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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK CHURCH BETWEEN THE PERIOD OF 1920–1931: A REFLECTION ON ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

This study deals with the issue of religious education in the Czechoslovak Hussite Church during its formation and initial institutional development. The introductory section provides an overview of the main authors (either as teachers or members) associated with the Czechoslovak Hussite Church who dealt with the issue of religious education both theoretically and practically. The main part of the study focuses on the historical development of religious education in the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church during the years 1920–1931. It analyzes the formation of awareness of the necessity of religious education in the new church, Karel Farský's contribution to its conceptual anchoring, and the gradual promotion of unity in religious education. Attention is paid to the creation and development of textbooks, catechisms, and curricula, the importance of Alois Spisar, and changes in teaching practice in connection with the institutionalization of the church. The study shows that the development of religious education was closely linked to the formation of the identity of the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church and its efforts to provide systematic and modern religious education.

Keywords: religious education, Czechoslovak Hussite Church, church formation and institutionalization, Karel Farský, Alois Spisar, textbooks and catechisms, church identity, 1920–1931

Streszczenie

WYCHOWANIE RELIGIJNE W KOŚCIELE CZECHOSŁOWACKIM W LATACH 1920–1931: REFLEKSJA EPOKOWA I ROZWÓJ HISTORYCZNY

Autorka artykułu porusza problematykę wychowania religijnego w Czechosłowackim Kościele Husyckim w okresie jego powstania oraz pierwszych przemian instytucjonalnych. W części wstępnej przedstawiono przegląd głównych autorów związanych pedagogicznie lub wyznaniowo z Czechosłowackim Kościołem Husyckim, którzy zajmowali się i zajmują problematyką wychowania religijnego zarówno w ujęciu teoretycznym, jak i praktycznym. Główna część opracowania poświęcona jest historycznemu rozwojowi wychowania religijnego w Kościele czechosłowackim (husyckim) w latach 1920–1931. Przeanalizowano w niej kształtowanie się świadomości potrzeby wychowania religijnego w nowym Kościele, wkład Karla Farskiego w jego koncepcyjne ugruntowanie oraz stopniowe wprowadzanie jednolitości wychowania religijnego. Uwagę poświęcono powstaniu i rozwojowi podręczników, katechizmów i programów nauczania, znaczeniu Aloisa Spisara oraz zmianom w praktyce nauczania związanym z instytucjonalizacją Kościoła. W niniejszym opracowaniu ukazano, że rozwój wychowania religijnego był ściśle powiązany z kształtowaniem tożsamości Kościoła czechosłowackiego (husyckiego) oraz jego dążeniem do systematycznego i nowoczesnego kształcenia religijnego.

Słowa kluczowe: edukacja religijna, Czechosłowacki Kościół Husycki, powstanie i instytucjonalizacja Kościoła, Karel Farský, Alois Spisar, podręczniki i katechizmy, tożsamość Kościoła, 1920–1931

Introduction

The history of religious education in Czech theological and religious-pedagogical thought across the main Christian denominations has not yet been dealt with in the form of a comprehensive synthesis or systematic comparison. Religious education is usually developed in the Czech theological environment as part of practical theology and is also expressed from a broader historical and interdisciplinary context.

Theologian Ján Liguš, who works at the Hussite Theological Faculty of Charles University, defined catechetics as a practical-theological discipline that bases its broader perspective on model situations from the Old and New Testaments. He laid the foundations for a catechetical methodology based on biblical testimony as it was applied in church practice before and immediately after the Velvet Revolution in some Protestant churches and as it was formed within the framework of practical-theological professional discussions[1]. He focused on guiding children in faith and towards faith in various religious and educational situations,

1 Ján Liguš et al., *Náboženská výchova a výuka* (Brno: L. Marek, 2005), 154–164.

and therefore he was also interested in the skills of catechists, including their pedagogical, hermeneutical, and communication skills[2], always emphasizing the personal qualities of teachers and a living faith in Jesus Christ[3].

