europe, but although it had a king, it was also one of the most decentralized. The nobles had managed to retain

⁷ Pettegree and Maag, 10. Even so, a Hungarian Lutheran Church continued and has survived to the present day; it is much smaller, though, than its Reformed counterpart.

their powers by limiting those of the monarch. During the 16th century a constitution evolved in Poland which made the monarch basically a spokesman for the *Sejm* (the Parliament), composed of nobles. The constitution enshrined the nobles' powers: in the *Sejm*, with its 150 appointed members, if only one noble voted against any proposed piece of legislation, it was defeated. The nobles held the real control in the country; this made for an open door for the Reformation as it began to enter Poland. The nobles' determination to seek their own advancement, though, helped to close it, as we will see.

It was not until the 1540s that the works of the Protestant reformers began to be disseminated in Poland. The writings of Luther, Calvin, and others were eagerly read by many. Even King Sigismund II Augustus for a while regularly heard Calvin's teachings. When Bona Sforza traveled to Poland to become queen there, the Roman Catholic priest who accompanied her was Francesco Lismanino, who was drawn toward Calvin's views while in Poland. Sometime after 1546, Lismanino began reading portions of Calvin's *Institutes* twice a week to Sforza's son, by then the king.⁸ Whatever impression this made on him, though, he did not end up favoring Protestantism in general or the Reformed tradition in particular.

Several Polish cities and a high percentage of the nobility did turn to Protestantism, though;⁹ this set them over against the Polish king and others who remained within the Roman obedience. After 1572, when the last king of the Jagiellonians—the historic Polish royal dynasty—died, the nobles secured an arrangement in which they elected future kings; this, of course, further consolidated their control of the nation, at the expense of the monarchs. Royal opposition to alternative confessional commitment was virtually impossible to enforce in such a situation, and the Protestant Reformation spread widely. Already by 1569, half of the members of the Polish Senate, composed of the noble elite, were Protestant. By 1580, there were some 1000 Protestant churches in Poland, divided about equally between Lutherans and Calvinists. By 1591, one in every six churches throughout Poland was Protestant.

Lutheranism found its acceptance within Poland primarily in areas with mostly German inhabitants. The rest of Poland had a Slavic heritage; the Poles well remembered the centuries-long conflicts with the Teutonic Knights (who had embraced Lutheranism in 1525 when their order was secularized and became Ducal Prussia, a smaller neighboring state). The Poles were not at all keen on identifying too readily with anything notably German; the fact that Calvinism was more international in heritage made it the preferred choice for Poles who turned to Protestantism. The Protestant pattern in Poland, for the most part, was constant: in the German enclaves Lutheranism prevailed, but in the rest of Poland the Reformed tradition predominated. The preponderance of those who embraced Calvinism were from the nobility, the leading class in the country. By 1600, half of Poland's nobles had become Protestant; of those who were Slavic rather than Germanic in heritage, most were Calvinists.

OPTING FOR THE REFORMED FAITH

Some readers may be getting uncomfortable that I have focused so far on considerations

⁸ Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide*, expanded ed., trans. Lyle D. Bierma (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 201.

⁹ For the details in the material that follows, I am relying on Janusz Małek, "The Reformation in Poland and Prussia in the sixteenth century: similarities and differences," in Maag, 182-191; and Michael G. Müller, "Late Reformation and Protestant confessionalization in the major towns of Royal Prussia," in Maag, 192-210; for a good overview of the course of the Reformation in Poland, see Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way: A Thousand-Year History of the Poles and their Culture* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1987), 75-91.

of ethnic heritage or challenge to rulers as rationale for embracing Protestantism and, more particularly, its Calvinist stream. I am not implying that those Eastern Europeans who turned to Protestantism were unconcerned with questions of truth and doctrinal faithfulness. Nor do I want to downplay the significance of doctrinal and perspectival differences between the Lutheran and the Reformed alternatives which confronted the Eastern European peoples as they made their choice. But such choices were not made in an ethereal realm of bare doctrinal ideas; those teachings had feet, and they walked on ground that had been prepared by centuries of prior history. Certain factors helped prepare the way for the Reformation in general, and its Lutheran and Reformed versions in particular, to walk.

