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The Cooperation of State and Church in the Emergence of Compulsory Education During the Theresian–Josephinian Period

Sodelovanje države in Cerkve pri nastajanju obveznega šolstva v terezijansko-jožefinskem obdobju

Abstract

State-directed elementary education, which also became compulsory, began to take shape in Austria toward the end of the 18th century. Enlightenment ideas, increasingly centralised state structures, and the organisational capacity of the Catholic Church converged into an interdependent system that enabled the creation of a school network and the gradual expansion of literacy. The Theresian–Josephinian reforms, especially the General School Ordinance of 1774, institutionalised cooperation between the state and the Church in establishing compulsory schooling aimed at forming a rationally minded, industrious, and morally responsible individual. A comparison with developments in Prussia indicates that progress in elementary education was closely linked to efforts to strengthen the economic and military capacities of the state, while reform-oriented expressions of Christianity provided ethical legitimacy to the educational system and state authorities. Within this framework, the conviction that literacy and

Izvleček

Državno vodeno osnovno šolstvo, ki je postalo tudi obvezno, se je v Avstriji začelo oblikovati ob koncu 18. stoletja. Razsvetljenske ideje, vse bolj centralizirane državne strukture in organizacijska moč Katoliške Cerkve so se povezale v prepleten sistem, ki je omogočil nastajanje šolske mreže in postopno rast pismenosti. Terezijansko-jožefinske reforme, zlasti Splošni šolski red iz leta 1774, so institucionalizirale sodelovanje med državo in Cerkvijo pri vzpostavljanju obveznega izobraževanja, namenjenega oblikovanju razumsko mislečega, delavnega in moralno odgovornega posameznika. Primerjava z razmerami v Prusiji kaže, da je bil napredek osnovnega šolstva tesno povezan s prizadevanji za gospodarsko in vojaško krepitev države, medtem ko so reformne oblike krščanstva zagotavljale etično legitimnost izobraževalnega sistema in državnih oblasti. V tem okviru je tudi na slovenskem ozemlju, vključenem v habsburško Avstrijo, ob koncu 18. stoletja začelo prodirati prepričanje, ki je pismenost in izobraževanje

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education constituted important social values also began to take root in the Slovenian lands, which formed part of Habsburg Austria. In the long term, cooperation between state policy and ecclesiastical institutions created the conditions for broader access to knowledge and social development.

razumelo kot družbeni vrednoti. Dolgoročno je sodelovanje med državno politiko in cerkvenimi ustanovami ustvarilo pogoje za večjo dostopnost znanja in družbeni razvoj.

Keywords: General School Ordinance (1774), Maria Theresa, Joseph II, Habsburg Austria, educational reforms, Enlightenment Catholicism, Pietism

Ključne besede: Splošni šolski red (1774), Marija Terezija, Jožef II., habsburška Avstrija, izobraževalne reforme, razsvetljensko katolištvo, pietizem

Introduction

The process of establishing compulsory elementary education accessible to children from all social strata in the Central European region was embedded in broader developments associated with the formation of modern nations and states. It unfolded in parallel with economic, technological, and intellectual changes, shaped by industrialisation and urbanisation. Models of organising school systems circulated from one state to another and thus exerted a mutual influence. This can be most clearly seen in the far-reaching significance of the Enlightenment-oriented Augustinian canon, Johann Ignaz von Felbiger (1724–1788), abbot of the monastery in Żagań (Sagan) in Silesia, in the southwest of present-day Poland, who, as a minister in the Prussian government, was responsible for school reform. In this context, the Prussian model of elementary education was the oldest and played a formative role in shaping developments in numerous states, most notably in the neighbouring Austrian lands of the Habsburg Monarchy, where Maria Theresa (reigned 1740–1780) invited Felbiger to serve as the guiding figure of school reform.[1]

Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II (reigned 1780–1790), through the General School Ordinance (1774) and other measures inspired by the Enlightenment, emphasised that education was one of the principal concerns of the state (*politicum*). In doing so, they did not renounce the traditional role of Catholicism in the Habsburg lands; rather, in their efforts to strengthen the monarchy, they made

1 Johannes Westberg, Lukas Boser and Ingrid Brühwiller (eds.), *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling: Education Policy in the Long Nineteenth Century*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 5–7; Simon Malmenvall, "Austrian General School Ordinance and the Establishment of Primary School Systems in Europe from the Mid-18th to the Mid-19th Century", *Šolska kronika*, vol. 33, 2024, no. 1, pp. 75–76.

use of the spiritual and moral message, institutions, and pedagogical personnel rooted in the ecclesiastical framework. Enlightenment ideas, increasingly centralised state structures, and the organisational capacity of the Catholic Church, converged into an interconnected system that enabled the establishment of a school network and the gradual growth of literacy. Attention to education was stimulated by efforts to enhance the economic and military strength of the state, while reform-oriented forms of Christianity provided ethical legitimacy for the new educational system and state authority.