His concept was continued by a number of his students, notably Noemi Bravená and Tomáš Butta. Noemi Bravená, a theologian working at the same institution, introduced the concepts of "the transcendence of children" and "the theological competence of children" into Czech religious education[4]. As a lecturer in the *Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking* (RWCT) program, she deals with pedagogical constructivism and its application to religious education in schools, families, and churches, focusing on various didactic applications to theological topics. On the importance of developing critical thinking, she says: "It is easier to get children to articulate their reflections on religion if they are used to not only talking about religious topics, but also thinking about them from multiple perspectives"[5].

Tomáš Butta has long been systematically involved in the issue of religious education in the Czechoslovak Hussite Church. His approach builds on that of the older generation of teachers in the Hussite tradition. He is the author of a number of professional and methodological publications in the field of religious education[6]. As a Hussite theologian and an important representative of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, he is involved in shaping the current concept of religious education in this church and anchoring it in its tradition and contemporary context.

1. The context of the emergence of religious education in the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church and Karel Farský[7]

The beginnings of religious education in the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church are closely linked to religious instruction in the Roman Catholic Church at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This developmental context is understandable, as the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church was established in 1920 as the result of long-term reform efforts that had been developing since the second half of the nineteenth century and at the same time

2 Ján Liguš, Noemi Bravená, Ludvík Dřímal, Pavel Kolář, Alena Špačková et al., *Prakticko-teologické aspekty mezilidské komunikace* (Sokolov: Flavia Viera, 2019), 57.

3 Ján Liguš et al. *Religious Education and Teaching* (Brno: L. Marek, 2005), 84–89, 154–164.

4 Noemi Bravená, *"Do Not Be Concerned Only About Yourself..." Transcendence and Its Importance for the Socialization and Formation of a Child's Personality*, trans. Angelo Shaun Franklin, Beiträge zur Kinder- und Jugendtheologie Band 43, hrsg. Petra Freudenberger-Lötz (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2019), 59–68.

5 Noemi Bravená, *Teologie dětí – vznik, definice, základy metodologie a oborové didaktiky* (Praha: HTF UK, 2021).

6 Tomáš Butta, *Kapitoly z katechetiky. Nástin náboženské výchovy a vzdělávání* (Praha: Husův institut teologických studií, 2018).

7 In 1971, the Czechoslovak Church adopted the epithet "Hussite". In the following text, I use the name Czechoslovak Church when referring to the form of the church prior to 1971.

as the concrete realization of the principle of the ever-reforming church (*ecclesia semper reformanda*). The Catholic modernist movement had a fundamental influence on its formation, with the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak Republic providing the decisive historical and social framework[8].

Karel Farský was a key figure in the newly founded national church. A priest, theologian, and educator, he influenced, among other things, teaching activities in the early days of the new church. He wrote catechetical works, including, for example, *Československý katechismus* (*Czechoslovak Catechism*) and *Biblickou dějepravu – starozákonní* (*Old Testament Biblical History*)[9].

From the very beginning, the Czechoslovak Church was aware of the importance of religious education. It understood religious education in the broadest sense of the word, not only as catechesis, but as education in which everyone should participate, that is, believers, families, and the Christian community. This significantly reflected the principle of the priesthood of believers, a doctrine which became one of the defining principles of the church. In her article from March 1928[10], Kučerová reflects on Farský's conviction about the fundamental importance of education for the formation of the human personality and the broader social framework. Farský perceived education as a fundamental and long-term process that has a deeper meaning than simply imparting knowledge or disciplinary guidance. He takes a strict stance against the teaching practices of Catholic catechists, "for no authoritarianism, however infallible – at that at the very least – can replace the art of education and academic training"[11]. In education, it is the personality of the teacher that is decisive, not the external means of education. The personal example of the educator is determinative since it is pedagogically effective, unlike commands, prohibitions, or punishments. Teachers should work primarily on themselves in terms of moral and personal growth, and their educational influence should be non-violent and indirect, based on the authority of their personality rather than their function as teachers. "The disrespect of pupils towards their teacher must not be attributed solely to the depravity of the pupils, as is customary in the Roman Catholic Church. Experience teaches us that a good teacher is rewarded with gratitude and love"[12]. In Farský's concept of education and didactics, we see a clear departure from the Catholic concept of education and a shift towards the tradition represented in history primarily by the thinking of the theologian, teacher, and bishop of the Unity of the Brethren, Jan Amos Komenský. Let us recall that Comenius started from the conviction that man was created in the image of God, whereby he does not

8 For more information, see the anthology: Kolektiv autorů, *90. let Církve československé husitské* (Praha: Církev československá husitská, 2010).

