

Religious and Patriotic Education in Peasant Families during National Captivity

Wychowanie religijne i patriotyczne w rodzinach chłopskich w czasie niewoli narodowej

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Abstract: The family is the basic educational environment for children. When speaking about upbringing, we also have in mind religious and patriotic education. The family home is the place where a child acquires first religious and patriotic patterns. However, the condition for arousing the correct religiosity or patriotic attitude in children is also the maturity of these values in the parents, who pass on certain, specific patterns of conduct. Love of the homeland is strengthened and shaped by the national and religious upbringing of the child. Introducing the child to the world of values is an inseparable element of their upbringing, helping to preserve their own cultural and national distinctiveness. The most important place in the hierarchy of values has always been homeland, family, Catholic religion, history of Poland, tradition and national symbols, while the moral traits most valued were patriotism, courage, diligence and readiness to make sacrifices in the name of the highest values.

Keywords: family, education, child, patriotism, Church, values

Abstrakt: Rodzina jest podstawowym środowiskiem wychowawczym swych dzieci. Mówiąc o wychowaniu, mamy na uwadze również wychowanie religijne oraz patriotyczne. Dom rodzinny to miejsce, w którym dziecko nabywa pierwszych wzorców zarówno religijnych, jak i patriotycznych. Jednak warunkiem wzbudzenia u dzieci prawidłowej religijności lub postawy patriotycznej jest również dojrzałość tychże wartości u rodziców, którzy przekazują pewne konkretne wzory postępowania. Miłość ojczyzny umacnia się i kształtuje przez narodowe, a także religijne wychowanie dziecka. Wprowadzanie dziecka w świat wartości jest nieodłącznym elementem jego wychowania, który sprzyja zachowaniu własnej odrębności kulturowej i narodowej. Najważniejsze miejsce w hierarchii wartości zawsze zajmowały: Ojczyzna, rodzina, religia katolicka, historia Polski, tradycja oraz symbole narodowe, zaś cechami moralnymi najwyższymi cenionymi były: patriotyzm, odwaga, pracowitość i gotowość do ponoszenia ofiar w imię najwyższych wartości.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, wychowanie, dziecko, patriotyzm, Kościół, wartości



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INTRODUCTION

The 19th century across Europe was a time marked by the emergence of national identity based on the bond of members of a group who shared the same history, traditions and culture. This was a particularly important time for Poles, who had a sense of belonging to one nation during the period when the Polish state did not exist, and among the cherished values that accompanied Poles were love of the Fatherland, subordinating one's own needs and interests to it, a sense of justice, respect for others and honesty.

The oldest and most important educational environment has been, is and will be the family. In the life of every person, the family plays a vital role. It is in this family that the child's personality and identity are shaped naturally. In the family, children learned the Polish language, respect for the family, Polish tradition, the Catholic faith, patriotic attitudes, respect for work and the Polish land understood as the Homeland from their parents and grandparents. It is thanks to the family that a young person acquired everything that prepared them for adult life and formed their earliest beliefs and worldview.

During the period of national captivity, the Polish nation retained its durability and identity thanks to various factors, including the family. During the partitions, when the Polish nation existed without a homeland, it was the family that played an important role in maintaining national identity by cultivating everyday rituals, traditions and customs. Religion and patriotism were foremost in shaping the atmosphere of Polish homes, including peasant cottages. Therefore, every Polish home in which Polish traditions were cultivated, and where care was taken to maintain Polish nationality, became a bastion of Polishness (Nawrot-Borowska 2012, 125-178).

1. THE LIFE SITUATION OF PEASANT FAMILIES

Peasants were a group of owners or users of small family farms passed down from father to son, where all household members performed a range of work and duties closely related to their place in the family hierarchy (Jabłonowska 1975, 52-55; Staniszewski 1995, 34-56). Peasant families usually had many children. The larger the family, the greater its power and recognition in society (Konsała 1972, 2; Małłek 1976, 75; Samsel 2015, 279). It was claimed at that time that children from large families caused the least problems in upbringing, because they were hard-working and obedient. Children were treated as a blessing and a gift from God. Catholic newspapers wrote that "God's blessing descends on a home with many children, and parents who give society, the Church, and the state many offspring - what a rich reward awaits in heaven" (Dąbrowski 1927, 360).