This was not peculiar to Eastern Europe. Scholarly investigations in the Reformation as it played itself out in Western Europe have shown that decisions to embrace Protestantism there were also significantly influenced by other considerations than questions of truth and doctrinal faithfulness. For one thing, if rulers embraced Protestantism, they would be able to close the monasteries in their territories; they could then expropriate the monastery buildings and their lands. Since these often included some of the most productive farmlands and costly buildings in the territory, this was at least a temptation — one against which the reformers themselves warned. For example, in 1540, Martin Bucer (the leading Protestant reformer in Strasbourg) published a lengthy treatise, *Von Kirchengütern* (“On the Possessions of the Churches”); in it he urged Protestant civil rulers to honor the original intent of whatever bequest had led to the establishment of monasteries and the lands they had included. Bucer called on the rulers not simply to take the properties and dispose of them for their own profit, but to set up schools in the buildings or to sell them and use the proceeds to support the poor. Bucer was not imagining a possible problem; rather, he (and other leading reformers) addressed one: some rulers who turned to Protestantism had counted the cost — and evidently found it a good investment. This need not imply that they did not really care about what the Protestants taught; it just shows that other factors might well count in the final decision.

The study of the Reformation in the cities is another area of research which has produced some intriguing data in this regard.¹⁰ In the Holy Roman Empire, cities proved to be especially fertile ground for Reformation seed. Cities had long endured suspicion because they did not fit into the threefold medieval structure, supposedly God-ordained, of those who work (in the fields), those who pray (clergy), and those who fight (the nobles and knights). The medieval Church had castigated the cities severely as dens of iniquity because they seemed to thrive on the love of money, what with the urban dependence on commerce and their success in it. With that, city-dwellers had long questioned whether they had much hope of pleasing a stern God by their presumably contaminated works. But the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith sidelined the question of placating God by good works, and the Protestant teaching that all legitimate vocations are ways to serve God removed the heavy weight of suspicion. Again, the embrace of Protestant doctrine brought along other tangible benefits beyond those of truth and a purified gospel.

But there is more here relevant to our concerns. While Luther’s teaching found wide acceptance in German (and other) cities, the early Reformed (under the leadership of Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, Johannes Oecolampadius in Basel, and Martin Bucer in Strasbourg) outpaced

¹⁰ I am drawing for this treatment on the seminal work by Bernd Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation*, ed. and trans. H.C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 41-115; and on the work by Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), which carried these investigations into the cities further, examining (among other concerns) the reasons so many of them came to choose the Reformed over the Lutheran version of Protestantism.

the Lutherans in attractiveness to the cities. This continued because of and was enhanced by the teaching of John Calvin. Beyond what Luther offered, the Reformed approach also urged the 3rd use of the law — the one for guidance of Christian life and society. With the huge social upheavals occasioned by the rise of cities in the medieval period, city life needed relevant direction which the old three-fold system of society could not offer. Although Luther eschewed using the law to direct Christian life or society, the Reformed leaders saw the divine law as direction which could be applied to urban life and reshape it more in keeping with God's intentions. This offered fresh possibilities for addressing the problems distinctive to urban communities, and this served to make the Reformed segment of Protestantism more appealing to city-dwellers. With that, it is not surprising that the majority of the cities which turned to Protestantism within the Holy Roman Empire turned to the Reformed version; outside Germany, the Reformed predominance was even more evident.

With all this, I am not suggesting that choice for either Protestantism in general or for the Reformed version of it in particular was determined merely by such temporal concerns as princely greed or urban uncertainty. But we delude ourselves if we think these concerns played no role. Clearly they did in the course the Reformation took in Western Europe; *mutatis mutandis*, the same can be noted about the Reformation in Eastern Europe. People there were concerned to embrace truth and a purified gospel, indeed. But when doing so also allowed you to "stick it to" your ruler or to a dominating foreign group — well, that was just a special providence from God, to be gladly received.

DECIMATION OF THE REFORMED FAITH IN EASTERN EUROPE

In the late 1500s, the Reformed faith was flourishing in Eastern Europe. By the mid-1600s, though, it had been decimated. Reformed churches survived in the region, to be sure — but just barely. How did it come to this? We can note one important factor that played a role in all the countries we have considered. Then there are specific circumstances which led to the devastation of the Reformed movement in Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland.