9 The publication of *Biblické dějepravy – novozákonní (Biblical History: The New Testament)* did not take place. For more on Farský, see: Miloslav Kaňák, *Dr. Karel Farský* (Prague: Blahoslav, 1951).

10 Článek Marie Kučerová, "Několik myšlenek o pedagogických zásadách a učitelské činnosti dra Karla Farského", *Školská hlídka* 2, 7 (1928): unpaginated, introductory page.

11 Kučerová, "Několik myšlenek o pedagogických zásadách a učitelské činnosti dra Karla Farského".

12 Farský's words from the work *Přelom*. Quoted according to Kučerová, *"*Několik myšlenek o pedagogických zásadách a učitelské činnosti dra Karla Farského".

understand sin as a complete falling away from God, but as a distortion of this image. The image of God in man is not destroyed, but only obscured, and it is therefore possible to approach it again. In Comenius's conception, the key means of this renewal is education, which enables the gradual correction of man and his return to his original destiny. Human free will and the individual's own efforts play an essential role in this process[13], as well as didactic methods, personality, and the lifelong education of teachers. In these respects, Comenius is very modern and ahead of his time. Some of his ideas can also be found implicitly in Farský's educational reflections. In addition to Karel Farský, theologians such as Alois Spisar, Rudolf Urban, and Jaroslav Halbhuber dealt with issues of religious education in the early days of the church. The ideas of religious education were extremely lively among the teachers of the Czechoslovak Church, which was reflected in their efforts to hold regular meetings and systematically offer deliberations on this issue in a professional manner. The teachers of religion of the Czechoslovak Church joined together in a professional association called *Spolek učitelů náboženství Církve československé* (*The Association of Teachers of Religion of the Czechoslovak Church*). The association was established in 1927 and its activities included publishing the magazine *Idea* between 1931 and 1942[14].

2. Alois Spisar and the ideological foundations of religious education

The fundamental issues of the early period of religious education were the ideological unity of religious teaching, the creation of textbooks and curricula, and education, including the legal status of religious education teachers. In 1927, Alois Spisar stated in his article[15] that religious teaching in the Czechoslovak Church was inconsistent and emphasized the need for its ideological and methodological consolidation. Spisar pointed out that despite the significant development of the church since its establishment, no unified concept of religious education or corresponding textbooks had yet been created, leading to fragmentation in interpretation and differences in content and approach between individual teachers. This situation is perceived as unsustainable, especially in view of the Church's educational responsibility towards young people. "But I just want to seriously point out that it is high time for all those who care about the Church and who have the ability and duty to care for the future of the Church to get to work and provide religion teachers and children with textbooks for religious education"[16]. According to Spisar, ideological unity in teaching is a necessary prerequisite for the creation of quality textbooks.

13 The ultimate expression of this concept is Comenius' project for the universal reform of human affairs, formulated in his work *Obecná porada o nápravě věcí lidských.* Compare: Kamila Veverková, "Myšlenky Komenského jako inspirace pro vzdělávání v současnosti", in: *Blahoslav 2022. Rodinný Kalendář Církve Československé Husitské*, ed. Olga Nytrová (Praha: Církev československá husitská, 2022), 59–60.

14 According to: Liguš et al., *Náboženská výchova a výuka*, 122.

15 Alois Spisar, „Ideová jednota výuky náboženské v CČS a učebnice", *Školská hlídka* I, 1 (1927): 2.

16 Spisar, „Ideová jednota výuky náboženské v CČS a učebnice", 2.

And this has already been done in principle. This principle is the definition of religion, Christianity, and the Church in the spirit of the theology of the Czechoslovak Church. He refers to the early Christian Church, whose "doctrine developed and yet was still taught to them. The people, even in schools. So shall we. We will develop and yet teach. We need textbooks written from a unified standpoint and in one spirit. And that is possible"[17]. Spisar directly encourages the Association of Catechists to make a decisive appeal to the Central Council of the Czechoslovak Church to write textbooks for the entire church for elementary, secondary, and municipal schools. These textbooks should not be the result of individual initiatives, but rather the collective work of catechists. Spisar rejected the adoption of older models and emphasized the need for teaching in line with the spirit of the Czechoslovak Church. Spisar's text is one of the fundamental efforts to systematize and institutionalize religious education in the Czechoslovak Church, which should be ideologically unified, pedagogically thought out, and organizationally managed so that it can fulfil its educational and spiritual goals.

