



BETH

**BETH Bulletin
2024**

No 02

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To Saved the Orphaned Ones: The Contribution of the Theological Library in Katowice to the Presentation of the Bibliophile Legacy of the Polish Clergy^[1]

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A book requires an owner to fulfil its purpose and remain relevant. If a book is deprived of its owner, it may be forgotten or even destroyed. The absence of a book can have serious, negative consequences for understanding the functioning of the surrounding world and its processes. Books are a source of knowledge and therefore play an important role in maintaining society's level of development. Unfortunately, situations may arise where a book loses its owner, such as when the owner passes away or when institutions close or move. When this happens, the book becomes orphaned and must be saved by individuals or institutions that are friendly to their former owners. The Theological Library in Katowice^[1] has been dedicated to this mission for many years (Uniwersytet Śląski n.d.). In this article we will present our library's contribution to preserving the bibliophile heritage of the Polish clergy.

Our library is one of the founding members of the Federation of Ecclesiastical Libraries (Fides), which currently unites 84 libraries of university theological faculties and higher seminaries in Poland (both diocesan and religious). Fides in turn belongs to BETH.

[1] This article is based on a presentation given at the BETH conference in 2023

The Theological Library in Katowice is not an independent institution, but structurally it is part of the University of Silesia – the largest university in the region, educating approximately 25,000 students. In addition to the main library, the University Library consists of six specialist departments, each located within particular faculties of the University. The resources of the Theological Library can be used not only by the community of the Faculty of Theology, but also by students and employees of other faculties of the University of Silesia, as well as by priests and nuns serving in the Archdiocese of Katowice. In justified cases, books are also lent to lay persons not affiliated with the University.

Although the Theological Library in Katowice is quite a young institution – established only two decades ago – its collection of books has been gathered over the course of a century. Its history is intertwined with that of the Katowice diocese. At the same time as the Apostolic Administration for Upper Silesia was established in 1922, two libraries were also established: one in Katowice for diocesan priests, and one in Cracow for clerics. For over 50 years, both collections grew independently. After years of effort by Katowice bishops, the seminary was moved to the diocese's capital in 1980, bringing tens of thousands of volumes of books from Cracow. The seminary library took over the diocesan collection of over 19,000 books. When the University of Silesia's Faculty of Theology was established in 2001, the Silesian seminary library was transformed into the current Theological Library for clerics, lay students, and scientists (Czakański 2004, 283-292). The Katowice Curia still finances book purchases, but the library has also acquired books funded by the University in recent years, since becoming a branch of the University of Silesia Library. As of the end of 2022, the Theological Library in Katowice contained 134,000 books, almost 28,000 journal volumes, and 5,500 documents in a special collection, including old prints. In addition, readers with a library account can use – free of charge – the electronic resources of more than 180 scientific databases (journals and books) to which the University provides access, both within the library and from home.

The collection of the Theological Library in Katowice is acquired through purchases, exchanges with other libraries, and donations. Among the donors we can distinguish three groups: the first being private individuals (such as students, University staff, authors, and bibliophiles); the second being organisations (such as church institutions, museums, associations, and publishing houses); and the third group

consisting of priests, especially those on the University staff, with specialist knowledge, who have often managed to collect a wide resource of specialised literature during their careers. It is the collections of such priests that constitute the largest part of the donations received by the library. The circumstances of their transfer are often different: the ending of an active academic career, a change of residence and the associated difficulties in transporting and finding a place for the collection in a new location, a reorganisation of a private library, or the death of its owner (Warzȃchowska 2008, 399-400). Orphaned collections come to our library most often in accordance with the wishes of their owners (often so stated in a will), or as a result of the decision of his family members or academic colleagues. In this way, the resources of the Theological Library in Katowice are enriched with valuable collections, the value of which is determined not only by rare publications, but also by the history of the collection, the person of the founder and/or current owner, and other such factors (Warzȃchowska 2008, 399-400). Of the collections taken over from priests, the three most valuable are legacies separated from the rest of the resources of the Theological Library and are kept in rooms specially reserved for them.

