

Review

Aneta Sokół

Andrzej Manitius, Ks. Gustaw Manitius. *Pastor ewangelicki, męczennik za wiarę i polskość*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2015, ss. 401 (English: *Lutheran pastor, martyr for the faith and his Polish identity*).

In 2015, in Toruń, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek published a book devoted to the work of Reverend Gustaw Manitius, a pre-war parish priest of the Lutheran parish in Poznań and a Senior of the Diocese of Wielkopolska. In 1940, Reverend Manitius was murdered by the Nazi Germans for his work with the Polish Lutheran Church and his faithfulness to his Polish identity. The author of the publication is Professor Andrzej Manitius, the grandson of the Poznań priest. Andrzej Manitius is a professor in electrical engineering at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. For this project, Professor Manitius became a historian reconstructing the biography of his grandfather based on preserved documents and family memoirs. Reverend Gustaw Manitius along with his contemporary Rev. Juliusz Bursche was one of the most prominent Polish pre-1939 Lutheran pastors.

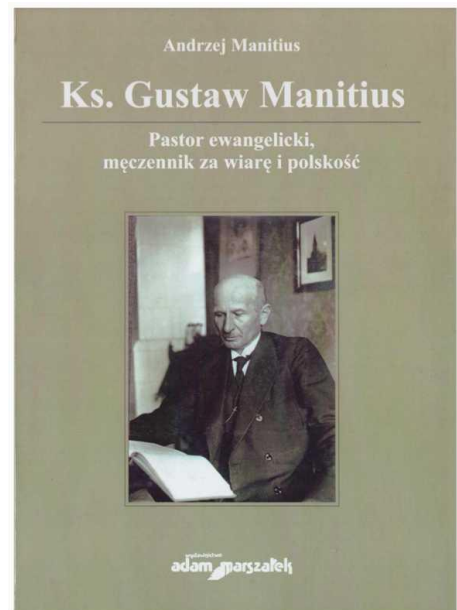
Professor Andrzej Manitius tells readers that the impetus for the biography was the desire to preserve the memory of his grandfather, who left his mark in the history of Wielkopolska Lutherans and whose name was commemorated in the year 2000 by giving his name to one of the parks in Poznań. Professor Manitius was inspired, he says, by his own participation in the commemoration celebrations; he writes in the book's introduction, "*I came to the conclusion that no one else could do [this work].*"

The research was made difficult because of the fact that no family documents had remained in the home of the Manitius family, who were evicted by the Gestapo as early as fall of 1939. Together with the church of The Holy Trinity in Warsaw, the central Polish archive of the Lutheran Church also burned in 1939, resulting in the destruction of precious documents.

Professor Manitius embarked upon an arduous collection of any information preserved, "*in the hope that a picture of Rev. Gustaw [would] emerge*" (p. 25). In the introduction, the author emphasizes that it would not have been possible to carry out the task without the kind assistance of members of the parish in Poznań and other pastors interested in the history of the Church. Professor Manitius also benefited from the help of local historians and employees of the Institute of National Remembrance, along with state archives and libraries. As a result, readers finally come to know the fate of the pastor and his family, as well as that of his parish. The 380-page biography includes numerous photographs along with its text.

As in other biographies of Lutheran pastors, the author begins by presenting the family traditions of Reverend Manitius, along with his genealogy. Early members of the Manitius family most likely originated from Hungary where, as followers of the Reformation, they were then compelled to leave for more friendly settlements. The family found one such settlement in Lusatia (near Dresden), then in Königsberg and finally in the Polish city of Płock.

Both Reverend Manitius' father (Zygmunt Otton, 1852-1911) and his grandfather (Karol Gustaw Manitius, 1823-1904) were Lutheran pastors, born on Polish soil and educated at the Dorpat University, where they belonged to the Polish patriotic student organization called Konwent Polonia. These ancestors were associated with parishes in Łódź, Konstantynów, and Warsaw, leading the bilingual Polish-German community of believers. It is worth noting that since 1895, Karol Gustaw had been the general superintendent of the Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of Poland; at the same time, he was the author of the church's publications. Reverend Gustaw



Manitius was thus born to a family already entrenched in the Polish Lutheran tradition, whose name was known and respected.

