

Reviews

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**Monograph Review: Elżbieta Osewska,
*Rodzina i szkoła w Polsce
wobec współczesnych
wyzwań wychowawczych*
[*The Family and School in Poland:
Contemporary Educational Challenges*],
Kraków 2020**

The name of Prof. Elżbieta Osewska is already an important one among specialists in Polish pastoral theology, catechetics and Christian pedagogy, owing to her immense academic work and research. Because of the process of de-Christianization of the family, as well as changes regarding the concept of the family, its structure and function, it is necessary to refer to the truth of matrimony as an indissoluble and sacramental communion, and the family as a natural community, the domestic Church and our first educational and catechetical environment. From the very beginning of her academic work, Prof. Osewska has referred to the basic educational environments and has portrayed the family as the prime milieu for our growth and education.

Having recognized the gravity of contemporary threats to matrimony and family, Prof. Osewska undertook research on the theology of matrimony and family, family studies, family pedagogy and education for living in matrimony

and family. Preserving and fortifying the truth about matrimony and family requires interdisciplinary research which respects philosophical and theological assumptions regarding marriage and family, so that these assumptions are acknowledged by representatives of various academic disciplines. That is why the organization of international research teams (which undertook interdisciplinary studies of matrimony and family) should be regarded as the Author's significant academic achievement. Prof. Osewska presents the results of these studies during international conferences and in international periodicals. One can observe her engagement also in Poland, where she chaired the ministerial *Zespół do opracowania kierunków rozwoju nauk o rodzinie*. [Team for framing a plan of developing family studies]. As a result of the group's work, the discipline 'family studies' has been restored and the field 'family studies' has been established.

In the light of the above, we may emphasize another monograph by Elżbieta Osewska, *Rodzina i szkoła w Polsce wobec współczesnych wyzwań wychowawczych* [*The Family and School in Poland: Contemporary Educational Challenges*], Kraków 2020, Wydawnictwo naukowe UPJPII, ISBN 978-83-7438-951-8 (print); ISBN 978-83-7438-952-5 (online); DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15633/9788374389525>, pp. 328. Prof. Osewska defines her research approach by referring to Christian pedagogy and pastoral theology in the broad perspective of

family studies. She presents family and school as two basic educational communities from the pedagogical, axiological, existential and theological perspective. She stresses the fact that while the Polish society has been subject to various ideological concepts, it has been the family that has displayed the greatest resistance. Polish family as an educational community has always played a large part in shaping us as Christians and Poles. After World War II, when Polish schools gave way to Socialist totalitarianism, it was the family that successfully impacted the young generation and shaped its consciousness via emotional, socio-moral, spiritual, patriotic and religious education. Even if we assume that the religiosity of the Polish family is folk religiosity, its live culture supported the youngest generation in preserving 'the Polish character', religiosity and its fruit: morality. Emphasizing the truth and functions of the family is especially important nowadays, when the socio-political changes influence the family and weaken its educational role.

Prof. Osewska also underlines the significance of the Polish school. Even though it 'technically' ceased to exist during the partitions of Poland, its students and teachers opposed Germanization and Russification, and advocated the use of the Polish language, at least during religion classes.

During the interwar period (1918–1945), the Polish educational system developed, and the reform of education led to positive changes in the Polish school. However, this was dramatically interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. Nevertheless, even during German occupation of the country, the Poles did not give up, and established underground education. After regaining independence in 1989, debates began on the educational vision of the school. The debates have been about the reflection of the new situation in Poland, but also deal with philosophical, educational, pedagogical and theological disputations on the role of school in the modern society. In the first stage of these disputations, the need to refer to the educational experience of the interwar period was stressed. Also, the possibility to create the educational program in accordance with the assumptions of Christianity, which contributed to the restoration of religion classes. Subsequent stages brought about a clash of various opinions, including a new approach to Marxist and liberal currents. As a result, the school started to reflect the political struggle. Prof. Osewska stresses that it is especially liberal education that is particularly dangerous from the axiological and pedagogical perspective. For it is this kind of education that deepens axiological chaos (already present in the Polish society) and hinders the education of people in values. In her book, Prof. Osewska reviews the condition and scope of cooperation between two key educational milieus: the family and school, from the perspective of ideological, political, social, cultural, moral, religious and educational changes that have been taking place in Poland since 1989. Taking a broader perspective of the North Atlantic civilization, Prof. Osewska takes the challenges of contemporary family and school as the starting point of her research.

In her research project, Prof. Osewska is guided by several assumptions which elucidate her research perspective. She starts with the issue of upbringing, which she defines on the basis of Christian personalism, and Polish personalists in particular. Secondly, she emphasizes the need to diagnose the present socio-cultural context and to look for sensible solutions to contemporary threats and challenges. Thirdly, she acknowledges the family and school communities as the fundamental milieus that contribute to our growth and education, despite their educational deficiencies. Fourthly, she perceives upbringing in the family as the right and moral duty of parents. At the same time, she reminds us that no educational institution can eliminate the role of the family. Rather, it should creatively cooperate with the family and encourage respect for its rights. Last but not least, the family and school need to cooperate with the Church in order to strengthen education, while maintaining their own character and complementing their activities.

Responding to the contemporary challenges, the author recalls the truth about the human being as a person, with values and dignity that emanate from the act of creation by God, salvation and sanctification. She stresses that a human being as a person is not only a thinking being who is free and capable of creating culture, but is, above all, open towards others and called to respond to God's gift of love, through interpersonal relationships with Him and other people. Prof. Osewska highlights the connection between adopting certain anthropology and education that is implemented. She sketches the main goals of education, as well as the integral education, which is consistent with the implication of Christian thinking. Her answer to the axiological chaos is education in values: faith, hope and love in particular. At the end of her book, Prof. Osewska describes pastoral and pedagogical conclusions that sum up her research. The author encourages the readers to conduct further studies by providing extensive literature on the subject.

Prof. Osewska expands upon the issue thoroughly and motivates us to undertake a broader discussion in Poland on the significance of contemporary family and school in the process of educating the young generation.