The best classified is the collection donated to our library by Father Professor Wincenty Myszor. The collection was donated to us after his retirement in 2012. The reasons why the Professor decided to donate his legacy to our library can be considered pragmatic. In a letter to the Library Management documenting the donation, he said: "First of all, I donate books that are currently needed by my doctoral students and myself, staying in Katowice at the retirement home. I hope that the collection of my books, kept in the Theological Library, will allow me to continue my scholarly work, in the form of technically easy loans." (Warzȃchowska 2015, 292) Along with the books, the Library also received bookshelves from the donor's apartment. This collection can be considered the most valuable in our library's resources due to the presence of many rare publications, especially foreign ones, often unavailable in other libraries in Poland. Professor Wincenty Myszor was a renowned patrologist, researcher of the history of early Christianity, as well as an expert and translator of Gnostic texts. He developed the first Polish textbook for learning the Coptic language, as well as the first Polish translation of the Gospel of Judas. He was associated with the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw and with the University of Silesia in Katowice, where he organised and directed the

Faculty of Theology, established in 2001. Professor Wincenty Myszor had a collection of highly specialised books that included around 6,000 volumes. Among them is a prized series of multilingual versions of texts from Nag Hammadi, including numerous Apocrypha (Muc 2013, 208-11).

Professor Myszor's book collection gave rise to the Patristic Reading Room, one of two specialised reading rooms which have been created in recent years at the Theological Library in Katowice. The collection was organised according to 25 thematic categories, including such criteria as type of document, geographical and cultural area, period, or scientific discipline. Importantly, the appearance of the departments in the Patristic Reading Room mirrors the original appearance of the home library of the collection donor (Muc 2017, 158-59).

Father Professor Myszor's book collection has its own separate catalogue, based on a Wikipedia template. The catalogue allows users to search for bibliographic records by the titles of individual books and series, authors' names, thematic categories, and keywords (Myszor n.d.). The Wincenty Myszor's Centre for Research on the History of the Church is responsible for maintaining this catalogue. The centre is run as a Foundation by the Professor's brother and is located in the Patristic Reading Room of our Library. The Foundation's tasks, as outlined in its statutes, include taking care of the Professor's book collection and conducting publishing activities. The Foundation has been publishing a series called 'Studia Antiquitatis Christianae' for several years, which provides patristic sources with commentary based on the collection of books in our Patristic Reading Room. Therefore, the collection not only has its legal foundation, but also provides research material for Polish patrologists.

Another interesting collection similarly separated out from the main library holdings consists of donations taken over by the Theological Library of Katowice from Father Professor Remigiusz Sobański, a world-famous canonist and priest of the Archdiocese of Katowice. Received in 2011, his legacy consists mainly of documents in the field of canon law, history, theology, and philosophy and counts about 9,000 volumes, which makes it the largest donation given to our library (Gawinek and Gawlik 2017, 34). Professor Sobański was connected with two scientific centres – Warsaw and Katowice, where he stayed, worked, conducted

research, and thus, he surrounded himself with books. For many years, the collection was divided into two apartments: in Warsaw and Katowice. After the death of the Professor, it was merged into one collection and, according to the will of the owner, it was transferred to our library (Kołodziej 2013, 203). Of great importance in the research work of Father Sobański were the overprints of various articles, speeches, homilies, interviews, and judgments announced in the press. The extensive scientific and academic contacts Father Sobański made (many fellow lawyers, canonists, and theologians from all over the world) systematically also send him their own articles, showing the Professor's international reach. These materials form a collection of several volumes. Each overprint has a precise bibliographical description with an indication of the scientific source. A characteristic feature of Father Sobański's collection is the 'added value' that does not appear elsewhere in the main Library holding. Looking through this collection, in many positions we will find remarks, notes, explanations, comments, and reflections, all handwritten in the margins by their owner. These additions show a deep analysis of the text, a great inquisitiveness on the part of the Professor, and a critical engagement with the theses contained. In these notes, the researcher shares his personal 'hot takes' and reflections while reading. Professor Sobański's notes are interesting research materials, which may indicate the method of work of a scientist and the way of his scientific investigations (Kołodziej 2013, 205-07).

