

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND CHRISTIAN UPBRINGING  
IN THE POLISH TERRITORY UNDER RUSSIAN RULE  
IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY.**

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*V 19. a na počátku 20. století byly polské země kontrolovány Rakouskem, Pruskem a Ruskem, což přineslo celkový úpadek. Rusové se snažili omezit aktivitu katolíků, a proto měli církevní hodnostáři zapovězený přístup do škol i tam, kde byla katolická většina.*

*Klíčová slova: Křesťanská výchova; náboženské vzdělávání; Polsko v 19. a ve 20. století*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a very difficult period for Polish society due to the lack of Polish statehood. Polish lands were controlled by three countries, Austria, Prussia and Russia, which had brought about the decline of the Polish state at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These countries, although they were all Christian, varied in their dominant religious denomination: Austria was Catholic, Prussia was Protestant and Russia was Orthodox.

The situation of the Orthodox faith in Tsarist Russia was special, as it was closely connected with the state and the ruling house. The relationship was so strong that it can be interpreted as a subordination of the Church to the interests of the Russian state with the simultaneous identification of the Orthodox faith with Russia. The Orthodox denomination had the status of the national Russian religion, although formally the subjects of the Tsarist state enjoyed freedom of confession. However, among the remaining Christian denominations, mainly Catholics and members of the Evangelical Church could enjoy the freedom of religious practice. The Russian state acted particularly aggressively towards all sects and groups formed on the basis of the Orthodox faith. The Greek-Catholic Church was repressed for an extensive period of time by the Russian administration co-operating with the Orthodox Church and finally, in the 1870s, it was liquidated entirely in Russia. The worshippers and the clergy of this denomination were pronounced members of the Orthodox Church, while the individuals defying this ruling were punished with imprisonment or deportation to Russia's interior<sup>1</sup>.

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was particularly difficult for clergy and the Catholic Church in the areas of the former Polish borderlands (*kresy*). After the defeat of the January Uprising, the Tsarist government, as part of the fight against Polish identity, started taking action against Catholic worshippers. Denomination was treated as the main criterion defining nationality, in accordance with which every Pole was a Catholic. Thus, tsarist repressions affected Catholic parishes and monasteries, which were liquidated, and churches, which were converted into Orthodox ones. Religious practices of Catholics were subject to restrictions limiting them to temple walls. The Polish language was eliminated from public life and schools, and its use in churches was also limited<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> CHWALBA, A.: *Historia Powszechna. Wiek XIX*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 334–335; PIPES, R.: *Rosja carów*. Warszawa 2006, pp. 246–250.

<sup>2</sup> DRAUS, J. – TERLECKI, R.: *Historia wychowania. Wiek XIX i XX*. Kraków 2005, p. 93.

Religion and especially Catholicism played an important part in the functioning of Polish society at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Religion constituted a basis on which the process of educating the young generation was based. Three principal milieus can be distinguished in which the influence of religion on the young generation occurred. The first of them was family, the second equally important one was church, and the third was school. In each of these places the doctrine of faith was taught and young people were educated in the Christian spirit.

The importance of family in religious education could be observed in all social classes. Both in the gentry and peasant families, values based on Christian principles were important in the education of the young generation. Irrespective of social class, mothers were traditionally assigned a particular role in the religious education of children. Also, the Polish Catholic Church stressed their role as guardians of Christian morality, securing the young generation's adherence to the religious and national tradition. The Church saw in them the readiness to perform religious practices, religious zeal, and an example for children<sup>3</sup>.

The traditional model of a Polish peasant family of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was based on religious and social values. Principles propagated by the Church were rigorously observed. In accordance with them, having numerous children was viewed as "God's gift". Members of a rural family were united by bonds based on maintaining traditional norms of conduct, attachment to the land, common customs, language, culture and faith. Mothers, often supported by grandparents, took care of religious education of children from their earliest days. Children learnt from them the sign of the cross, their first prayers and basic doctrines of faith. Thus, mothers played a particular part in instilling Christian ethical and moral norms in their children. The role of fathers increased in later periods, when children started to participate actively in religious practices. The father took care of controlling their attendance at masses and services as well as the quality of their participation in religious practices. The process of educating children was largely based on adoption of the values and views of the elders, especially parents and grandparents<sup>4</sup>.

