

ARTICLES

Olgierd Kiec, Piety, Churches and Society in East-Central Europe during the 19th and 20th Centuries

In the last two centuries fundamental changes of society and civilization took place, which had affected religion as well. Already at the end of the 18th century a “disenchantment” had begun; yet, that did not mean a lessening influence of religious institutions, but rather a profound change and modernization. These alterations took mostly place in Western Europe, but it is difficult to draw a sharp dividing line between the so-called “civilized” West and the “backward” East. Between Russia and Germany there were large transitional zones. East and West Prussia constituted such zones, in which the different religions, nations and ethnicities experienced the process of modernization.

These changes were not so much a secularization or loss of religious relevance, but more an individualization and privatization of religious practices. On the one hand more and more people disassociated themselves from the institutional churches, while on the other hand new prayer and confession groups evolved and searched for deeper religious experience, not always in accordance with the official church doctrine. Churches answered with the modernization of church structures, which offered an effective spiritual and pastoral service adapted to the needs of different social groups and professions. These modernized structures and new ways of communication served to “re-enchant” the world anew. At the same time individual revelations of Saint Mary and Jesus, as well as pilgrimages began to play an important role.

The attempt of the churches to stop the progress of this process of drifting apart of Christians – Catholics as well as Protestants – was not successful, however. Tensions between modernists and followers of different forms of popular beliefs kept leading to arguments within the institutional churches. Clerical leaders tried to keep control of the new religious movements, which were increasingly propagated by non-European missionaries of various Christian denominations.

Grzegorz Jasiński, From Pietist Religiosity to the Endeavour to Retain the National Identity. The Christian Fellowship Movement (Gemeinschaftsbewegung) in Masuria in the 19th and 20th Centuries (until 1956)

In the 19th century the Christian Fellowship Movement (CFM) (Gemeinschaftsbewegung) was a haven of conservatism. However, the attempt to retain earlier traditions (especially the preservation of the Polish and Lithuanian language as *lingua sacra*) did not mean a resistance against the state. On the contrary, in accordance with their principles the CFM recognized almost any authority as long as it did not violate the generally accepted norms.

After World War I the CFM came closer to the official church helped by their common conservative convictions and a critical attitude towards the confession politics of the Weimar Republic. When, after 1933, the Church Struggle began, the members of the CFM stood side by side with the Confessing Church connected by their common neo-Pietist confession. However, that did not mean that they rejected the state completely. After the most violent phase of the Church Struggle had subsided, the dislike of the National-Socialist rulers decreased. Yet, the state authorities distrusted the CFM to a certain extent, due to a certain independence and the participation in the Church Struggle even after it had stopped.

After World War II, from 1945 to 1956, the Polish Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession did not succeed in winning the trust of the German believers, in this situation the CFM played an important role. It was no longer an organized movement, but the mental neo-Pietist structures had been retained. The horrors of the war intensified the eschatological mood in parts of the Movement. That is why some members took the new political situation as a punishment for having ignored God

's commands. Again, for part of the believers, working in unofficial community structures offered a chance to satisfy their basic religious needs, which the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession could not still on account of the weakness of its organization. Right from the beginning, the main problem was the question of language. Different from the 19th century, the church language was German. That led to the fact that part of the CFM was mistrusted by the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, which propagated a policy of Polonization, and, at the same time, met with open hostility of the police and the Polish administration. Within the CFM German national attitudes escalated, and the opportunity to vent them was almost as important as the religious element of the meetings.