The only collection that is not housed in the Theological Library in Katowice is the Collection of Father Sobański. It is kept in a room on the second floor of the building of the Metropolitan Curia, which is located opposite the Library. The room was originally used by Father Sobański as an office, and it still contains his original wooden desk from the interwar period as well as a chair and computer. Professor's personal belongings, such as gramophone platters, a briefcase for documents, and a collection of pipes from various parts of the world, are also on display in the office.

Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły's collection, donated to the Theological Library in Katowice in 2007, is completely different from those previously presented, Although like the gifts donated to our library by Father Myszor and Father Sobański, the legacy of Archbishop Wesoły has been separated from the main collection and is kept in a separate room. The Archbishop spent most of his life in Rome. He served as rector of St. Paul's church and hospice, and was a member of the Pontifical Council for the

Pastoral Care of Migrants and Travellers. As a pastor of Poles abroad he made numerous foreign travels and knew several foreign languages. All this earned him the nickname 'Bishop on Suitcases'. His collection is unique in that it is multilingual and consists of Polish works published in different countries around the world (Kołodziej 2009, 145-47). It focuses on Polish emigrant literature, covering topics such as Polish history, culture, and the pontificate of John Paul II. The collection contains many rare publications, including occasional works published by various Polish institutions operating abroad. These books are difficult to find in Polish libraries due to the low number of publications released, and the censorship during the communist period (Sąsiadek 2018, 314-17).

The reasons why Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły decided to transfer his bibliophile legacy to the Theological Library in Katowice should be obvious from the deeply established philosophy of his spiritual life. In a book interview, he expressed such sentence: "This is why a cleric studies liturgical texts in order to explain them to people. That's why he learns about life's problems to help a man in confession. That's why he reads a lot, to get the most out of life. In order to explain as it should be – short and simple – he has to know a lot, a lot to learn." (Warząchowska 2015, 282) Archbishop Wesoły's words were fulfilled, because clerics and lay students of theology often reach for publications from his collection.

The circumstances of acquiring the presented collections led to many publications containing handwritten dedications, usually written by the authors of the book for its owner. The most valuable in this respect is the collection of Archbishop Szczepan Wesoły, in which we can find about half a thousand signed works. Among them are the autographs of clergy and people from the world of science, culture, and politics, mostly Poles. For example two of the most valuable are the dedications of two Popes – both John Paul II, and Benedict XVI from the time when he was still a cardinal. In addition to the dedication of the Pope from Poland, there are also inscriptions by other saints, blessed and candidates on the altars, such as Blessed Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland between 1948 and 1981 (Sąsiadek 2018, 314-17). Today these autographs should be treated as relics.

The collections of Father Sobański and Father Myszor also contain dedications from authors, mainly associated with foreign research centres. In Father Sobański's

collection, for example, there are entries from Hans Kung, a Swiss professor of fundamental theology, and Dominique Le Tourneau, a French professor of canon law. Meanwhile, in Professor Wincenty Myszor's patristic collection, a dedication written in both the alphabet and Coptic language stands out among many others.

As we come to the end of this article, it's important to recognise the integral role that the Theological Library in Katowice plays in preserving the cultural heritage of the local community. This institution has acquired many collections of Polish clergy (other than the specifics already mentioned), which include valuable bibliophile legacies. The Library gives books without owners a new lease of life by making them available to readers, allowing them to continue their mission of disseminating knowledge and conducting research. The collections donated to our Library have been saved from dispersion, disappearance, and even destruction. The Library not only provides storage space but also professional care, including the development of the collection, cataloguing, and maintenance of damaged documents.

To maintain the completeness of the collection, books from the collections of Father Myszor, Father Sobański, and Archbishop Wesóły are not available for loan but are instead accessible only to readers in the reading room. These collections not only help students and researchers acquire specialised knowledge, but they also serve as research material for librarians, historians, and theologians. (Additionally, they can also be an excellent source of information about the lives and activities of their former owners, as noted above.)

The multilingualism of the publications and the circumstances of their acquisition and inclusion in the collections transcend national, cultural, and religious borders. Collections that were amassed outside of Poland over decades, such as the book collection of Archbishop Wesóły, have now found a home in the Theological Library in Katowice – in the heart of the diocese from which the owners of these collections originated.

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