3. Alois Spisar and the issue of education and the legal status of teachers

Another area that the young church had to deal with in the context of religious education was the question of the education and legal status of religious teachers. An important source on this issue is Alois Spisar's paper presented at the Synod of Clergy[18]. Spisar rejected the view that religious education teachers, catechists, could work long-term without adequate education. He admits that in the early days of the Czechoslovak Church, a provisional solution was adopted out of necessity, whereby even people with insufficient qualifications were allowed to teach, but this situation was considered temporary and unsustainable. The catechetical office is placed on an equal footing with other spiritual services and should not be considered inferior. Spisar demanded that catechists have: a general education corresponding to that of teachers at the schools where they work, a theological education that enables them to truly teach religion, not just formally lecture, and methodological and pedagogical training, especially in the field of pedagogy and the methodology of religious education. A catechist does not have to be a clergyman, but "must be educated in general, theological, and methodological terms"[19]. Spisar demanded the creation of a unified system of examinations and approvals for catechists, according to the type of school (elementary, middle, high). Without passing these exams, a catechist should not be granted definitive ecclesiastical authorization to teach. He proposed a comprehensive catechetical concept that included the creation of catechetical commissions at church offices, regular monitoring

17 Spisar, „Ideová jednota výuky náboženské v CČS a učebnice", 2.

18 Published in *Školská hlídka*. Alois Spisar, „Vzdělání a právní postavení učitelů náboženství v CČS", *Školská hlídka* 1, 41 (1927): 14–15.

19 Spisar, "Vzdělání a právní postavení učitelů náboženství v CČS", 14–15.

of teaching through classroom observations, and the obligation for catechists to report on their activities (i.e., the number of students, the scope of teaching, the attendance at church services, and the textbooks used). The aim of this concept was to eliminate randomness and ensure a uniform level of religious education. Spisar also pointed out the unclear and inadequate legal status of religious teachers in the Czechoslovak Church. He paid particular attention to the issue of revoking ecclesiastical authorization, which must not be done arbitrarily. He explicitly demanded that catechists could not be deprived of their authorization without prior investigation, hearing, and decision by the competent authority, that rules for disciplinary proceedings be clearly established, and that catechists have the possibility of legal protection against church authorities. Spisar also dealt with the issue of financial and social security for catechists. He demanded that the Church strive to equalize salaries and to include previous catechetical service in both church and public security systems[20].

4. Examination regulations of the Czechoslovak Church, 1927

One of the first examination regulations was *the Examination Regulations for Teacher Qualifications to Teach Czechoslovak Religion in Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Diocese of West Bohemia (Prague), which was approved on November 5, 1927, as binding for both Examiners and Candidates*[21]. These examination regulations were published in *Školská hlídka* in January 1928[22]. It mainly concerns the organization, content, and control of religious education in the Czechoslovak Church and the qualification requirements for teachers of religion. It defines the areas that make up the professional training of catechists, namely biblical studies, doctrine, ethics, general and Czech church history, pedagogy, psychology, didactics, liturgy, and school regulations[23]. It also includes recommended textbooks and study literature, often with references to the works of Karel Farský[24]. A significant part is devoted to examinations of competence to teach religion in general and municipal schools. The conditions for admission to the examination, its course, the content of the individual examination areas, and the evaluation scale are specified[25]. The examinations were usually oral, conducted before a special examination committee, among whose members we find the names of prominent theologians such as Alois Spisar,

20 Spisar, "Vzdělání a právní postavení učitelů náboženství v CČS", 15.

21 It was approved at the plenary meeting of the diocesan council in Prague on November 5, 1927.

22 Jan Roháček, „Zkušební řád pro zkoušky učitelské způsobilosti k vyučování náboženství československého na školách obecných a měšťanských v diecési západočeské (pražské)", *Školská hlídka* 2, 5 (1928): 30–32.