The Counter-Reformation proved to be a powerful force, especially in Eastern Europe. It set out to reclaim as much territory and as many people as possible from Protestantism. The Counter-Reformation started with the coming of a genuinely reform-minded papacy in the late 1530s: under the leadership of several popes in sequence the Roman church experienced a dramatic about-face. The reform papacy finally called a council, which met at Trent in several sessions between 1545 and 1563. The Council of Trent managed to establish official Roman Catholic teaching in opposition to Protestant doctrine, on the one hand. On the other, it adopted numerous reforms which the reform papacy made sure were implemented and enforced; these met (and in some instances exceeded) the call for reform which had echoed throughout Western Christendom for the preceding nearly 250 years.

The Society of Jesus became the shock troops of the Counter-Reformation's assault on the Protestants. A young movement, only founded in the early 1540s, the Jesuits stressed rigorous education, in the finest mold then available — a scholasticism revitalized by an adoption of key elements of Renaissance humanist pedagogy and driven by the doctrine established at the Council of Trent. Jesuits became known for the excellent educational institutions they built and for a casuistry in which the end justifies the means. They played a major part in the roll-back of Protestantism in general, and the Reformed faith in particular, in Eastern Europe. What they could do, though, depended on what the civil rulers invited and allowed them to do in each country.

The Jesuits' role was strictly circumscribed in Bohemia, ruled by Habsburg Austria. The Habsburgs had been suspicious of the Jesuits and limited their activities as much as possible. So, their engagement in Bohemia played a relatively minor role in the reversed fortunes of the Reformed movement there. To be sure, the Jesuits managed to have an impact with their vigorous doctrinal challenges to the Reformed. Calvin's teachings had only been known for about a generation within Bohemia, and the Reformed there had no outstanding leaders who could match the Jesuits in debate. Among the commoners the Roman Catholic Church regained some ground in Bohemia; however, the noble class for the most part stuck doggedly to their Reformed commitment.

But when new Habsburg enactments against Reformed churches in Bohemia were instituted in 1618, the nobles reacted by storming into the Habsburg government castle in Prague and throwing the two Habsburg representatives there out the third-floor window (an act known as the "Defenestration of Prague"). They repudiated Habsburg rule, declared a Reformed prince, Elector Frederick V of the Rhenish Palatinate, king of Bohemia, and invaded Austria. However, the Habsburg forces out-flanked them and headed toward Prague. The Bohemian forces, led by the nobles, returned to defend the city. At the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, the Habsburg armies won a devastating victory over the Bohemians. Hundreds of Bohemian nobles fell on the field of battle; in the aftermath of the defeat, many hundreds of noble families fled; captured nobles were executed and their heads were mounted on pikes around the Prague Castle, where they remained for the next two years. Altogether, some 2000 Bohemian nobles and their families thus perished or fled the country.

With this, the Reformed movement in Bohemia came to a screeching halt. A handful of Protestant churches survived, but they have played a minor role in subsequent Bohemian/Czech history. With the noble class thus obliterated in 1620, Bohemians lost their leaders. Bohemian land was parceled out to the leaders of the Habsburg forces, none of whom was Bohemian. Even the Bohemian commoners, who were for the most part Roman Catholic, saw that religion had led to the destruction of their nation and any hopes for its rebirth. In the long run, this all had devastating consequences for Bohemia—today's Czech Republic, the most secularized nation in all of Eastern Europe.¹¹

In Hungary, the Habsburgs admitted the Jesuits in 1565 and allowed them freer rein than in Bohemia: since the Reformed faith had swept some 90% of the population into its churches (and not just or primarily the noble class), drastic measures were called for in Hungary. The Habsburg ruler provided endowments for Jesuits to set up and run schools and universities across the country. Providing the best education available at the time, these institutions were also the virtually required gateway for political appointments: the Habsburg ruler thus offered numerous blandishments to convert for those who sought to advance their station. Vigorous promulgation of Roman teaching by the Jesuits, met by feebler Reformed responses, led many to embrace the faith held formerly by their parents or grandparents. Over the course of the 17th century, the Counter-Reformation, led mainly by Jesuit initiatives, but enhanced by special government privileges offered to those who returned to Rome, recaptured most of the Hungarian populace. By the end of the 17th century, the percentages of adherents had become what they have remained, with little change, ever since—about 65% Roman Catholic, about 33% Reformed. Drastically reduced in size, the Hungarian Reformed Church nevertheless remains the largest surviving Reformed

