
FROM THE HISTORICAL CALENDAR

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The educational heritage of the Reformation – on the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s protest

We rarely have an opportunity to remember such an important anniversary as the 500th anniversary of Marcin Luther’s proclamation of the famous 95 theses in Wittenberg in 1517.¹ Therefore, it is worth taking a closer look at the effects of his protest, which cannot be overestimated in the field of the history of education. There are two aspects that deserve special attention: the reforms of family life and education. Changes occurring in these areas have been gradual, and their initiation and giving them the right direction is mostly attributed to Luther.

The reforms initiated by Luther should be considered in a broader context of the Renaissance and connected with the concept of *paideia Christi*,² which was created at that time. This concept has evolved gradually, influenced by scholars such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Erasmus of Rotterdam and Johann Ludwig Vives. In their writings, they postulated the need to return to ancient roots, also in terms of pedagogical theory, as well as the need to link it closely with the Biblical tradition. In addition to this, we can also observe the “revival” of rhetorical theory and the inclusion of oratory skills in the educational canon, which had a significant impact on the history of education.

However, the goals of education remained largely unchanged in relation to the medieval times, as education was still supposed to lead people to salvation. The responsibility for this salvation, however, was to be assumed by the faithful to a larger extent. This is particularly evident in the culture of the Reformation. The most important changes result-

¹ TODD, J.M., *Marcin Luter*, translated by: T. SZAFRAŃSKI, Warsaw, 1970; BRECHT, M., *Martin Luter. Sein Weg zur Reformation 1483-1521*, Stuttgart, 1983; MARITAIN, J., *Trzej reformatorzy: Luter, Kartezjusz, Rousseau*, translated by K. MICHALSKI, Warsaw-Ząbki, 2005.

² BUDZYŃSKI, J., *Paideia humanistyczna, czyli wychowanie do kultury. Studium z dziejów klasycznej edukacji w gimnazjach XVI-XVIII wieku (na przykładzie Śląska)*, Częstochowa, 2003, p. 41.

ed from the assumed need to read the Bible individually and to use the Biblical models of behaviour, which had a strong influence on family education in particular. With regard to family, important symptoms were already visible in both catechisms by Martin Luther – they affected the father’s position in a family, its justification and important aspects of responsibility of both parents. In order for it to come into fruition, two conditions had to be met first: elementary education needed to be made widely available, so that the faithful could freely read the Bible, and the sacred texts needed to be made available in their national language. The third need also emerged alongside the former two – the need to create new pedagogical literature, in line with the spirit of the reformed religion. We have to remember that a significant part of all achievements in this field was of a Catholic nature and was written in Latin.

The Reformation movement in some of the German states quickly led to destruction of school system, which was then based on the structure of the Catholic Church, as well as intellectual decline and decay. For some time, there was no alternative to the schools, which were not in line with the new values. Marcin Luther’s attitude to human mind, which he perceived as “the wildest enemy of God”,³ was most probably a significant contribution to this situation. The lack of organised education created a serious practical problem – namely, there was nobody who would prepare young people for their religious and family duties and for public life.

As a result, in 1524 Martin Luther wrote the “Letter to the Mayors and Aldermen of all the Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools”⁴ in order to help young people, and indirectly also his own cause. The first and overarching goal of school education was to prepare children for reading the Bible, but also for roles in secular government, running their homes, raising children and managing their servants. It is worth mentioning that these schools were supposed to provide education for both boys and girls. The letter also emphasised the necessity to teach the three classical languages, which was also one of the basic postulates of education in humanities (*homo trium linguarum*).⁵ It has been noted that these languages prove to be helpful in understanding Biblical texts and necessary in order to make the original text accessible, which could lead to new translations into national languages being produced in the future. At the end of the letter, Luther stressed that the German state needs well-educated husbands and women, and the responsibility for this lies with the aldermen, because the rulers were preoccupied with enjoying the pleasures of temporal life, while the simple folk did not have an understanding of educational needs.

Martin Luther encouraged parents to send their children to schools, he even resorted to pointing out that it was necessary, because schools were supposed to carry out a very

³ BAŁA, P., Szkolnictwo państwowe w myśli Marcina Lutra, *Cywilizacja* 23, 2007.