Religion also played an important educational part in families of landed and lesser gentry. Children of gentry families were taught the catechism and fundamental doctrines of faith through home schooling. The knowledge and observance of religious norms by children made it easier for their parents to solve pedagogical problems. Religious education at home instilled in the children respect for their parents and the elders. It helped bring up the children teaching them about the Christian duty to take care of others, especially to take care of their parents until their death. Religion introduced the child into the world of proper behaviour in interpersonal relationships. As part of Christian education, children were taught to share with others by participating in charity work. This was done mainly by including children in the activity of adult family members aimed at poor people coming from the lowest classes or the families of farm workers of the estate. The inclusion of the youngest generation in charity work from their earliest days meant that when the children came of age they treated the activity for the benefit of the needy as something obvious and natural. Mothers played a special part in the educational process in landed and lesser gentry families. Usually they introduced children to the realm of Christian and patriotic values as well as family tradition<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> WALEWANDER, E.: *Wychowanie chrześcijańskie w nauczaniu i praktyce Kościoła Katolickiego na ziemiach polskich w II połowie XIX wieku*. Lublin 1994, p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> KORZENIOWSKA, W.: *Edukacja i wychowanie różnych warstw społecznych na ziemiach polskich od drugiej połowy wieku XIX do roku 1918*. Kraków 2004, pp. 49–51.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 74–79.

Church institutions supported families in religious education and this issue was discussed by Church dignitaries, priests, journalists and educators. The attitude of the Catholic Church towards the problem of educating the young generation is best evidenced in the papal encyclicals of Pius IX and Leo XIII. Pius IX, in the encyclical *Quanta cura* as well as the *Syllabus* attached to it, condemned the views endangering public morality and order. Socialism, communism, liberalism, rationalism and naturalism were deemed erroneous. The adoption of the idea that accumulating wealth is the sole aim of a person's life was considered equally dangerous. He also opposed the attempts at changing the traditional, Christian model of maternity and family life. The encyclical by Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, provided the foundations for Catholic social science. During his pontificate, the Catholic milieu took up counter-actions against further limitation of the teaching of religion as well as the removal of clerical teachers and religious symbols from schools. The next Pope, Pius X started the reform of education and formation of clergy so that it was better prepared for religious service<sup>6</sup>.

It is worth noticing that irrespective of the religious world view, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century upbringing was an expression of concern for the adequate physical, spiritual and moral development of children and consequently their preparation for social functioning. It was assumed that following religious principles constituted the best protection against the destructive influences of the surrounding world. Priests were given the task of propagating evangelical principles in the environment in which they were working. Attention was paid to consolidating religiousness and introducing children and young people to the liturgical life of the Church. Religious teaching was aimed at instructing children about the rules of catechism as well as at forming their correct moral attitude. It was considered necessary to educate the young generation in the spirit of Christian principles due to the inadequate state of the religious consciousness of Poles. Such actions were supposed to protect children against secularisation and to get them accustomed to life in the Church community. The role of those few priests – teachers of religion who were allowed by the Russian authorities to teach at school was particularly important. The Church realized, however, that teaching religion at school without the cooperation with parents would not necessarily yield the desired results. The need was observed for personal contacts between priests and parents in order to persuade them to set an example for their own children. These contacts were to promote such changes in the family which would ensure that the family's life would proceed in accordance with the teaching of the Church<sup>7</sup>.

Religion played an immense role in contemporary schools both as a teaching course as well as an element in the pedagogical formation of pupils. Both in primary and secondary schools, each day study was preceded by prayer. Combining religious practice with school ceremonies was a standard. All state holidays celebrated at school also had their religious aspect. State anniversaries, celebrations of the crowning of the emperor, jubilees, or death of the monarch were always connected with religious services in which teachers and pupils participated together. During such ceremonies, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it happened that secondary school pupils had to go to a local Orthodox church irrespective of their denomination. Pupils of Orthodox denomination participated in the ceremonial liturgy together with Catholics, Protestants and even Jews<sup>8</sup>.