During the period of national captivity, the economic situation in the Polish countryside was very difficult. Lack of hygiene – because children were bathed only on so-called "holidays", i.e. very rarely – caused diseases and epidemics, which, due

to the lack of medical care, resulted in high mortality, especially among children, whether in infancy or early childhood (Słomka 1983, 119; Gawron 1986, 8; Stryczek 1984, 26). It should be mentioned here that the rural population trusted healers and herbalists more than qualified doctors (Jabłonowska 1975, 59). Their fate was very difficult. Small children, who were no longer breastfed, were fed like adults, which often led to illness or death. Many peasant families were starving. The poor peasant population ate little bread, and if there was any, it was treated with great respect, and before cutting the first piece, mothers would always make a sign of the cross on it. In families with better living conditions, although there was more bread, meat appeared only on Sundays and holidays (Chałasiński 1984, 215-216; Słomka 1983, 43). The housing conditions of peasant families were miserable, and for some even tragic. The village huts themselves were built of wood and covered with thatched roofs. In the winter, they were insulated with straw or leaves. A peasant's house usually consisted of one living room, a large hall and a pantry. The living room was the main residential area, while grain and food products were stored in the pantry. Many huts still had workshops in the pantry. The second part of the house was used to keep farm animals, or if the animals were outside during the warm season, poorer peasants would bring a cow into the room for the winter, keep a pig under the stove, and keep chickens under the bed (Kunysz 1973, 50). Farm equipment such as millstones for grinding grain, a block of wood for chopping, etc. was kept in the hall. The floors were made of compacted clay. Clothes were hung on poles in the room, hall, or chamber (Słomka 1983, 34). In such conditions, even basic hygiene was out of the question. Children slept on the floor or on a bench. An additional problem that made even rest difficult was lice. The huts were semi-dark, as people economised on oil lamps. It was often cold, because the huts were heated with poor-quality wood and only as much as was necessary for cooking a meal (Kunysz 1973, 74). Small children were often left alone in their cradles because their mothers had to go to work in the fields. Children were left without food for many hours. They cried from hunger and loneliness (Słomka 1983, 120; Fołta 1987, 29). Only in the huts of wealthier peasants were the conditions better. Wealthier farmers built larger houses with two rooms. They also had separate stables for farm animals and a barn. Farm buildings were still built in a rather primitive way. The walls of the buildings were made of brushwood, which was sealed with clay. The yards were small, muddy in spring and autumn and usually littered (Kunysz 1973, 50).

In peasant families, there were no conditions for showing affection to their children. Hard, daily work prevented the development of sensitivity. Children received little affection from their parents, which does not mean that they were not loved. Hunger and cold were troublesome, because children did not have shoes. During the warm seasons, children, like adults, went barefoot, while in winter they had to stay indoors due to the lack of footwear (Gawron 1986, 9; Chałasiński 1984, 174; Męczyński 1962, 7; Magryś 1987, 23-24; Librachowa 1934, 33).

In such poor conditions, small children often fell ill and developed more slowly. From the youngest years, regardless of gender, children had to learn hard

work on the farm, often beyond their strength. Even children as young as a few years old had to help adults with some duties (Szczepański 1984, 34; Jabłowska 1975, 14-23). Small children were cared for by their mothers, but at the age of three and four, children were introduced to work, and depending on their age, they were assigned increasingly difficult and responsible duties. From the youngest age, they were taught a sense of duty and shared responsibility for the family (Bujak-Boguska 1918/1919, 24-25). The youngest children helped with household chores, such as bringing wood from the firebox and feeding poultry; the older ones tended domestic fowl, then looked after cattle, pigs or horses, usually from sunrise to noon and from afternoon until dusk (Dąbrowska 1969, 12), and not only on their parents' farms, but very often on the farms of wealthy farmers, for whom they worked to help support the family. The duties of older children were more responsible and dependent on gender. Girls as young as four helped their mothers with household chores, including caring for younger siblings and helping around the house, while boys helped their fathers with men's household chores (Magryś 1987, 27). Learning through imitation of adults and sharing their duties were the basic educational tools in the countryside. The value of each person in the family depended on their usefulness on the farm. In those times, raising children was rigorous and strict. Although parents loved their children, they did not show their feelings so much. Children were subject to unconditional obedience towards their parents, especially their father (Witos 1878, 40; Baranowski 1969, 22-29; Jabłowska 1975, 53; Kalniuk 2014, 135-137; Marciniak 2009, 239; Librachowa 1934, 67; Chałasiński 1984, 200).

