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The Missionary Review of the World

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES*

WAR AND MISSIONS IN TRIPOLI

The war-cloud that has so perpetually hovered over various parts of Europe has finally passed over to North Africa, and has broken in a shower of shot and shell in the Turkish province of Tripoli. Italy alleged that the rights of her subjects have not been respected, and grew impatient at the usual prolonged parleying of the Turkish Government. As a result war was declared, and the Italian ships have captured many Turkish vessels and have bombarded and captured the ports of Tripoli. Many see in this a prospect of the breaking up of the Turkish Empire. Italy was, no doubt, precipitate in her action and covetous in her desire for possession of Tripoli; but any who have traveled or lived in Turkish dominions have experienced the exasperating conditions and barbarism that prevail. Turkish diplomacy is wily and has generally succeeded in avoiding war even when provocation was extreme. It is not to be wondered at that Italy declined to wait indefinitely for a reply to her demands.

As a Christian missionary field Tripoli is almost unoccupied, the only Protestant station being at Tripoli, where the North Africa Mission has two married missionaries and two single lady missionaries. The country is as large as Texas and New Eng-

land plus New York State. It is mountainous, dry and hot. The population numbers about 600,000, or 1,000,000, including Benghazi or Barka to the east of Tripoli proper. Most of the population are Berber, but the Jews are numerous. The European population numbers about 6,000, most of whom are Italians. There are few Turks; but while Arabic is usually spoken, Turkish is the official language. The capital, Tripoli, has a population of about 35,000. Islam is, of course, the prevailing religion.

MISSIONS IN TURKEY

The war with Italy has attracted more attention to Turkey. It has even been suggested that, should Italy be successful, the Turks may claim compensation elsewhere—as in Greece—and that there might even be a general uprising against Christians in the empire. There is no doubt that great bitterness prevails among the Moslems, and the present war may bring about greater complications in European politics or may even hasten the dismemberment of Turkey. We do not, however, anticipate any of these more serious consequences at present.

Turkey has a large empire, including a population of nearly twenty-five millions. The religious following is still greater, as the 200,000,000 Moslems of the world are all interested in the fate of the empire.

* The editors seek to preserve accuracy and to manifest the spirit of Christ in the pages of this REVIEW, but do not acknowledge responsibility for opinions expressed, or positions taken by contributors to signed articles in these pages.—EDITORS.

THE MARIAVITES IN POLAND

A NEW CATHOLIC CHURCH WITHOUT ROME AND POPE

BY REV. LOUIS MEYER, D.D.

When we wrote about the Mariavites in these columns some time ago (see *MISSIONARY REVIEW*, 1910, p. 642), basing our remarks upon the reports of German religious papers, several Roman Catholic papers took exceptions and acted as if we had ourselves been misinformed. Under these circumstances we are glad that a little book has been published in Germany very recently,* in which a responsible German pastor gives not only a history of the Mariavite Movement, but also the impressions which he gained during a visit to its leaders in Lodz, in Zgirz, in Warsaw, and in Plock, where there are flourishing congregations of Mariavites. From it we take the following facts.

The Mariavites (a name derived from the Latin "*qui Mariæ vitam imitantur*"), were founded in 1893 by Maria Franziska Kozłowska, who is a descendant of the famous Polish family of Pulawski on her mother's side. She had lost her father in a battle of the Polish rebellion in 1832, when she was only eight months old, and had been brought up by her widowed young mother and her grandmother, both Roman Catholics. Her religious training was but scanty, yet she always delighted in spiritual things and had consecrated her life to the service of the Master in her youth. In 1883 she became a deaconess, but found so little satisfaction in the work that she withdrew from it after a little more than two years, when her health had severely suffered. She then thought of becoming a nun, but a faithful Capuchin father depicted to her the dark, hopeless, and morally doubtful life in a cloister and kept her from taking the false step. After much prayer, she decided to gather around her other women like herself that they might lead a pious life according to the rules of Saint

Clara, which are the Franciscan rules made suitable for women, and in 1887 she and five other women entered in the old Polish town of Plock upon a life which is very similar to that of a nun. The members of the new society gained their support by making embroideries and ecclesiastical utensils. Many soon joined it in spite of the strictness of its rules which, among other things, demanded abstinence from all meat and fish and daily attendance at the mass which is celebrated at midnight.

Six years after the founding of this society for women, Maria Franziska received a special divine revelation to the effect that she should found a society for priests also. They must live according to the rules of the Franciscans, but within the bounds of their congregations and not in cloisters. They must preach and recommend as the chief means for the awakening of true love to Christ and for the strengthening of spirituality piety and morality among the members of the Church, the "adoration of the Son of God who is hidden in the sacrament of the altar," the "invocation of the Mother of God of the Eternal Help," frequent confession, and frequent partaking of the Holy Communion. It was to be understood that these priests must be different from the great mass of Roman Catholic priests in Poland in their full consecration to the service of God and in chastity and purity.