The biography's subsequent chapters bring into focus the figure of Reverend Gustaw Manitius (1880-1940) and various aspects of his activities, starting with his youth and his years of study, moving through the successive stages of pastoral ministry in Zduńska Wola (1914-1924), Poznań (1924-1939), and, finally, examining his work as a pastor working in diocesan and national forums during the period 1933-1939. The book then narrates the tragic events caused by the outbreak of war and the plot of extermination planned by the German regime, directed against Polish Lutheran pastors.

It must be emphasized that despite the lack of direct access to the documentation of Reverend Manitius, the author uses a rich spectrum of available sources related to the history of evangelism, including religious press, foreign-language literature, and relevant websites, as well as preserved family messages and published memoirs. Taking into account these details, readers can access the Reverend's years of theological studies in Dorpat, where the young Gustaw Manitius took up the role previously held by his father and grandfather. Referring to archives currently housed in the University of Tartu (formerly Dorpat), the author provides the names of professors, titles of exam subjects, and texts of selected lectures; these archives also include the handwritten work by young Manitius. This documentation illuminates the student activities performed within the framework of the Circle of Polish Theologians, a regular group of students dedicated to expanding their religious knowledge while also deepening their understanding of Polish culture and literature.

After more than a hundred years, the author has traced the subject matter of the Circle's meetings, their preferred readings, and the student presentations, the content of which included theological material and also that devoted to the Polish Reformation. This content also references works by Przybyszewski, Wyspiański, and Żeromski. The author writes, "*The five year stay [1901-1906] was of great importance in the life of Gustaw Manitius, because it gave him not only a very thorough university education, but had a great influence on broadening his horizons and knowledge...*" (p. 69).

Ordained on February 10, 1907 by the superintendent of the Church Rev. Juliusz Bursche at the Warsaw Church of The Holy Trinity, Reverend Manitius began his pastoral ministry from the Vicariate in the parishes of Lipno and Osówka (near Płock). He then was appointed a parish priest in Zduńska Wola, the industrial city of the Łódź region. The establishment of this position in Zduńska Wola was accompanied by Reverend Manitius' marriage to Maria Kleindienst (1891-1966), the daughter of a pastor from Płock. Later, the couple welcomed the births of three sons, Jan Stefan (1911), Leon (1914), and Zdzisław Oskar (1922). In the absence of any family correspondence from that period, the reader participates in a narrative given by the author himself as he conducts a kind of investigation through snippets of historical information; he pieces together a story made from texts such as official documents, church regulations, and local chronicles.

The general knowledge of the realities of history and the social customs accompanying this history allows the author to move into conjecture and speculation; he writes, "*Probably during this period, Rev. Gustaw met Maria Kleindienst, perhaps during one of the visits of Rev. Gustaw's to the house of Rev. Kleindienst*" (p. 79). With this technique, a book devoted to one pastor broadens to a discussion of pastoral traditions in general and certain norms of custom. The effect of these traditions was, among others, the marriage of women into the pastoral ministry; the author writes, "*Pastors' wives were not only family partners, mothers for children, and housewives, but most were also pastoral partners.*" These wives contributed to religious, charitable, and social activities. The image of Maria Manitius emerges from the pages of the book as one of an active parishioner, a German language teacher supporting a husband in his ministry, and a widow and finally survivor of the war years.

It should also be noted that apart from pastoral care and numerous related duties, Reverend Manitius also served Zduńska Wola as a member of the Guardianship Council, providing help to those in need during the First World War. Additionally, he was co-organizer of the local junior high school and, most importantly, the chairman of the City Council in independent Poland. The City Council, under the leadership of the Lutheran pastor, made important decisions for the city's development and its future, reflected even today in protocols and ordinances signed by Reverend Manitius.

After 14 years of service, culminating in the opening of a new nursing home for the elderly in 1923, the pastor of the Zduńska Wola undertook a more difficult mission involving the parish priest of the Lutheran parish in Poznań, accepting the challenge of leading the Polish Lutheran community living next to a large group of

followers of the German Evangelical Union Church in Wielkopolska. The author re-introduces the reader to the climate of contemporary events, presenting the situation of the Polish Lutheran Church at the beginning of the Second Polish Republic by showing the contemporary realities of Poznań. The author details the complex relationships within the Evangelical Union Church, especially concerning property claims of that church against Wielkopolska and the Polish state.