23 Roháček, „Zkušební řád pro zkoušky učitelské způsobilosti k vyučování náboženství československého na školách obecných a měšťanských v diecési západočeské (pražské)", 31–32.

24 Roháček, „Zkušební řád pro zkoušky učitelské způsobilosti k vyučování náboženství československého na školách obecných a měšťanských v diecési západočeské (pražské)", 32.

25 Roháček, „Zkušební řád pro zkoušky učitelské způsobilosti k vyučování náboženství československého na školách obecných a měšťanských v diecési západočeské (pražské)", 30–31.

František Kovář, and František Kalous[26]. The certification of religion teachers, which is awarded on the basis of exam results, is regulated, and its levels ("excellent", "competent") are defined. The consequences of failure and the possibility of retaking the exam are also described[27].

5. The supervision of religious education and the responsibility of teachers

The same issue of *Školská hlídka* also published a supervision of Czechoslovak religious education which set rules for the performance of religious education, its control, and the responsibility of teachers[28]. Religious education was to be conducted exclusively "in the spirit and intent of the Church"[29] and only "on the basis of approved curricula, textbooks, and teaching aids"[30]. Teachers were required to "prepare properly" for lessons[31], adhere to the established timetable, and begin lessons at the appointed time. Timetables and overviews of classes taught are to be sent regularly to the diocesan council. Teachers' obligations in the event of absence or extraordinary obstacles to teaching are specified and must be reported in a timely manner to the spiritual administration and the school. Teachers are also required to report their entry into service to the relevant church and school authorities. The obligation of teachers to strive for trust, respect, and a loving relationship with children and parents is emphasized[32]. The second part of the text is devoted to the supervision of religious education[33]. The supreme supervision is exercised by the bishop of the diocese and the church inspector, or where appropriate, by authorized parish priests. Supervision includes classroom observation, checking compliance with the curriculum, and discipline in teaching. If deficiencies are found, teachers are first warned and asked to make corrections; repeated violations are followed by further measures. Disciplinary proceedings and the levels of punishment that the diocesan council may impose are also defined. These include reprimands, warnings, transfers to a worse position, temporary suspension, or permanent suspension. The penalties imposed are recorded in the teacher's qualification records[34].

26 Roháček, „Zkušební řád pro zkoušky učitelské způsobilosti k vyučování náboženství československého na školách obecných a měšťanských v diecési západočeské (pražské)", 32.

27 Roháček, „Zkušební řád pro zkoušky učitelské způsobilosti k vyučování náboženství československého na školách obecných a měšťanských v diecési západočeské (pražské)", 30–31.

28 Josef A. Černý, „Vyučování náboženství československému a dozor k němu", *Školská hlídka* 2, 5 (1928): 33. The proposal was approved at a plenary meeting of the diocesan council in Prague on November 5, 1927.

29 Černý, „Vyučování náboženství československému a dozor k němu", 33.

30 Černý, „Vyučování náboženství československému a dozor k němu", 33.

31 Černý, „Vyučování náboženství československému a dozor k němu", 33.

32 Černý, „Vyučování náboženství československému a dozor k němu", 33.

33 Černý, „Vyučování náboženství československému a dozor k němu", 33.

34 Černý, „Vyučování náboženství československému a dozor k němu", 33.

6. A religious educational curriculum

Since the Czechoslovak Church wanted to work methodically and systematically in the field of religious education, it was necessary to develop a religious educational curriculum for elementary, middle, and high schools. The need for a curriculum was closely related to the requirements for religious education formulated shortly after the establishment of the Czechoslovak Church by the aforementioned Alois Spisar. By 1931, the teachings of the Czechoslovak Church had taken shape, but there was an effort to define the curriculum. In practice, this resulted in guidelines for the direction of religious education.