Religious matters influenced the changes in the organisation of education introduced in 1864 by the tsarist authorities on the territory of the Kingdom of Poland. The reform introduced

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<sup>6</sup> DRAUS, J. – TERLECKI, R.: *Historia...*, p. 149.

<sup>7</sup> WALEWANDER, E.: *Wychowanie...*, pp. 85–91.

<sup>8</sup> SMORODINOW, W. G.: *Moja służba w Warszawskim Okręgu Naukowym i zdarzenia ze szkolnego życia. Wspomnienia pedagoga*. Kielce 2003, pp. 168–173.

single- and double-class elementary schools as well as secondary schools – real and classical grammar schools. Initially, in areas dominated by Polish population, the schools retained their national character. Elementary schools were categorised according to the denomination – there were separate schools for members of the Orthodox Church, Catholics, Protestants and Jews. Also secondary schools were divided into those for members of the Orthodox Church and Protestants as well as so-called mixed schools. In addition, separate elementary and secondary schools were established for the population of Greek-Catholics<sup>9</sup>. In the 1870s, after the liquidation of the union by the Russian authorities, the schools were converted into Orthodox schools with Russian as the language of instruction.

Protestants, especially of the Evangelical denomination, enjoyed a relative liberty of teaching religion at school. They owed this to the support on the part of the Russian administration in the Kingdom of Poland, in which many prominent posts were occupied by persons of German descent and Evangelical denomination. The Russian authorities feared that without their support the local members of the Evangelical Church and the settlers coming from Germany and settling in rural areas would assimilate with the Polish population and convert to Catholicism. That is why the establishment of Evangelical elementary schools was supported and the functioning of church schools at Kantorat prayer houses was allowed. The liberty in this matter was perceived particularly by people of German descent as a way of preserving their own national and religious identity<sup>10</sup>.

Russian authorities decided to deprive Catholic clergy and gentry of any influence on education with administrative measures. This particularly concerned elementary schools, which were considered to play an important role in the plan to assimilate the Polish population into the Russian state. This was done through the introduction of compulsory Russian language courses (1872), appropriate handbooks, supervision over Polish teachers, whom the authorities attempted to replace, when possible, with Russians at all levels of education. Finally in 1885, the instruction in Russian of all courses in elementary schools, except for religion and the Polish language, was introduced. A similar process was initiated regarding secondary and higher education in the territory of the Kingdom of Poland<sup>11</sup>.

The educational policy of that period, especially the one adopted at the time when A. Apukhtin (Pol. Apuchtin) was appointed Curator of the Warsaw Educational District, was to obstruct implementation of any educational regulations favourable to the Polish population especially of Catholic denomination. During his rule, the teaching of religion in the mother tongue was illegally discontinued in elementary schools and the Catholic clergy was removed from teaching in those schools. Simultaneously, Orthodox and Evangelical clergymen were allowed to teach the Catholic religion in predominantly rural areas<sup>12</sup>. Oftentimes the former place of the Catholic clergymen in the teaching the religion of this denomination was also taken by teachers of the Orthodox or Protestant denomination. In the school year 1891–1892, in 58 village schools in the territory of the Kingdom of Poland, Catholic religion was taught by Evangelical teachers, and in 44 schools by Orthodox teachers<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Dziennik Praw Królestwa Polskiego, T. LXII 1864, pp. 335–359, *Ukaz najwyższy o szkołach początkowych w Królestwie Polskim z dnia 30 VIII/11IX 1864r*; Ibidem, p. 361–365, *Ukaz najwyższy o Gimnazyach i Progimnazyach Żeńskich w Królestwie Polskim z dnia 30 VIII/11IX 1864r*; Ibidem, p. 367–385, *Ukaz najwyższy o utworzeniu Gimnazjum Ruskiego i przy niem Progimnazjum żeńskiego i szkoły początkowej w Warszawie z dnia 30 VIII/11IX 1864r*; Ibidem, p. 387–389, *Ukaz najwyższy o szkole głównej niemiecko-Ewangelickiej w Warszawie z dnia 30 VIII/11IX 1864r*.