Some children could not attend school due to their constant work or, if possible, they only attended during the winter season, when there was no field work. The time when children worked on the farm lasted from early spring, usually from April 23 (St. Adalbert's Day) until late autumn, that is until November 11 (St. Martin's Day) (Bień 1999, 201; Cichy 1980, 24). Even if children could study at school, their parents did not release them from their duties of working on the farm. Before children could go to school, they first had to do everything on the farm that was needed from early morning, such as taking care of the cattle and driving them out to pasture. After returning from classes, there was often no time to revise lessons, because they had to work in the field. It should be remembered here that many peasants at that time still had a negative attitude towards education, believing that only hard physical work could provide a living for the family. The second reason for peasant children dropping out of school was the lack of money to buy books, clothes, and shoes (Chałasiński 1984, 318, 504).

2. THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING OF CHILDREN

Peasant families were large. The basis of support was a farm or their own workshop. Peasants were tied to their own farm, which they usually inherited over several generations, and which was the only source of support for their entire family. The

head of the family was the father, who had power and authority. In families at that time, there was a strict hierarchy. This model of the traditional peasant family lasted for a very long time. It was still relevant in the realities of the last quarter of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. Both the father and the mother observed moral and customary norms. The main features of the peasant family were stability, cohesion, a close connection with the farm, treating marriage as a holy sacrament, and patriarchalism. These patterns were based on the personal models of the time, primarily the father and the mother. There was a strong connection with tradition and a sense of duty. Parents tried to instil all of this in their children (Szlendak 2010, 31; Turowski 1967, 203-223; Jabłonowska 1975, 52-71; Ossowski 1946, 156-175).

The traditional model of a peasant family had the following main features: a close connection with the farm, stability, unity, marital fidelity, patriarchalism in intra-family relations, as well as cultural patterns that regulated the division of duties on the farm. Here, children were completely under parental authority, especially that of the father, who was obliged to take care of both moral and material well-being of his family (Turowski 1967, 203-223; Jabłonowska 1975, 52-71). It should be added here that, in accordance with the principle of industriousness, upbringing in a traditional peasant family did not tolerate children's free time. In addition, they were taught to be hardworking and punished for laziness (Słomka 1983, 121).

The high position of a woman as a mother and patron of the home in the family, regardless of social class, was associated with great value, because it was, she who was primarily responsible for raising children and who was burdened with household chores. She was the first teacher of the Polish language and the principles of faith. Motherhood was one of the first duties of a woman towards the rural community. According to the social principles and religious requirements of the time, a woman was expected to give birth to children and thus fulfil herself as a mother to her family. From their youngest years, children observed their environment and became like their parents, because it was their cares and efforts that determined how their character was shaped (Kostrzewska 2002, 449). The role of the mother herself was the most important in the entire process of shaping the child's personality and acquiring values. The mother's religiosity and morality were very important, because she passed on to the child the tradition and heritage of ancestors, but also taught how to cultivate church and family holidays. It should be noted that a child's idea of God is always connected with the image of its parents, therefore parents should always give their child a correct testimony of life and talk to them about religion. The family environment therefore has a fundamental influence on the formation of a person's religiosity (*Zarys dziejów religii* 1986, 321-322)

The upbringing of peasant children was linked to the social situation of the estate. Not all peasant families could afford to send their children to school. The only teachings that children could learn at that time were those heard in the parish church from their priest during sermons and parish announcements. In those

times, the educational ideal was a God-fearing and hard-working man, obedient towards his lord and priest (8).