As early as 1921, the church newspaper *Český zápas* published a school curriculum[35] designed by Karel Farský[36]. Farský's religious education curriculum is based on the framework of Catholic religious education in nineteenth-century schools, whose inspiration is evident in its structure, but Karel Farský significantly expanded and revised its content for the needs of the new church[37]. The curriculum was organized according to the principle of gradual progression, with individual topics returning at a higher level of understanding throughout the school year. In elementary school, first-grade instruction focused on basic Christian concepts and the significance of major holidays, especially Christmas and Easter. In the second grade, the Old Testament was studied, and in the third grade, the New Testament and the sacraments. The fourth grade focused on doctrine, especially the interpretation of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and a basic overview of Czech church history, while in the fifth grade, the core of the teaching was morality based on the Ten Commandments[38]. In lower grades at municipal schools, the curriculum of elementary schools was expanded and systematized, while upper grades focused on Czech church history, world religions, and the history of Christianity. Secondary school education built upon these thematic areas by further deepening them in broader historical and theological contexts[39]. Another was the curriculum *Osnovy náboženského vyučování církve československé pro školní rok 1925–1926* (*Curriculum for Religious Education of the Czechoslovak Church for the 1925–1926 School Year*) proposed by Kalous, Roháček, and Šimšík in 1925. They do not represent a separate concept of religious education, but essentially only the layout of Farský's *A Biblical Reader I: The Old Testament*. Other religious topics are only marginally represented in them[40].

In 1927, another curriculum was drawn up, which served at the time as a practical framework for religious work in schools and was used as a practical aid for teaching[41].

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35 Karel Farský, *Vyučovací osnova náboženská v církvi československé z r. 1920–1921* (Praha: Tiskové a nakladatelské družstvo Církve československé, 1921).

36 An overview of Farský's significance is provided by Liguš et al., *Náboženská výchova a výuka*, 122–123.

37 Liguš et al., *Náboženská výchova a výuka*, 122–123.

38 Liguš et al., *Náboženská výchova a výuka*, 122.

39 According to: Liguš et al., *Náboženská výchova a výuka*, 122.

40 According to: Jaroslav Halbhuber, "Curriculum of the Czechoslovak Church for elementary, middle, and secondary schools", *Náboženská revue Církve československé* 8 (1936): 35.

41 This was the Antonín Hradec, "Osnovy náboženské výuky CČS pro únor", *Školská hlídka* 1, 1 (1927): 2–3. According to: Jaroslav Halbhuber, „Učebné osnovy náboženství čsl. církve pro školy obecné, měšťanské a střední", *Náboženská revue Církve československé* 8 (1936): 35.

In 1930, Jaroslav Halbhuber prepared a curriculum that he designed with regard to the current social and educational conditions[42]. In his article from 1938, Halbhuber states that only Karel Farský's curriculum also included teaching in secondary schools and that none of the curricula published at that time had been approved by the Central Council of the Czechoslovak Church. They were recommended for teaching, but not mandatory[43].

The Czechoslovak Church's religious education curriculum was published monthly in *Školská hlídka*[44], a supplement to the magazine *Český zápas.* It was generally conceived thematically and chronologically, with a strong focus on biblical narratives, the person of Jesus Christ, and the ethical and educational dimensions of religion[45]. In the lower grades of elementary schools, narrative and pictorial elements predominate, introducing the basic events of Jesus's life[46], his actions, relationships with people, and basic moral attitudes such as love for one's neighbour, helping the weak, and sacrifice. In higher grades, the content of teaching is expanded to include a deeper reflection on religious life, the history of salvation, and moral issues, including the relationship of the individual to society, justice, responsibility, and criticism of evil. The prophetic tradition, an emphasis on social ethics, and the connection between faith and practical action occupy an important place here. Teaching gradually moves from biblical stories to more general religious, cultural, and social topics[47]. The curriculum for secondary schools places greater emphasis on symbolism, liturgy, the history of Christianity, and moral teaching, including a look at the historical forms of the church. A characteristic feature here is the effort to link religious teaching with general cultural education and the thinking of the time[48].

7. The codification of religious educational content: the document *Učení náboženství křesťanského (Teaching the Christian Religion)*

In 1931, the Church Council of the Czechoslovak Church adopted the document *Teaching the Christian Religion for Believers of the Czechoslovak Church*, which systematically defined the content of religious education for national and secondary schools[49].