Thus, the Mariavites were founded in 1893 as a society of priests, nuns and lay members, for the distinct purpose of reviving the Roman Catholic Church from within, of bringing true piety and morality to priests and people, and of making the love of Jesus Christ a reality in the lives of believers. Maria Franziska was fully convinced of the rottenness within the Romish Church in Poland, and of the profligate and immoral lives led by many, many of the priests, and of the general lack of spirituality among the

* Bei den Mariaviten. Eindrücke von einer neuen romfreien katholischen Kirche. Von Arthur Rhode, Pastor in Schildberg, Bez. Posen. Verlag von Edwin Runge, in Gr. Lichterfelde, Berlin.

priests and people. She saw the need of reform, but, like many other reformers, she thought that she could stay within the camp and labor faithfully for its reformation. Therefore she founded the Society of the Mariavites, and she never thought of separating from the Roman Catholic Church or denying the authority of the Pope.

Maria Franziska is a deeply spiritual woman, who exerts an almost magnetic influence over those who come in contact with her. Thus, several of the priests who came to see her and talk with her about spiritual things decided, after one brief conversation with the pious woman, to join the new society, and it grew slowly, until in 1900 Johann Kowalski became a Mariavite. Born in 1871, he had received a remarkably fine education and had been ordained priest in 1897. He always felt dissatisfied over the lack of spirituality among priests in general, their covetousness and their often openly immoral lives, and their cynical conversations. A priest who had joined the Mariavites directed his attention to pious Maria Franziska in Plock. Kowalski decided to call upon her. He went and one brief conversation with the founder of the Mariavites caused him to take the decisive step and join the society. He soon became one of its most zealous and most prominent members. His parish was in the city of Warsaw, where soon crowds came to hear his sermons, which now were spiritual and quite different from those of other priests. Men and women crowded his confessional, so that other confessors became jealous and complained to the archbishop. He gladly embraced the opportunity to punish the Mariavite, and Kowalski was sent from Warsaw to a little country parish near Lodz. Soon a great revival took place in his new parish and the members of other parishes flocked to his church, among them many from the parish of Dobra, where Father Skolimowski, had been parish priest for a number of years already. While all other priests cursed

the Mariavite Kowalski angrily, Skolimowski followed his people, listened to Kowalski's sermons, became intimately acquainted with him, and finally joined the Mariavites, one of whose most influential leaders he is to-day.

Immediately after its organization the Society of the Mariavites was disliked, yea hated, by the great mass of the Roman Catholic priests in Poland. Its members preached holiness of life and conduct, while many of these priests were living wanton and unholy lives. The dignitaries of the Church took the side of the priests against the Mariavites, and in 1903 open persecutions of the hated reformers broke out. The bishops aided the persecutors by attempting to undermine the influence of the Mariavite priests, by changing them from one parish to another, that effective work on their part became almost impossible, and by finally suspending them from office. Maria Franziska was included in these petty persecutions, tho now she had nothing to do with the practical work of the society which she had founded. Its head was Kowalski, to whom she and all the members had promised obedience, and Maria Franziska was only in charge of the sisters, whose numbers had increased to seventy, and the sisterhood was not an ecclesiastical, but a purely private affair.

In 1903 a committee of the Mariavites, of which Maria Franziska and Kowalski were members, went to Rome to get the permission of the Pope for their society, when the persecutions in Poland increased in virulence. Protests to the Pope and the cardinals had little effect, tho the consecration and spiritual work of the Mariavites were recognized and protection was promised. Finally, the hour of decision came. Kowalski and some other Mariavite priests had been suspended by the Archbishop of Poland in January, 1906, simply because they were Mariavites, tho the particular charge against Kowalski was that he had taken into his own home some penniless and homeless Mariavite priests who had been unjustly de-

posed by the bishops. That action of the archbishop caused all Mariavites, priests and nuns and people, in all sixteen congregations, with 60,000 souls, to refuse obedience to him and to appeal to Rome. Consternation was caused in the Vatican, and Kowalski and another Mariavite leader, Prochniewski, were called to Rome, where the Pope and the cardinals gave them a very kind hearing and attempted to pacify them once more with promises. But the two Mariavites sat down at once and wrote out a complaint against the Polish bishops, in which they named more than one thousand Polish priests who lived in open violation of the sixth commandment and were not being molested by the bishops, while the Mariavites, who lived according to the strict rules of the Franciscans, were being persecuted. The Pope called them before him. He promised just judgment. Then Kowalski quoted to him Scripture passages containing threatenings and warnings. The Pope became attentive, placed his glasses upon his nose and read the complaint carefully, betraying much concern while reading. However, he said nothing but, "Continue in prayer," as he dismissed them. Seven weeks later there appeared a papal encyclica against the Mariavites, which condemned them without having granted the promised investigation. The Pope had listened to the Polish bishops, who stated that one word from him would end all relations between the Mariavite priests and their congregations. The papal encyclica was read from the pulpits, but the people adhered to Kowalski, who was not furnished a copy of the edict. Seven days he hesitated between submission to the Pope and open opposition. Maria Franziska refused to give him counsel, leaving the full responsibility to the head of the society. At first he decided to submit, but when he read a copy of the encyclica and became cognizant of its falsehoods and exaggerations, he decided upon open opposition. Maria Franziska fully approved his decision, which was followed by the papal ex-