The family home was a place where children acquired their first religious models. Religion was a very important value in peasant families at that time. Thanks to it, people found it easier to endure everyday hardships, suffering and death, because faith gave hope for a better life in eternity. It was religion that gave meaning to the lives of peasant families. Children were raised from an early age in respect for the truths of faith. In rural cottages there were many religious symbols such as images of the Mother of God, Jesus Christ or the saints, crosses, and altars, before which whole families prayed together every day, and the teachings of the Church were received in a realistic way (Wójcik 1995, 158-166). There was a very strong bond between the Church and the peasant family, because it accompanied them in all important moments of life – from wedding to funeral. The saints played an important role here. Mothers in particular told their children the stories of great Polish saints from ancient times, because their appealing examples were a very important help in raising them in the religious and national spirit (Helsztyński 1937; Samsel 2010, 149).

Due to their great piety, parents paid attention to the religious upbringing of their children. They made sure that they learned the Lord's Prayer, the truths of faith, the hours in honour of the Mother of God and other essential prayers. Parents took their children on pilgrimages and indulgences. Places of worship were very important for religious life, especially Marian sanctuaries and calvaries, to which entire families and even entire villages would travel during major parish holidays. The Mother of God was considered the main protector of people, while calvaries brought them closer the Passion of Jesus Christ. Frequent pilgrimages served to regain and deepen faith (Czachowski 2010, 142; Ohler 2000, 13-26). This was a very important help in raising people in the religious spirit. For many peasant children, a trip to distant sanctuaries was an incredible experience and an adventure in learning about the world (Witkowska 1984, 20-26; Helsztyński 1937, 11-16; Olszewski 1996, 15).

Parents attached great importance to Sunday Masses. It was a day off from work and the whole family went to church. In addition to attending church every Sunday, peasants eagerly participated in all church holidays (Kabacińska-Łuczak and Ratajczak 2013, 291). All celebrations, prayers, holidays and services included children in the religious tradition of the Polish nation, helping to cultivate the customs of religious and national culture (Chłosta 1986, 22).

3. THE TIMES OF NATIONAL CAPTIVITY AND THE ROLE OF THE PEASANT FAMILY AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN PATRIOTIC EDUCATION

A person can be educated in patriotism. However, this should be done from the earliest years of life. The role of the first teachers of love for the homeland was fulfilled by parents (Adamski 1918, 17-20). The family, regardless of its place in society, has always played a significant educational role and helped shape the personality of children. The function of the family was realized by teaching its

children certain patterns of behaviour, the division of family roles and activities performed by its individual members.

For many centuries, the rural population lived on the sidelines, having no access to education or culture, i.e. to the changing world. During the partitions, the majority of Polish families were peasant families, based on patriarchy and subject to moral control by the Catholic Church. Religion in peasant families was an important educational factor. It was during the partitions that a special bond was created between the peasants and the Church. At that time, both sides served as a guarantee of each other's survival. Religion had a strong influence on morality, customs and organization of family life. Patriotism and religion were mutually intertwined at that time. To be a patriot, one had to be religiously committed. Love for the homeland was also love for God. Regardless of social class, religion was a very important educational factor at that time, because it influenced morality, family life and customs. This was evident in everyday life among peasant families, where the year was organized according to the church calendar. In a Polish, rural cottage, parents, and especially the mother, taught prayers and religious songs in Polish. There was a custom of regularly saying family prayers in the following months: October and May for the Mother of God and in June for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Although prayers and long services were burdensome for children, they became a serious educational element. Thanks to such teachings, children were included in the religious and cultural tradition of the Polish nation (Chłosta 1986, 22). It was also within the family that the child learned the Polish language, Polish traditions and customs. Such practices distinguished Polish families from foreign communities. It was a kind of struggle to preserve traditional values and to pass them on to the younger generation. This was a guarantee of the survival of the Polish nation. Religious education was aimed not only at introducing the child to the Church community, but also at strengthening family ties and cultivating Polish traditions, which were closely related to religious rites (Adamski 2002, 57; Samsel 2011, 98; Kałwa 2015, 234-235).