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42 *Učebná osnova náboženské výuky církve československé pro národní školy (The Curriculum for Religious Instruction of the Czechoslovak Church for National Schools).* According to: Halbhuber, „Učebné osnovy náboženství čsl. církve pro školy obecné, měšťanské a střední", 36.

43 Compare: Halbhuber, „Učebné osnovy náboženství čsl. církve pro školy obecné, měšťanské a střední", 36.

44 This is a unique source on the history of religious education in the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church.

45 As an example, I will use the curriculum from February 1927, which was drafted by Antonín Hradec. Compare: Hradec, "Osnovy náboženské výuky CČS pro únor", 2–3.

46 An example is Jesus' stay in the desert. Compare: Hradec, „Osnovy náboženské výuky CČS pro únor", 2.

47 Examples include the topics: idolatry, images and statues in religious life, new people, new ideas. Compare: Hradec, „Osnovy náboženské výuky CČS pro únor", 2.

48 Topics such as: the reign of the wise Solomon, the Popes in Avignon, the decline of the Christian spirit. Compare: Hradec, "Osnovy náboženské výuky CČS pro únor", 3.3.

49 Halbhuber, „Učebné osnovy náboženství čsl. církve pro školy obecné, měšťanské a střední", 34–39.

This document was prepared under the leadership of Alois Spisar and František Kalous. In connection with Alois Spisar's role in the adoption of the doctrinal document, it should be emphasized that his work in the field of religious education did not end there. Spisar subsequently played a significant role in the creation of other religious textbooks and doctrinal texts[50].

This step was followed in 1932 by the adoption *A Framework for the Curriculum for Religious Instruction and Education of the Czechoslovak Church*, which was prepared by the school commission of the Central Council of the Czechoslovak Church and approved by the Central Council of the Church. This curriculum became a binding standard for religious education and formed the basis for the subsequent creation of religious education textbooks[51]. According to the 1932 curriculum, religious education in the Czechoslovak Church was divided according to school levels and progressed from elementary religious instruction to a more systematic explanation of doctrine, morality, and liturgy. In elementary school, teaching in the lower grades focused on basic religious concepts and biblical images from the Old and New Testaments, supplemented by an overview of the history of Christianity with a special emphasis on the Czech environment. In the higher grades, the focus shifted to the beginnings of the doctrine and morals of the Czechoslovak Church and to an introduction of the liturgy. At secondary school, teaching focused on a more systematic selection from the Old and New Testaments, doctrine, moral teaching, and liturgy, supplemented by a brief overview of the history of religion and Christianity. Secondary school education built on this content by deepening it, especially in the area of religious studies and apologetics of the religious views of the Czechoslovak Church. Part of the teaching at all levels also included prayers, religious poetry, singing of hymns and church songs, reading religious literature, and occasional participation in worship services and sacraments[52].

8. The first religious textbooks of the Czechoslovak Church

The issue of religious textbooks was not systematically addressed in the Czechoslovak Church from the outset. The first religious textbook in the Czechoslovak Church was *The Czechoslovak Catechism*, which was intended for young people and believers of the church and compiled by Karel Farský and František Kalous. The publication was approved by the diocesan councils of Prague and East Bohemia and published in 1922 in Příbram[53].

50 For example: Alois Spisar, *Křesťanská věrouka v duchu církve československé pro školy měšťanské a střední* (Praha: Ústřední rada církve československé, 1932).

51 According to: Halbhuber, „Učebné osnovy náboženství čsl. církve pro školy obecné, měšťanské a střední", 36.

52 According to: Halbhuber, „Učebné osnovy náboženství čsl. církve pro školy obecné, měšťanské a střední", 36–37.

53 Jaroslav Halbhuber, „Učebnice československého náboženství", *Náboženská revue Církve československé* 8 (1936): 99.

At Farský's initiative, a draft textbook entitled *Christian Religious Instruction for Believers of the Czechoslovak Church* was prepared in 1929 and expanded by František Kalous and Alois Spisar. After minor revisions, the text was adopted in 1931 by the Czechoslovak Church Assembly as the basis for religious teaching. According to contemporary evaluations, both textbooks were used primarily by teachers and were later replaced by newer educational texts[54].

