A review of the book:
M. Marczewska-Rytko, E. Olszewski (ed.),
*Myśl społeczna wielkich religii świata*,
[The social thought of the major world religions],
UMCS Press, Lublin 2013, pp. 345

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Publication by multiple authors “The social thought of the major world religions” by the academic editor Professor Maria Marczewska-Rytko and Professor Edward Olszewski is the fourth publication of the series “Religious system in the contemporary world”. So far the following works have been published: M. Marczewska-Rytko, *Religie i polityka w globalizującym się świecie* [Religions and politics in the globalizing world], UMCS Press, Lublin 2010, pp.361; M. Marczewska-Rytko (ed.), *Religion in the Changing Europe: Between Pluralism and Fundamentalism. Selected Problems*, UMCS Press, Lublin 2003, pp.240; M. Marczewska-Rytko, *Religie niechrześcijańskie w Polsce*, [Non-Christian religions in Poland], UMCS Press, Lublin 1997, pp. 143.

The latest publication is an anthology of seventeen articles written by authors representing academics in Poland and the world. Such a diversified group of academics dealing with issues of religion diffusion into the social and political system was a guarantee of fulfilling a target put by the publication’s authors. As was mentioned in the preface: “Universalizing religions developed the theory of humans and their life in a community with a social and political doctrine, often referred to as social science. It expresses a specific social thought which sometimes enters a sphere
of political thought. Through social science religious communities influence development of the people's world view, they create specific systems of values and from the point of view of their own doctrines they motivate to required idea attitudes and actions not only in the scope of a religious but also in public life. They also present opinions towards key problems of social and political life in a state and global dimension. Religion provides legitimization of socially defined reality [...] Mutual divining of the Sacred and the Profane at a social level and – very often- in political life was an inspiration to undertake in the presented publication the issue of social thought of the main religious communities as a part of social teaching that can be distinguished from their doctrines”. (p. 5–6).

The division of the publication is very clear and resulted from the content of particular articles. The book consists of three parts: general thoughts, social thought of the Catholic religion and social thought of the remaining major religions in the world. Distinguishing of the social thought of the Roman-Catholic Church is a logical solution because the biggest part of scientists, political scientists and specialists in religious studies deal with problems appearing in the closest cultures. In the third part the analysis of the social thought of Judaism, the social thought of Islam, religious tradition of Confucianism and Taoism and examples of influence of religious groups on institutional and legal structures in the Unites States of America (theocracies and the Religious Right) were presented with partial presentation of Hinduism and Buddhism. Such a comprehensive list of examined religions and their influence allows for the presentation of many conclusions and comments.

In the part concerning the Catholic religion articles of historical and contemporary character were collected. The first articles are the ones written by: Professor Lucyna Wiœniewska-Rutkowska, MA Bogumi³ Jurkowski and Doctor Maciej Strutyński. The articles of: Professor Maria Marczewska-Rytko, Doctor Dorota Maj, Doctor Marek Delong, Doctor Krzysztof Kowalczyk, Doctor Micha³ Gierysz and Doctor Mikhai³ Papou consist of the part of research where contemporary problems of divining religious and social life are elaborated.

Particular attention should be paid to the article of Professor Maria Marczewska-Rytko who made an analysis of stands of the following Popes: Leon XIII, Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II and also of the Second Vatican Council concerning the idea of nation and state. In this context the concept of corporatism presented by Leon XIII in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891
becomes the most crucial. This concept was creatively developed by Pius XI in the papers of *Quadragesimmo anno* in 1931. The Popes looking for solutions which reject the Marxist class conflict proposed social and professional system referring to personalism, subsidiarity and solidarity. The interesting papal concept was developed only to a small degree. As the author rightly reminds, the concept of Catholic corporatism was often joined with the fascist corporatism (p. 54–55). Such accusations formulated after the Second World War led to abandoning by the Roman-Catholic Church of the concept of regulating socio-economic relations based on corporatism. However this is a legacy that deserves particular interest. D. Maj who explained the idea of subsidiarity in the papal teaching also becomes part of these deliberations.

Doctor Krzysztof Kowalczyk widely presented the stand of the Polish Bishops’ Conference, of bishops and the Second National Plenary Synod towards the state and politics after 1989. The article is at the same time an exciting analysis of creating very often not easy relations between the Roman-Catholic Church and bodies of the state authority. Kowalczyk states that this is one of the most important issues in the Church’s activity in Poland (p.90). Very often the Polish Bishops’ Conference while stressing social inequalities being a result of socio-economic changes did not find any understanding among the political class. In the meantime the institutional Church accepted an ungrateful role of representing persons who are excluded and badly off. Unfortunately the Church itself aimed to have too many roles which were not accepted in the eyes of the Poles. Kowalczyk wrote that the Church’s stand towards political reality fluctuated between approval for activity at a political level and at a meta-political level. However efficient activity in both fields was impossible (p.99). After 1989 the Church presented “a vision of state and policy that was determined by historical conditions […] and resulted from a desire to represent the Catholic majority. The Church supported the concept of a democratic church where ethical issues would not be the subject of voting. The basis of the political system were to be the rules of Catholic social science: dignity and personalism, common good, solidarity and subsidiarity. A Postulated model of religious relations was generally based on the rule of friendly cooperation between the state and Church. In the years 1989–2011 the Church entered a sphere of politics including a process of constitutional establishment, legitimization and the discrediting of specific parties and groups”. (p.113). The article of Marek Delong, who presented the stand of the Polish Bishops’
Conference within its transformation period, may be a detailed deliberation of Kowalczyk’s thesis.

Michał Gierycz undertook the difficult task of examining the influence of Christianity on European political and legal structures. The author has made an analysis of indirect implementation that always brings a high scientific risk (p.117). He presented his deliberations on three levels: cultural, ethical and of European political elites. Particularly in this last context he presented interesting conclusions: “Firstly ethical issues became an important element of the political identity of left-wing groups in Europe. Their key agenda in this sphere is in contradiction to significant values of Christianity. Secondly, the analogical process of creating a political identity based on axiological postulates did not take the place of the right-wing (p.131). Therefore in a wider perspective the subsequent failures of Christian values in the structures of the European Union and the Council of Europe may not be a surprise.

In the third part particular attention should be paid to articles, deliberations and conclusions of PhD, an Assistant Professor Roman Marcinkowski concerning the chosen social issues of the Rabbi in Judaism, by Professor Anna Mrozek-Dumanowska referring to Islamic revival movements and of Professor Kazimierz Banek on chosen ideas of the Chinese religious tradition. The whole is supplemented with articles by Professor Selim Chazbijewicz on creating the Islamic political doctrine, of Doctor Lukman-Thaib from the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur and of Doctors Marcin Pomarański and Maciej Potz on the North-American theology and doctrine of Religious Right.

Publication is a significant contribution into development of researches on the social thought of religions and relations between religions, religious groups and cultural, political and legal and ethical systems. So far this subject has been undertaken from the perspective of a single religion and usually on a theoretical level – however this time the publication prepared which presented the most important modern religions of the world both in the theoretical and practical aspect. Therefore I agree with the assessment of the editing reviewer, Professor Rados³aw Zenderowski, who expressed his recognition with a respect of undertaken and completed tasks. Undoubtedly the analysed subject is a very wide research area which requires further scientific reflection. The presented publication will become an important reference point, even more valuable due to the fact that the huge undertaking was to elaborate the used literature in the whole work and its presentation in a separate chapter.