¹¹ For a condensed but somewhat more detailed treatment of the Bohemian/Czech situation, see my "Religion, Nationalism, and National Identities," 49-60 in Ines Angeli Murzaku, ed., *Quo Vadis Eastern Europe? Religion, State and Society after Communism* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2009), 55-56.

denomination in Eastern Europe. During the 18th through the 21st centuries, it has played an important role among the Reformed denominations in Europe; however, that has been in the wake of the significant losses it endured in Hungary itself during the 17th century.

In Poland, the king remained committed to the Roman obedience, but a significant proportion of the nobility had become Calvinists. In late 1555, Calvin sent nine letters to selected key Polish nobles who had embraced the Reformed faith and urged them to promote the Reformation in their homeland. In that regard, he encouraged them to provide for the future of the Polish Reformed Church by setting up an academy which could train ministers and theologians, who would certainly be needed for the church to flourish. In May 1556, a Reformed church synod meeting sent a letter to Calvin asking him to come to labor among them for a time, to solidify the nascent Reformation there; they followed it up with a request to the Geneva city council to grant Calvin a few months' leave for this purpose. In March 1557, though, Calvin declined the invitation, noting that he could not leave Geneva at that point. In further letters written in 1558 and 1560, Calvin urged various Polish noble leaders who had embraced Protestantism to be fearless in their promotion and defense of the Reformation.¹² It is significant that, despite Calvin's earlier exhortation, the Polish Reformed Church had not established an institution to train clergy and theologians. This would prove to be a serious failure.

In 1560, the Polish king welcomed the Jesuits into Poland. By then, the Reformed movement had not yet had a full generation to take root and had not yet produced Polish preachers and theologians who could match the expertise of the Jesuits. The results of public disputations served to stall the growth of the Reformed faith among the Poles.

While this played a role, the king's invitation for the Jesuits to set up schools and universities throughout Poland had even greater impact. The Jesuits built them, and in short order they became the leading educational institutions in Poland, to which parents wanted to send their children. The royal family did so, and Polish noble families who had remained Roman Catholic followed their lead.

Calvinist nobles hesitated to send their children to these schools, though, fearing that the Jesuits would try to convert them to Roman Catholicism. To address this concern, the Jesuits invoked a wartime casuistry: the end justifies the means. The Jesuits saw themselves as involved in religious warfare for the souls of the Polish people. By the Jesuits' assessment, the Reformed noble parents were bound for eternal damnation, anyway; the Jesuits should try to save their children from a similar fate. So, the Jesuits assured the Calvinist nobles that they had no intention of trying to convert their children; they would simply offer them the best education they could receive. Upwardly mobile as they were, and ambitious for advancement for their children, Calvinist noble families believed the Jesuit assurances and sent their children to one or another of the Jesuit institutions. From the records available, it appears that virtually all the children of Reformed families who enrolled in one or another of these Jesuit institutions came out a committed Roman Catholic. Through all this, the nobles—Reformed and Roman Catholic alike—were focused on political manipulations which would enhance noble prerogatives and further constrict those of the king.¹³ By the time they realized what had happened, their children had returned to the Roman obedience.

By the middle of the 17th century, the Reformed presence in Poland had been virtually obliterated. A few years back, at an ecumenical conference in New York city, I met and had the

¹² De Greef, 201-202.

¹³ Zamoyksi, 86-89.

opportunity to talk with the representative appointed by the Reformed Church in Poland. During his presentation at the conference, he noted that each of the Reformed congregations in Poland could trace their history back to the 16th century—all ten of them.