communication of Maria Franziska Kozłowska and Johann Kowalski in December, 1906, and the papal excommunication of thirty-one other Mariavite priests twenty days later. This excommunication was followed by attacks of crowds of Roman Catholics excited by the harangues of the priests upon the churches, yea, even the homes of the Mariavites, who adhered to their leaders in large masses. Several were killed by the persecutors and attempts upon the lives of the leaders were frequent during 1906, after attempts at bribery had proved fruitless. Even to-day Mariavites in Poland are vehemently persecuted and quite often stoned upon the streets. Wherever they appear, adults and children of the lower classes imitate the bleating of the goats, because Kozłowska contains the Polish word *koza*, a goat. Roman Catholic priests asked the people, during the divine services, to show thus their contempt for the hated Mariavites. Other nicknames are continually called after them, and the lot of the Mariavites in Poland is not a happy one even at the present day. But in spite of persecution and derision the Mariavites have increased in numbers, until there were 160,000 of them five years after the publication of the papal encyclical against them. They now have flourishing congregations in Lodz (with a total membership of 40,000), in Zgirz (12,000 members), in Warsaw (where the Mariavites gained their first adherents only in December, 1906, but have already 20,000 adherents), and in many other towns and villages of Poland, while Plock still remains their spiritual center. In September, 1909, the Mariavites joined the federation of other Romeless and popeless Catholic Churches upon the Old Catholic Congress held in Vienna. Johann Kowalski was consecrated Bishop of the Mariavites by Bishop Gerhard Gul of the Dutch Jansenist (or Old Catholic) Church in Utrecht in October, 1909, and a few months ago two other bishops were consecrated in the Polish town of Lovitch.

The Doctrines of the Mariavites

While the Mariavites have thrown off the yoke of the Pope and of Rome, deny the real presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the bread of the Lord's Supper, to some extent, refuse absolutely to believe in the sacrificial or sacerdotal authority of the priests, and laugh at the claim of papal infallibility, yet they still retain some of the peculiar doctrines of the Church of Rome. They adhere to the belief in purgatory and are not opposed to the worship of saints, which is not encouraged by the priests, however. In the churches no side altars and no pictures and statues of saints are found, except the picture and statue of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is no less revered than in the Roman Church. The Sacrament is worshiped and in Mariavite churches almost always people are found who adore and silently worship the "Savior hidden in the Sacrament."

Mariavites believe in the Church Invisible, the all-comprehending kingdom of God, the spiritual body of Christ, of which all true believers are members. They emphasize the necessity and benefit of frequent confession and of frequent partaking of the Lord's Supper, at which the people receive only the bread, as in the Roman Catholic Church.

The life of the Mariavite priests and nuns is strict and regulated by the rules of the Franciscans. All must be vegetarians, totally abstaining from all meat and fish. Fasting is frequently enjoined and during a fast all dishes containing milk and eggs are forbidden. During certain feasts they abstain from all nourishment. Tobacco and alcohol are not allowed, tho smoking is not considered a sin. Strict obedience is the first rule of the Mariavite society.

Priests wear a light gray habit without the black cuffs which they used to wear while still under Rome. The bishop wears a miter, a crosier, and a large cross (upon his breast), very much like those worn by Roman Catholic bishops, but less assuming and costly.

Beside the Mariavite nuns, a considerable number of young women have organized themselves into women's organizations. They live and eat together, but wear no special dress, and gain their living by working upon the farms (according to Polish custom) or in the factories, but must take the vows of virginity for a certain period of years. Mariavite nuns take vows for life, after a long period of probation.

The Mariavites are rapidly increasing in numbers, so that there is already felt a lack of priests able to take care of the congregations, but here and there intelligent and well-educated young men to join the movement and study for the priesthood. The present priests are all highly educated, yet very humble men.

The Mariavites have shaken off for good the yoke of the Pope, but they have not yet progrest very far toward Protestant doctrine. Will they proceed toward it? One can not help being hopeful when he reads a recent pastoral letter of Bishop Kowalski to the clergy, in which he says: "One of our principal duties is the proclamation of the Gospel. Our lives shall be as a mirror to it. It is our highest law, our light on the road of life. In every Mariavite home the Gospel must find a place and every member of the family must be versed in its contents, because it must always be remembered that our entire Christian life centers in Christ."