⁴ LUTHER, M., “Do burmistrzów i rajców wszystkich miast w Niemczech, iż powinni zakładać i utrzymywać szkoły chrześcijańskie” [in:] *Źródła do dziejów wychowania i myśli pedagogicznej*, ed. S. WOŁOSZYN, vol. I, Kielce, 1995, p. 299-300.

⁵ BUDZYŃSKI, J., *Paideia humanistyczna...*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

important task.⁶ Primary education was meant to prepare boys and girls for reading the Bible, familiarise them with the foundations of liberal arts and to provide a basis for public, private and professional activities they would undertake later in their lives.⁷ One could of course accuse Luther, as Łukasz Kurdybacha once did, of partially withdrawing his support for education of broad social strata in the face of peasant wars, but in the end, when the danger of peasant rebellion had passed, the folk education returned to Luther's agenda.⁸

Philip Melancton, *Praeceptor Germaniae*, a renowned humanist and creator of a modern curriculum, quickly assisted Luther in organising the school system,⁹ taking responsibility for secondary and higher education. He became famous for his school ordinance for Saxony, which he announced in 1528 and which became an organisational model for schools in other German territories. First and foremost, it should be noted that Melancton's focus was on classical, formal education, revolving around Latin language and Cicero's rhetoric. He believed that national languages should be absent from schools and that the only language used by students should be Latin in order to improve their command of that language. This was supposed to apply to all schools, including elementary. His ordinances also contained a selection of authors, particularly Renaissance writers and scholars. Apart from the obvious Cicero, the list also featured Erasmus of Rotterdam, Terence, Plautus, Virgil, Ovid and Aesop. School education was to be accompanied by religious education, carried out using the catechism created by Martin Luther. Melancton did not limit himself to preparing the curriculum, as he was an author of a number of textbooks and prepared teachers to work at schools.¹⁰

The idea of secondary education in humanities was developed by Johannes Sturm, student of the Dutch schools of the Brethren of the Common Life, who in 1537 was entrusted with the management of a school in Strasbourg. The new organisation of the school was laid out in the following year in *De ratione studiorum*. From this document we can learn that the education at school was divided into eight stages (grades) with incremental difficulty level, adapted to the students' skills and competencies. In the first grades, children learned elementary skills, along with reading, writing and basics of Latin grammar, in order to move on to rhetoric, dialectic and Greek grammar. In the highest grades, stu-

⁶ LUTHER M., *Eine Predigt, Mart. Luther; das man kinder zur Schulen halten solle*, Wittenberg, 1530. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:70-dtl-0000022593> [accessed on: 3.04.2017].

⁷ MILERSKI, B., O pedagogicznych poglądach Marcina Lutra, *Myśl Protestantka* 1 (1998), p. 29.

⁸ KURDYBACHA, Ł., *Historia wychowania*, vol. I, Warsaw, 1967, p. 346 and further.

⁹ MELANCHTHON, P., *Vnderricht der Visitatorn an die Pfarrhern im Kurfürstenthum zu Sachssen*, Wittenberg 1528, <http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/resolve/display/bsb10204613.html> [accessed on: 3.04.2017]; cf. RATAJCZAK, K., Melancton Filip, [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, ed. T. PILCH, Warsaw 2004, p. 142.

¹⁰ HARTFELDER, K., *Philipp Melancton als Praeceptor Germaniae*, Berlin, 1889, p. 417–188.

dents were supposed to read Latin classics, as well as Greek orators and poets, they would also study Aristotle and Plato, as well as theology.¹¹

Comparing the system and curriculum of the Strasbourg school with the Catholic or Jesuit schools, it is easy to believe that they have quite a lot in common. On the one hand, of course, this is due to drawing upon the same source, namely the traditions of the schools of the Brethren of Common Life, the Renaissance Italian schools and the pedagogical achievements of the Renaissance.¹² On the other hand, we also need to remember that Sturm's school was very popular and attended even by Catholic students.¹³

The influence of Protestant education can be easily seen when taking a look at the organisation of Polish education in humanities. The oldest one of such schools – the Lubrański Academy – was established in 1519 in Poznań, but it evolved to its final form only after 1528, when Krzysztof Hegendorfer, who sympathised with Luther's views, came from Leipzig.¹⁴ It was then that education in humanities was divided into three basic stages: grammar, poetics and rhetoric with dialectic. A similar division could be seen later in Jesuit schools, which divided education into two levels: basic, which concluded with rhetoric and higher, which included the study of philosophy and theology.