REFORMED CHURCHES IN EASTERN EUROPE TODAY

Here is some information on the present situation of the respective Reformed churches in the countries of Eastern Europe. There seem to be no Reformed churches in the Czech Republic. The Unity of Czech Brethren (or Church of the Czech Brethren), traces itself to the Hussite movement but combines elements of mostly Lutheran and less of Reformed teaching and practice, though its representative has been active in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. As noted, the Hungarian Reformed Church still claims about one-third of the population of the country (according to other sources about 20% of the population of Hungary plus considerable minorities of Hungarian Reformed in Romania, Slovakia, the Vojvodina province of Serbia, and in Croatia), which comes to approximately 3,000,000 members. While some of these may be only nominal adherents, the Hungarian Reformed Church remains a large and influential church—without question, the largest Reformed denomination in all of Eastern Europe. The contrast in this regard is stark with the Reformed Church in Poland: after its potent beginnings in the 16th century, the Reformed Church in Poland today has only ten churches. All of them are small and struggling.

The story of the Reformed churches in Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, and Croatia are not covered here, except to mention briefly the Reformed Church of Croatia based on impressionistic preliminary information.¹⁴ The denomination is composed of twenty-five churches, mostly in small villages of homogeneous national backgrounds—more on that in a moment—but with a couple of larger congregations in cities. The denomination has three national “wings” in it, owing to migrations and border adjustments over the centuries: one wing is Croatian, one is Hungarian, and one is Czech (with roots in the Bohemian noble emigration after the Battle of White Mountain in 1620.) The Reformed Church of Croatia is beset by rivalries at present, owing to ecclesiastical politics as one group or another seeks ascendancy to the leading roles in the denomination. According to an ordained minister in the denomination the Reformed Church in Croatia is struggling to retain its youth and is not having much of an impact within Croatia itself; to follow the imagery, a three-winged church has difficulty flying.

Finally, there is a Reformed presence in Ukraine. To be sure, Ukraine is a historically Orthodox country, and no Reformed churches were set up in it during the Reformation era. However, subsequent endeavors in the 19th century by Calvinistic churches from various other nations managed to establish a few Reformed congregations in Ukraine (beyond the Hungarian Reformed presence in Transcarpathian Ukraine [more on which below]). They have managed to squabble incessantly with each other, however. The representative of the Reformed Church in

¹⁴ For a treatment of the Reformed tradition in Croatia, see Gene S. Whiting, *Međimurje i reformacija: prilozi poznavanju povezanosti Zrinskij, Međimurja i reformacije u drugoj polovici 16. stoljeća* [English: “Međimurje and the Reformation: Contributions to Assessing the Connections of the Zrinskis, Međimurje, and the Reformation in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century”] (Zagreb: Bogoslovni Institut, 2008). (For this information, I am indebted to Dr. Andrew Parlee, of the Novi Sad Theological Seminary, who told me about this volume, sent the information to me, and put me in touch with the author in June of 2009.); see also Jasmin Milić, *Kalvinizam u Hrvata: s posebnim osvrtom na reformiranu župu Tordinci 1862-1918* [English: “Calvinism in Croatia: With the View on the Reformed Parish of Tordinci 1862-1918”] (Tordinci: Protestantska reformirana crkvena općina Tordinci, Teološki fakultet - Novi Sad [Tordinci: Protestant Reformed Church Parish Tordinci, Novi Sad Theological Seminary]), 2006. (Dr. Dimitrije Popadic, President of Novi Sad Theological Seminary, showed me a copy of this volume in June 2009. I am grateful to him for drawing my attention to it.)

America to the various Reformed denominations in Eastern Europe¹⁵ provided the information on the Reformed churches in Ukraine a few years ago. He advised me that there are at present eight Reformed congregations in Ukraine, divided up among three denominations— with one of these congregations a denomination unto itself! On a more positive note, among the ethnic Hungarians who live in Transcarpathia, a region of the Ukraine that had previously been part of Hungary, Reformed congregations are devoting considerable attention to improving the education and social circumstances of the Roma.

¹⁵ In addition to his service in this denomination, Duncan Hanson has also been a member of the executive committee of Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe (CAREE). As a UN-endorsed non-governmental organization, CAREE is invited to send an official representative to numerous meetings in the United Nations; Duncan served CAREE in that capacity for several years.