



Marian Dygo. *Mulier fortis. Studia nad Prologiem w „Vita Dorotheae Montoviensis” Jana z Kwidzyna [Mulier Fortis. Studies on the Prologue in „Vita Dorotheae Montoviensis” by Johann Marienwerder]. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2023. 284 pp. ISBN 978-83-286-0222-9.*

In the second half of the fourteenth century, after the formation of ecclesiastical territorial lordships within the diocese of Pomesania and the stabilization of the settlement process, conditions emerged that made it possible to increase the number of members of the Teutonic cathedral chapter there. Its members, upon taking the Teutonic habit, were well-educated clerics who exerted a considerable influence not only on shaping the religious atmosphere in this part of Prussia but also on the policies pursued at the time by the grand master's administration. The cathedral church in Marienwerder (Pol. Kwidzyn) became one of the principal religious centers in Prussia, and one of the factors consolidating this position was the deliberate and systematic management of the spiritual potential generated in the diocesan capital by the recluse Dorothea of Montau (1347–1394) – both during her lifetime and after her death.

At the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the cathedral in Marienwerder became a popular local pilgrimage site, as pilgrims visiting the tomb of Dorothea of Montau bore witness to numerous miracles that occurred because of her intercession. The growth of popular devotion was accompanied by an intellectual revival among the educated members of the cathedral chapter, resulting in various writings by Johann Marienwerder. These texts, on the one hand, shaped the spiritual image of Dorothea of Montau; on the other hand, they provided theological justification for the chapter's efforts to promote her canonization. In 1398, Johann Marienwerder composed *De vita et revelationibus venerabilis domine Dorothee Christi sponsae*, a work intended to prepare the ground for the formal campaign to elevate the Kwidzyn recluse to the altars. Even if the endeavors of the Pomesanian canons in the early fifteenth century ultimately came to nothing, they left behind a rich theological legacy that today forms the basis for scholarly research into the local phenomenon of Dorothea of Montau. It is significant that, since the 1960s, Johann Marienwerder's Dorothean writings, as well as the documentation of the canonization process from 1404–1405, have

been reintroduced into scholarly circulation through critical source editions. This editorial activity accompanied the efforts undertaken by German Catholics in the 1950s to obtain papal approval for Dorothea's cult in the Church – a goal that was finally achieved on 9 January 1976 by a decision of Pope Paul VI.

This contemporary context lends additional significance to Marian Dygo's research on the *Prologue* (*Prologus*) to the aforementioned *Life...* (*De vita...*) of Dorothea of Montau, in which Johann Marienwerder portrayed her as a "valiant woman" – the titular *mulier fortis*. The Warsaw medievalist set out to identify the sources of Dorothea's fortitude by, on the one hand, reconstructing the intellectual and spiritual profile of Johann Marienwerder, and on the other, by deconstructing the *Prologue* in order to grasp its central idea as well as the elements drawn from the rich treasury of biblical tradition from which the Pomesanian canon so abundantly drew – a man who was both a graduate of the University of Prague and a member of the Teutonic Order in Prussia. As Marian Dygo himself notes: "In the present study we undertake an analysis of the 'fruits of virtue' of Dorothea – that is, her actions and achievements – in order to answer the question why Johann Marienwerder regarded her as a valiant woman, indeed as *the most valiant among the valiant*" (p. 21).

The structure of the study under discussion, divided into eight chapters, reflects the composition of the *Prologue* it analyzes. The Pomesanian canon employed the motif of the seven seals, corresponding to specific stages in the life of Jesus Christ and to the associated gifts of the Holy Spirit, and then assigned these gifts to successive stages in the life of Dorothea of Montau. In examining the New Testament motif of the seven seals, Marian Dygo draws attention to the popularity of the *Apocalypse of St. John* within the Teutonic Order in the fourteenth century – particularly in the form of the rhymed German translation by Heinrich von Heseler – and to the way in which events from Dorothea's life and her virtues were incorporated into the symbolic framework of that biblical book. Furthermore, Dygo situates this interpretation within the political and intellectual context of the last quarter of the fourteenth century: the papal schism and the resulting divisions within the Teutonic Order, as well as the growing influence of "the theology of devotion centered on *inner religious experience and individual piety* (*devotio moderna*)" (pp. 18–19).

In the eight chapters of his monograph, Marian Dygo undertakes an exceptionally erudite deconstruction of the narrative constructed by Johann Marienwerder. Each of the seals he describes, together with its associated symbolism, serves as a point of departure for a thorough analysis of the Christian literature and tra-

ditions that shaped the Pomesanian canon. This approach not only reveals the foundations upon which the entire narrative rests but also identifies the elements of tradition employed to construct the flawless and sanctified image of Dorothea of Montau – the “lady of Teutonic Prussia” and a future saint. This image, which subsequently permeated the pastoral life of the diocese of Pomesania and perhaps of the entire Teutonic Prussia, was intended – following the anticipated canonization of Dorothea – to serve not only as the focal point of a new evangelization program but also as a new spiritual vector within the religious life of the Prussian branch of the Teutonic Order.

Johann Marienwerder’s writings devoted to Dorothea of Montau are firmly rooted in the realities of their time and reflect the spirit of the contemporary *devotio moderna*, in which holy women and mystics enjoyed great popularity. As Marian Dygo observes, Johann Marienwerder appears to challenge certain symbolic frameworks – such as the image of the Lord’s vineyard – traditionally used to describe the Teutonic Order. In this regard, an illuminating point of comparison for understanding the Order’s conventional, exclusive ethos could be found in the research of Janusz Trupinda, who analyzed the image of the Teutonic Order as constructed by Peter of Dusburg.¹ The conclusions drawn from those – not yet integrated here – studies might well complement the picture of the evolving political and spiritual reality both in Prussia and within the Order itself.

There is, however, no doubt that Marian Dygo has succeeded in producing a penetrating analysis of one of the most significant theological texts to emerge from the milieu of the Teutonic Order’s cathedral canons. By reconstructing the literary and symbolic instruments used to shape the image of Dorothea of Montau, he reveals the intellectual potential of a clerical member of the Teutonic Order – one who may, in pursuing Dorothea’s canonization, have been testing the limits of obedience to the Order’s secular authorities. Through this study, we gain an interpretative key to better understanding the mentality of the higher cathedral clergy in Marienwerder, who were responsible for shaping the religious climate of the diocese.

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¹ Janusz Trupinda, *Ideologia krucjatowa w kronice Piotra z Dusburga* (Gdańsk: Oficyna Ferberiana, 1999).

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