<sup>10</sup> STEGNER, T.: *Polacy-ewangelicy w Królestwie Polskim 1815–1914*. Gdańsk 1992, pp. 111–113, 128–129.

<sup>11</sup> DRAUS J. – TERLECKI, R.: *Historia ...*, p. 86–87.

<sup>12</sup> KORZENIOWSKA, W.: *Edukacja i wychowanie ...*, pp. 102–103.

<sup>13</sup> KOROTYŃSKI, W.: *Losy oświaty polskiej*. Warszawa 1906, pp. 41–42.

The activity of Curator Apukhtin in this matter was also criticised by the Warsaw general-governor Hurko. In 1889, he pointed to the negative effects of the complete removal of Catholic priests from teaching fundamental doctrines of faith in village schools. General-governor Hurko's actions, defending the right of the Catholic clergy to teach religion in rural schools, was motivated not solely by his readiness to observe the legal regulations in this matter. He held a view that this state caused dislike among Catholic clergy towards schools and the Russian educational administration. The attitude of the clergy greatly influenced the opinion of the parents, who, among others for this reason, did not send their children to school. This led to a decrease in the Polish society's interest in the development of elementary schools. General-governor Hurko considered the removal of Catholic priests from teaching religion, especially in village schools, a grave political mistake as it resulted in the peasants' hostility towards the actions of the Russian administration. In consequence, similarly to the Polish educated classes, they were becoming hostile towards the government and the interests of the Russian state<sup>14</sup>.

Suggestions regarding the return of Catholic priests to schools were met with understanding on the part of the ministry of education of the Russian Empire, which decided it was recommended to nominate Roman Catholic parish priests as teachers of religion in village schools. However, the implementation of this decision was resisted by the Curator of the Warsaw Educational District and his subordinate heads of administration supported by provincial administration<sup>15</sup>. The position of the ministry of education on this matter also changed. The new minister Delyanov stated that it was better not to have any schools than to allow them to be managed by Catholic priests. Finally though, in 1892 it was decided that priests should be allowed to teach Catholic religion in elementary schools in the territory of the Kingdom of Poland. However, in order to assume the post of a religious teacher at a district or village school, a Catholic clergyman needed to obtain the consent of school administration and of the provincial authorities. Each case was to be examined individually at the suggestion of the local community. At the same time, it was decided that the Roman Catholic religion could not be taught by persons of a different denomination. In this way, the question of allowing the Catholic clergy to teach religion in elementary schools seemed finally resolved. However, Curator Apukhtin soon issued a circular in which he stated that: "The Roman Catholic parish clergy should not teach the catechism to children who attend elementary schools, and in general such education should be conducted solely inside a church."<sup>16</sup>

A mass return of Catholic clergymen to teaching religion in elementary schools occurred only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It should be noted though, that this was not the case in the entire territory of the Kingdom of Poland. By means of administrative measures, Russian authorities did not allow Catholic clergymen to teach at schools in the eastern areas of the Lublin and Siedlce provinces. The Orthodox population, which constituted a substantial religious minority in this region, was subject to intensive Russianization<sup>17</sup>. Russians tried in various ways to limit the activity of Catholics, which they thought would contribute to Polonization of the local population. Thus, the Catholic clergy were denied access to schools and were not allowed to teach religion in them even in places where Catholics constituted the majority of the population.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40–41.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 34–36, 43–44.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> KUCHA, R.: *Oświata elementarna w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1864–1914*. Lublin 1982, pp. 110, 114, 138.

## **Shrnutí**

### **Výuka náboženství a křesťanská výchova na polských územích pod nadvládou Ruska ve druhé polovině 19. a na počátku 20. století**

V 19. a na počátku 20. století byly polské země kontrolovány Rakouskem, Pruskem a Ruskem, což přineslo celkový úpadek. Rusové se snažili omezit aktivitu katolíků, a proto měli církevní hodnostáři zapovězený přístup do škol i tam, kde byla katolická většina.