The question of the relationship to the catechism in the early period of the Czechoslovak Church represents a remarkable aspect of its religious and educational concept. The importance of the catechism within the Roman Catholic tradition is indisputable, and the emergence of the Czechoslovak Church is closely linked to the environment of Catholic modernism. In the initial phase of its existence, the Czechoslovak Church did not reject the catechism as a form and method of teaching, but accepted and used it. However, the catechism soon became the subject of debate regarding its suitability as a means of religious instruction and education. In later periods, the religious textbooks of the Czechoslovak Church gradually moved away from the catechism form, and in the 1931 publication *Teaching the Christian Religion*, this method was completely abandoned. This catechism itself was an expression of radical liberalism and aroused opposition both in other churches and in the Czechoslovak Church itself. Radical liberalism was one of the orientations of the new church, but this direction was soon abandoned.

Another important publication was *A Biblical Reader I: The Old Testament*, written by Karel Farský. The textbook was approved by the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in 1925 and published in the same year. It contained retold biblical accounts from the Old Testament written in understandable language and with the author's attempts to preserve the biblical wording or at least the biblical style. The biblical stories were often interpreted on a historical basis, which led to their partial deviation from the traditional biblical narrative and to the local reworking of some of the stories[55].

The textbook *Seménka*, *náboženská prvouka Církve československé* (*Seeds: A Religious Primer of the Czechoslovak Church*)[56], compiled by Jaroslav Halbhuber and illustrated by Eduard Neumann, was approved by church and state authorities in 1928. It was intended primarily for the youngest children, and its language and content corresponded to their mental level, while later editions were expanded to include more advanced pupils. Thanks to repeated editions with expanded content, it became one of the most widely used religious textbooks in the Czechoslovak Church[57].

54 Halbhuber, „Učebnice československého náboženství", 99.

55 According to: Halbhuber, „Učebnice československého náboženství", 100.

56 The Czechoslovak Hussite Church continued this tradition and in 2019 published a textbook entitled *Kořínky víry* (*Roots of Faith*). Compare: Vladimíra Marková, Jana Krajčiříková, Tomáš Butta, Zdeněk Kučera, Anna Radová, Oldřich Nováček, *Kořínky víry. Učebnie náboženství* (*Roots of Faith: A Textbook on Religion*) (Prague: Czechoslovak Hussite Church, 2019).

57 According to: Halbhuber, „Učebnice československého náboženství", 101.

Conclusion

Religious education in the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church was shaped by the extraordinary conditions of the newly established Czechoslovak Republic. Although the state created relatively favorable conditions for the existence of the new church and its establishment was accompanied by considerable social enthusiasm, the Czechoslovak Church also had to cope with mistrust and resistance from part of society and traditional church structures. In this context, the issue of education and religious instruction was a key area in which the church could not afford to fail.

A number of important figures were involved in the formation and gradual consolidation of religious education, with Karel Farský and Alois Spisar playing a key role in the first decade of the Church's existence, that is, until 1931. Their theological and teaching activities significantly influenced the form of religious education and contributed to its institutional and content-related anchoring.

In its early days, the Czechoslovak Church was forced to partially adopt some of the proven forms of the Roman Catholic tradition, typically the catechism form of teaching, from which it gradually moved away. Ideologically, it drew on the Reformation tradition in the field of religious education and was also oriented towards the intellectual and didactic legacy of Jan Amos Komenský. The first decade of the Church's existence can thus be characterized as a period of searching for suitable forms, methods, and a firm foundation for religious education. During this time, the first curricula, textbooks, and examination regulations were created. The adoption of the document *Teaching of the Christian Religion for Believers of the Czechoslovak Church* in 1931 was a fundamental milestone that led to the stabilization, systematization, and professionalization of religious education as an important area of church work. Radical liberalism was abandoned, and theology gradually moved toward biblical foundations.

The development of religious education was closely linked to the genesis of the church itself, whose establishment was marked by reform efforts and separation from the Roman Catholic Church, and became one of the key means of shaping its identity.

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