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**Andrzej Dwojnych, Rafał Łętocha, *W stronę Królestwa Bożego na ziemi.*
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The study of Mariavitism, both in terms of history and doctrine, is a particularly scarce phenomenon if we contrast it with the scholarly literature dedicated to other trends of Christianity. Polish researchers, in particular historians, sociologists, religious scholars and political scientists, obviously devote most attention to Roman Catholicism. However, in recent years they have also extended their attentions to minority trends, especially Orthodoxy, Pentecostalism, Baptism, Lutheranism, Adventism and Methodism, to which numerous monographs and scientific articles have been devoted. It is worth considering for what reason Mariavitism is somewhat on the sidelines. As an unmistakably Polish phenomenon (and one that originated on Polish soil, which makes it unique, bearing in mind that the Polish National Catholic Church was founded in the USA), it should, after all, be more interesting than, for example, ‘imported’ Protestant denominations.

The problem seems to be much more complex than considered in the convention: native vs. implemented denominations. The trouble with Mariavitism that the researcher faces is, first of all, the necessity to face an extensive list of negative narratives against the Mariavites, most often created while the religious community was still at its origins. These stem from such Mariavite practices as ‘mystical vows’ taken between nuns and priests, the priesthood of women, or the recognition by the Felicjanów current of the “Mateczka” (Little Mother) Feliksa Magdalena Maria Franciszka Kozłowska (1862-1921) as a saint and being a female embodiment of the Holy Spirit. To this must also be added the personal excommunication by Pope Pius X in 1906 of both the “Mateczka” and the future Mariavite archbishop, Fr. Jan Maria Michał Kowalski (1871-1942), for preaching views contrary to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. However, the most difficult issue seems to be the question of scientific analysis with regard to the internal disputes – including controversial moral issues – that the Mariavites had among themselves, which resulted in a schism and the formation of two ecclesial structures: the Old Catholic Mariavite Church (Płock) and the Catholic Mariavite Church (Felicjanów).

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Undoubtedly, significant attempts at monographic presentation of selected problems concerning Mariavitism were the studies by Krzysztof Mazur, Stanisław Rybak and Edward Warchoń. The first author, in a work entitled *Mariawityzm w Polsce* (1991), introduced rather basic information about the Mariavites into scientific circulation. Rybak, in a dissertation entitled *Mariawityzm. Dzieje i współczesność* (2011), made the theme of Mariavitism as the only denomination that arose on Polish soil, which was born in the clear role of the missionary movement of moral renewal in the Roman Catholic Church. Despite many interesting observations and factual findings, however, a certain shortcoming of this book was a rather apparent apologetic perspective, resulting from its author's involvement in the Mariavite activities. In contrast, the studies authored by Fr. Professor Warchoń on the subject of Mariavitism are defined by a critical Roman Catholic perspective. Other publications were generally of a contributory nature, most often popular science.

Because of the adoption of a distanced perspective – not Mariavite and not anti-Mariavite – a completely different monograph can aspire to the rank of the most important study in historiography devoted to Mariavitism. We are talking about the work entitled *W stronę Królestwa Bożego na ziemi. Myśl społeczno-polityczna mariawitów polskich*. It was published in 2021 by the Jagiellonian University Publishing House. The book was written by two scholars: Dr. Andrzej Dwojnych and Professor Rafał Łętocha. Both authors are recognized specialists in, among other things, the political science of religion.

In addition to the historical layer, which makes up the first chapter of the monograph and brings an indication of the peculiarities of Płock and Felicjanów Mariavitism, its leading character – expressed in the following chapters – is reflected in the consideration of the Mariavite political thought. These are based on numerous sources (created mainly in 1906-1939), primarily the Mariavite press and archives of the Mariavite provenance. At the same time, it is a model contextual analysis, taking into account as much as possible all the conditions of the times in which the Mariavite doctrine was formed.

Andrzej Dwojnych and Rafał Łętocha convincingly argue the thesis that the birth of Mariavitism was primarily a reaction to the situation within the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican Council I. The components that overlapped with the moral renewal movement, on the other hand, are national liberation, romantic and messianic motives. Mariavitism even appears as an original detailed current of Polish Messianism. Although it was imbued at its source with the thought of Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Zygmunt Krasiński, Andrzej Towiański or August Cieszkowski, its representatives developed a unique concept.

The Mariavite Messianism was initially part of the apocalyptic and millenarian visions popular at the turn of the 20th century. The radical concepts of Archbishop Kowalski, later rejected by some Mariavites, should therefore be read as 'products of his era'. According to Kowalski's vision – the Slavic Pope supposedly prophesied by the national bards – Mariavitism was a stage in the evolution of the Church in the long history of

salvation. It was also a response to the crisis and decline of the Roman Catholic Church. At the same time, it was not a human response, because, as the Mariavites themselves believed, it was God Himself who spoke to people by bringing revelations to the “Mateczka” and Archbishop Kowalski. One of the manifestations of God’s blessing that descended on the Mariavites was the radiation of their teachings outside Poland (Holland, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Germany, Spain, Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, USA, Argentina, Uruguay).

However, the authors of the book under review are not so much interested in the religious dimension of Mariavitism as in its socio-political message. In this optic, the reforms introduced by Archbishop Kowalski were aimed at realizing the vision of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, which is one of the central categories in the Mariavite thought. Since Mariavitism was born during the period of partition it was naturally initially imbued with the idea of the rebirth of the Polish state. When this idea materialized in 1918, the challenge for adepts of Mariavitism became the ‘political arrangement’ of Poland (though ultimately the whole world!) in accordance with the ideal of the Kingdom of God on earth. It turned out then that the model of this Kingdom corresponded to the content formulated by thinkers and activists of various ideological and political currents, but the closest to the Mariavites were people of the left. The negative reference, on the other hand, was generally the National Democrats. Even here, however, exceptional situations could be found, as for example, in the matter of Poland’s borders, the Mariavites expressed views converging with Roman Dmowski or Jan Ludwik Popławski.

The book’s authors accurately point out the sources of political inspiration and the specific conclusions derived from them by the Mariavites. For example, in favour of promoting tolerance towards national and religious minorities, and more broadly in favour of solidarity and egalitarianism. They also explain the conditions of the Mariavite support for the foreign policy of Józef Piłsudski, and later Walery Sławek (Płock) and Edward Rydz-Śmigły (Felicjanów), or the conclusions that the Mariavites drew from their observations of Poland’s international environment. Significant in this context are the anti-Hitler thoughts of Archbishop Kowalski, as well as his – based on ‘love of neighbour – concept of the United States of Europe.

The final issue examined by Andrzej Dwojnych and Rafał Łętocha, is Christian feminism and the role of women in the Mariavite thought. Included in this section is a discussion of the Mariavite interpretation of the Holy Spirit as a female being, and the Mariavite justifications for the priesthood of women.

In conclusion, Andrzej Dwojnych and Rafał Łętocha have introduced into scholarly and reading circulation an extremely valuable monographic study devoted to Mariavitism. This groundbreaking in many respects study of the Mariavite socio-political thought should be of interest to religious scholars, historians, sociologists and political scientists. And since the book is written in a language that is highly communicative, its audience can also successfully include readers outside of the scientific community.