Against the background of the pre-war parish of Poznań, many prominent Poznań personalities are brought together from the worlds of science, culture, and industry (prof. Jan Bystroń, among others). These individuals supported the projects of the Polish Evangelical Society, such as the orphanage in Ligota and the Evangelical Teachers' Seminary in Ostrzeszów. The author adds that it was this group of activists who sponsored the birth of the Polish congregation in Poznań. In addition to managing the parish since 1924, Reverend Manitus led the Poznań pastoral ministry and was temporarily the administrator of the parishes in Bydgoszcz and Toruń. He belonged to the editorial board of "Głos Ewangelicki" ("Voice") and he also traveled to the Lutheran churches in the region of Wielkopolska and elsewhere in the country by rail. The author writes, *"The list of his commitments related to cultivating Lutheran churches and maintaining contacts scattered throughout the country was long and growing with passage of time"*. The stabilization of the home parish was achieved after 1928, when it established its own registered office. This certainly allowed the minister to become more involved in the affairs of the whole Church. Growing national conflicts included the claims of German pastors to exercise authority in the Polish Lutheran Church. After 1933, nationalist tendencies grew more and more evident among German Lutherans. Changes were adopted after many years of efforts, especially by the leader of the Church Rev. Juliusz Bursche, including a law regulating the relations of the Lutheran Church with the state (1936).

As a result of organizational changes, Reverend Manitus joined the Diocesan Seniors. The Senior of the Diocese of Wielkopolska was elected unanimously, a process overseen by the Bishop Julius Bursche and the ceremony of introduction of Diocesan Seniors into office in the Warsaw church of The Holy Trinity on December 14, 1937. Readers come to understand the broader aspect of the pastor's work in Poznań, which included his involvement in the organization of diocesan congregations of Lutheran youth, pastoral conferences, parish visits, participation in the editorial board of the periodical "Przegląd Ewangelicki" ("Evangelical Review"), and settling disputes related to the responsibilities of a Senior. It can be stressed that the life of Reverend Manitus and other pastors took place in parishes and pastoral work, in the diocesan forum, and also at the level of ecclesial structures connected with the larger Church.

Professor Manitus, in describing the life of his grandfather, does not lose sight of any of these forms of activity, and he does not forget the importance of family life. The period of education of the three sons of Maria and Gustaw Manitus is connected with the Poznań period, during which time Jan graduated from the Warsaw University of Technology. Leon (called Leszek) took economic studies at the University of Poznań, and also found success in the sport of rowing. In 1939, the youngest son was still in junior high school. Family memories from this time include common holiday trips to Zakopane or to Włókno Lake in the Skoki Lake District. From 1928, the Manitus family occupied a comfortable large apartment where the Reverend had his own office, including a library of about 500 books.

In the preserved documents, traces of special celebrations in the life of Reverend Manitus and his wife have survived. The author includes a description of the 25th anniversary of the ordination (1932), honored with a gold ring given to the jubilee by the Consistory. The author writes, *"This ring was somehow saved from the chaos of war and has survived to this day."* The author himself now possesses this ring as a souvenir of his grandfather's life. The second anniversary of the jubilee (1935) was also the 25th anniversary of the pastor's wedding, probably also celebrated in his family and parish.

It may be assumed that in spite of the unsettling news of the possibility of war, the life of the Poznań parish took place in 1939 according to its own rhythm: measured ecclesiastical work, charity, preparation of confirmants, and the organization of hostels. The leadership of these activities took place under the care of Reverend Manitus during meetings of the Association of Polish Academic Evangelical Youth, which allowed him to use his own experiences as a student at Dorpat. The author writes, *"These were the last happy months of the pastoral work of Reverend Gustaw"* (p. 237). The author describes visits of unknown men during the services performed by the parish pastor in Poznań, those who looked mysterious, writing down their observations in notebooks. These details provide an ominous foreshadowing of later, tragic events.

The last period of the life of Reverend Manitius and his relatives is presented against a wide background of events occurring before and during the war, especially those related to the Nazi assault on Poznań. This assault included the eviction of inhabitants and the terror delivered by the occupying authorities on those inhabitants in an organized Nazi province called Warthegau. On October 9, 1939 Reverend Manitius was arrested, as were other Polish pastors and representatives of the intelligentsia considered by the Nazi occupants as harmful. He was imprisoned with the others at the city prison at ul. Młyńska, and was eventually moved to Fort VII, an old Fortress used by the Germans.

