

The miracles of the saints for a long time were not treated as a serious research topic. The believers accepted such stories as the confirmation of their beliefs, and the non-believers treated them as fairy tales, unworthy of their attention. However, for a few recent decades, the collection of miracles (*miracula*) have become to be treated seriously as a very good historical source. They show us the popular piety. They give us better insight into the opinions and worries of the ordinary Christians than the sermons and theological treatises of the Fathers of the Church. We can deduce from them what the people were afraid of, and in what they trusted. In addition, they give as a wealth of information about the everyday life.

The first collections of the miracles come from the 5th century (*The Miracles of St Stephen* from Latin North Africa, and *The Miracles of St Thecla* from Asia minor). The 6th century gives us the texts of Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great. They became very popular in the Middle Ages, which were the time of the full flowering of such collections. Poland was no exception. We have 15 preserved collections, written between the 12th and 15th century. They describe the miracles that happened through the intercession of the following saints: Adalbert, Stanislaus, Hedwig of Silesia, Werner (Bishop of Płock), Hyacinth, Kinga, Salomea, Dorothea of Montau, Prandota (Bishop of Kraków), Queen Hedwig, John Cantius and Simon of Lipnica.

In contrast to their counterparts from other European countries, the collections of the miracles of the Polish saints have not been thoroughly researched. Furthermore, the existing publications are almost entirely in Polish, and therefore unavailable to the foreign readers. This project wants to remedy that. First of all, we want to show the Polish collections of the miracles in a broader context. We will compare them not only to the texts contemporary to them, but also to the Late Antique ones, which certainly also influenced them. On the other hand, we will also take into account the influence of the Franciscan movement and of the Italian humanism.

Our research will be also helpful for better understanding the economic and social history of the Mediaeval Poland. The collections of the miracles are one of the few sources that allow to understand the people of all social strata. While the Western collections describe mainly the miracles through the intercession of the holy men, the Polish collections are unique in having holy men and women in nearly equal proportions. This opens up very interesting research perspectives.

For obvious reasons, the project is important also from the point of view of theology and the history of religion. We will try to see what impact had the miracle stories on the development of various devotions (and vice versa). Could pre-Christian practices be traced there? Is there any connection to magic? Were they used pastorally, or did they remain on the fringes of theological reflections?

Such questions could be multiplied and we will certainly do it, but a simple research agenda will be the point of departure:

1. What happened?
2. To whom did it happen?
3. How did it happen?
4. How was the story told?

We hope that answers to these questions will allow to say something new and interesting not only about the Polish saints, but also about the Polish society and Church in the Middle Ages, on a wide background of the contemporary and earlier Europe.