However, the cultural contribution of the Reformation was not limited just to education. The Reformation also caused some noteworthy changes in family relations. In *Large Catechism*, Martin Luther emphasised that the best way to achieve salvation is to observe the fourth commandment in family life.¹⁵ The scope of such life included first and foremost respect for parents, total obedience, especially to father, for the sake of God's will.¹⁶ Luther also extended this obligation beyond family, referring to a variety of subordination relationships, e.g. among folk.¹⁷ However, the extensive authority of the father also entailed extensive responsibility, especially in the educational context. The father was supposed to explain religious principles to the household members and keep a watchful eye on their observance, in a way that would not cause anger among his children.¹⁸

Similar to education, significant influences of Lutheran thought are also visible in the Old Polish pedagogical theory. In this context, it is worth noting the fact that this type of literature was written in Polish, in line with the Lutheran empowerment of national lan-

¹¹ STURM, J., Ioannis Sturm de ratione studiorum Gymnasii Hieronymitani Leodii Iudicium, [in:] *Monumenta Paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, vol. I (1540-1556), Romae 1965, p. 632–636.

¹² HYMA, A., *The Brethren of the Common Life*, Eugene, Or. 2004; PIETRZYK, Z., *W kręgu Strasburga: z peregrynacji młodzieży z Rzeczypospolitej polsko-litewskiej w latach 1538-1621*, Krakow 1997.

¹³ Cf. PIETRZYK, Z., *W kręgu Strasburga...*, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ NOWICKI, M., *Akademia Lubrańskiego: organizacja szkoły i działalność wychowawcza*, Warsaw, 2015, p. 59 and further.

¹⁵ LUTHER, M., WANTUŁA, A., LUTHER, M., *Mały katechizm ; Duży katechizm*, Bielsko-Biała, 2000, p. 67.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 65.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 69.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 26, 29, 31, 34, 42.

guages. Among the most noteworthy are several educational treatises from the 16th century by authors such as: Stanisław Murzynowski, Erazm Glicznier Skrzetuski and Marcin Kwiatkowski (translation of the work by Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder).¹⁹ Their texts are characterised with their strong emphasis the necessity of fearing God, which was strongly connected with upbringing and permeated not only religious but also family life. The family, as an institution established by God, had crucial meaning. According to these authors, the spouses had to be carefully chosen, taking their wishes and will into consideration, as marriage was supposed to be based on love, mutual respect, and dedication to the cause of raising offspring in line with the professed values. In addition to the great importance of father in the family, the texts mentioned above also stress the significant role of the mother, which extends beyond her children's early childhood. This was a result of the obligation of both parents to try and provide broadly understood education to their children, which was not limited only to formal schooling. After all, the aim of family life was to be the basis for achieving salvation, and it was the parents' responsibility to prepare their offspring for this task.

Even such a brief outline can already make us aware of the significance of the Reformation, initiated by Martin Luther's protest in 1517, to the history of broadly defined education, from family life to public education. While the wider impact of Lutheran family education on upbringing among other religious denominations still needs to be studied in depth, there is no doubt that the impact of Protestant ideas on European education has been enormous. This was due to several reasons: educational trips, the migrations of Protestant teachers and their work at schools in other areas, the establishment of schools of other denominations in other countries and, last but not least, competition between different types of educational institutions. The pedagogical theory of that time, which took note of the changes, was also crucial for the development of modern European education.

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¹⁹ [MURZYNOWSKI, S.], *Jana Seklucyana Oeconomia albo gospodarstwo: 1546*, ed. Z. CELICHOWSKI, Krakow, 1890., GLICZNER SKRZETUSKI, E., *Książki o wychowaniu dzieci bardzo dobre, pożyteczne i potrzebne, z których rodzicy ku wychowaniu dzieci swych nauk dolożną wyczerpnąć mogą*, ed. W. WISŁOCKI, Krakow, 1876; KWIATKOWSKI, M., *Marcina Kwiatkowskiego Książeczki rozkoszne o poczytym wychowaniu dzieci 1564 i Wszystkiej Liffłanckiej Ziemi opisanie 1567*, ed. Z. CELICHOWSKI, Krakow, 1889.

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