In the times of national captivity, it was the family and the Church that were the stronghold of Polishness. This was a time of intensive activity raising the awareness of peasants in terms of nationality. One could freely speak Polish among close family members. Parents shaped the system of moral values in their younger generation. Young people took over basic values from their parents, grandparents, other family members and even from wanderers who visited villages and promoted Polishness. Young people listened eagerly and with curiosity to the stories their parents and grandparents talked about their participation in the uprisings. The continuity of culture and tradition was maintained thanks to the family, which for centuries stood guard over traditional values. Thanks to this, it was the family that saved Polish culture despite the lack of its own state (Dyczewski 2002, 36; Zabielski 1980, 70; Syska 1970, 158; Nawrot-Borowska 2010, 195; Samsel 2011, 93). An example can be found in the recollections of one diarist of the time, who came from a peasant family and recorded his own memories: "I remember how my

mother told us about Poland, that it used to be great and rich, but that evil enemies had dismantled it; and she taught us to sing 'Boże Ojczy' and explained the words 'we in captivity, we in captivity' by saying that we were in captivity under Austria, and others under the partition of Muscovites and Prussia" (Chałasiński 1984, 63). In the family, the intergenerational transmission of values was essential for maintaining the continuity of culture, and at the same time served as a guarantee of the survival of society. Introducing the world of values was an inseparable element of raising the young generation (Samsel 2015, 54).

The fall of the Republic of Poland and its subjugation by three invaders put Polish society to a very difficult test. Poles, against everything and everyone, had to maintain their national identity and, in the absence of their own state, maintain their own culture and native language. After the fall of the November Uprising in 1830, the invaders tightened their policy towards Poles, and even more repressions affected them after the defeat of another uprising, this time the January Uprising in 1863. The fight undertaken by the invaders against Polishness, the denationalization of Polish society, along with deportations, prisons, and torture, meant that Poles were forced to take a certain, specific attitude towards the invaders and their actions. The loss of freedom made Poles realize how important their homeland was. The longing for the lost, once powerful state with an incredibly rich past and interesting culture made it one of the most important values, hence families had a sacred duty to pass on the most important values to their descendants (Buzek 1904, 27-31; Krąpiec 1999, 132-136).

The history of the Republic at that time, its political and military weakness, the marches of enemy troops and the occupation of the invaders, left little opportunity for peasants to participate in the defence of the country, which could have had a serious impact on the formation of their political attitude and national awareness (especially in regions such as Lublin, Podlasie and Western Lesser Poland).

At that time, the Church played a very important role. There was a strong bond between it and the Polish nation, which the invaders were unable to break and destroy (Wysocki 1983, 23). The Church, as the only Polish institution, provided Poles with knowledge about both religious, moral and social values. The teachings preached during sermons awakened Polish national consciousness and called for the pursuit of Poland's independence through loyalty to the Catholic religion and strong patriotism. The Catholic religion united Poles, whose faith differed from that of the non-Catholic invaders, who persistently attempted Germanization and Russification, attacking the Catholic Church in order to deprive Poles of its support. However, the more the Church was attacked, the closer the bond between it and the Poles grew (Samsel 2010, 148-149; Krąpiec 1999, 132-136). Polish society, very often participating in masses and services for the homeland, manifested its patriotism in this way. Close cooperation between the Church and Polish patriots resulted in the fusion of Polishness with Catholicism in the 19th century to such an extent that a Pole was and still is associated with this denomination. The Catholic religion was treated as the heritage of the fathers. The combination of the Catholic faith with Polishness had many dimensions, which resulted in the cult of the first patron of

Poland, St. Stanislaus, or the Mother of God as the Queen of Poland. One can say that a certain close symbiosis was created between the Polish nation and the Church, from which both sides drew strength to survive (Samsel 2010, 148-149).

CONCLUSION

The 19th century went down in history as a period that demonstrated the patriotism and courage of the Polish nation, as well as its determination and cooperation in the name of the highest good – a free and independent Fatherland. This period also shaped attitudes such as patriotism, readiness for sacrifice and the willingness to make even the greatest sacrifices. The values formed in families during national captivity left such a profound mark on the consciousness of Poles that, despite the subsequent difficult times, these values preserved the national identity of the Fatherland. It can be said with full certainty that family upbringing, together with the decisive role of the Church at that time – through the fulfilment of its educational functions and values – ensured that Polish society, despite 123 years of national captivity, did not lose its identity, tradition and language.

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