The author tells the reader about the cave-like conditions in the fort, bad by any prison standards. The prison guard was composed of depraved SS men, who brutally and sadistically abused the prisoners. Based on the memoirs of surviving prisoners such as Edward Frankiewicz, Professor Manitius describes daily life in the camp, giving insight into what would have been Reverend Manitius' own experience of Fort VII. Thanks to survivors and their testimonies, the author recreates the last months and days of his grandfather before he was brutally shot by the Gestapo, presumably on the night of January 28, 1940.

It should be added that reading this part of the book – devoted to the last period in the life of Reverend Gustaw Manitius – allows the reader to almost touch the experience created by the torturers for the innocent. The sentence of Reverend Manitius was probably issued during an investigation conducted before the war; his activities for the Polish Lutheran Church, as well as the activities of other Polish pastors, were considered by the Nazis particularly harmful to the interests of the German people. What can be guessed, even without documentation relating the details of the prison interrogations, is that Reverend Manitius was directed to Poznań Fort VII for his unwavering commitment to Polish nationality. The religious dimension of the Polish priests' pastoral ministry had no bearing in the Nazi perception of deeds deserving punishment. Reverend Gustaw Manitius was shot for his dedication to the Polish culture and identity. During this time, Maria Manitius, evicted from the pastoral home together with her youngest son, Zdzisław, joined a group of similar refugees from the Warta Region, finally finding a place to stay with relatives in the town Skarżysko-Kamienna in central Poland. The elder sons of Reverend Manitius, Jan and Leon (Leszek), arrived in France to join the Polish Army formed there.

One of the last chapters of the book is devoted to the war and post-war fate of the pastor's family, taking into consideration the author's own memories of his father, Jan Manitius. The three Manitius brothers survived the war; Jan and Zdzisław joined their fate with Poland, while Leszek settled in Ontario, Canada. The book pays particular attention to the pastor's wife, Maria Manitius, brutally separated from her husband when he was arrested. During the occupation, she worked as a teacher, taking part in secret teaching (of Polish children) when needed; she survived the Warsaw Uprising (1944) and at the end of the war, she went to her sister's family in Skarżysko-Kamienna. Later, she returned briefly to Poznań and settled in the house of the Polish Evangelical Society (1945-1947), the same tenement house where the pastor had lived before 1939. Then she moved to Gdansk to be closer to her youngest son, dividing her time between continuing her teaching career and cultivating family ties. Of his grandmother, Professor Manitius writes, "She prepared me for Lutheran confirmation. Then she gave me many of her reflections on the Lutheran faith."

The book presents the biography of Reverend Gustaw Manitius, emphasizing his dedication to the pastoral ministry and the context of his tragic fate, as I have stressed on several occasions, "thrown" against a wide historical background, taking into account the history of the Lutheran Church and the image of the Poznań community of Polish Lutherans before 1939. In a narrower sense, readers come to know the specificity of the parish headed by Pastor Manitius, as well as his commitment to the whole Church. It is also a book about the life of the pre-war pastoral family and Lutheran traditions, including the religious, cultural, and moral formation of Polish Lutherans.

The last part of the book devoted to the memory of the Poznań pastor is a valuable component and describes the activities of the parish priest Tadeusz Raszyk (1948-2012), who initiated the naming of a park after his pre-war predecessor, Reverend Manitius. Raszyk also organized the monument commemorating the Poznań pastor, which was unveiled on June 2, 2002 by the author, Andrzej Manitius. This publication is an effective preservation of the memory of Reverend Gustaw Manitius, especially as it is delivered from his own grandson's pen. The author provides readers with a historical account, but he does so with a sincere commitment to faithfully depict the fate of his devoted Polish ancestor.

The work is richly supported by numerous photographs, mostly archival (portraits, collections, buildings, and temples), and source texts, which consist of the aforementioned diploma thesis of young student Manitius, his later sermons, letters, and press clippings. The author also provides a comprehensive bibliography of the literature referenced throughout the book.

The lack of dates on the photographs included provides a certain shortcoming; the dates could have been used to approximate the time of the photographs' origins. The book was printed carefully, in hardcover, with a photograph of its title character on the cover.

(English text final edition by Jennifer Murvin)