The content presented in this article offers a perspective on the Enlightenment as a multilayered cultural phenomenon which, despite its critical stance toward institutional religion, cannot be placed in direct opposition to Christianity or to the Catholic Church.[2] The aim of the article is not to provide a comprehensive account of the characteristics and implementation of school reform during the reigns of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, but rather to offer a clear analysis of several key (ideational) aspects of cooperation between the Austrian state and the Church in the field of education during the period in question.

Foundations and limitations of the school reform

On 6 December 1774, Empress Maria Theresa promulgated a statute that introduced compulsory schooling for all children between the ages of 6 and 12 in the hereditary lands of the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy, regardless of gender, social status, or religious affiliation. The General School Ordinance (*Allgemeine Schulordnung*, and hereafter: the Ordinance) in question was largely drafted by the above-mentioned Johann Felbiger. He came from Silesia, a land with a linguistically (Polish–German) and religiously (Catholic–Protestant) mixed population, which neighbouring Prussia had annexed in the mid-18th century following its military victories over Austria. Approximately three years later, the Ordinance was also published in a bilingual German–Slovenian version. The text was most likely translated into Slovenian by Count Janez Nepomuk Edling (1751–1793), a referent of the Provincial School Commission for Carniola. The purpose of the Ordinance was to integrate the empire's diverse territories into a unified state community, while its primary concern was the expansion of literacy among all strata of the population. The subjects to be taught in all elementary schools were reading, writing, arithmetic, and religious instruction.[3]

The Ordinance consists of 24 articles that define the hierarchically structured organisation of the new school system, reflecting the relations of the

2 Simon Malmenvall, "State and Christian Enlightenment: Background of the Mass Elementary Education in Central Europe", *Bogoslovni vestnik*, vol. 84, 2024, no. 4, pp. 808–809.

3 Malmenvall, Austrian General School Ordinance, pp. 77–78.



Allgemeine
Schulordnung,
für die deutschen
Normal-Haupt-und Trivialschulen
in
sämmtlichen Kaiserl. Königl. Erbländern
d. d. Wien den 6ten December 1774.

WIEN,
gedruckt bey Johann Thomas Edlen von Trattnern,
kaiserl. königl. Hofbuchdruckern und Buchhändlern.

The title page of the original German edition of the General School Ordinance issued in Vienna on 6 December 1774 (Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, Fonds SI AS 7/I: I Land Administration of Carniola, Political Division – Public Issues, 1763–1782, box 75, folder 1).

estate-based society of the time.[4] The highest level consists of normal schools (*Normalschulen*) located in land capitals, which served as models for other schools and functioned as institutions for the training of future teachers. The intermediate level is represented by main schools (*Hauptschulen*) in towns, where the full cycle of elementary education was provided. The lowest level consists of rural or trivial schools (*Trivialschulen*), in which a reduced form of elementary education was offered.[5] Trivial schools were required to teach only reading, writing, arithmetic, and religious instruction. Religious instruction was, in terms of both curricular elaboration and number of teaching hours, the most important subject in elementary schooling. In trivial schools, it accounted for as much as two thirds of instruction. It played a decisive role in shaping the cultural and moral consciousness of pupils. A literate and at the same time pious population was expected, with the assistance of this subject, to distinguish itself through diligence and respect for authority within the family, ecclesiastical, and state spheres.[6] The aim of Theresian–Josephinian elementary schooling was not to form independently thinking individuals, but rather loyal subjects of a state in which the Catholic faith was recognised as the official religion.[7]

Among the more important reasons for the promulgation of the Ordinance were the orientations of the Enlightenment worldview of the time. The ruler believed that traditional adherence to Catholic faith and morality, supplemented by the Enlightenment values of industriousness and intellectual curiosity, would contribute to the material and moral advancement of the state.[8] It is significant that the Ordinance opens with the idea of educating youth of both genders as "the most important foundation of the true happiness of nations".[9] The goal

4 Helmut Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens. Erziehung und Unterricht auf dem Boden Österreichs*, vol. 3: *Von der frühen Aufklärung bis zum Vormärz*, Vienna: ÖBV, 1984, pp. 103–106; Vlado Schmidt, *Zgodovina šolstva in pedagogike na Slovenskem*, vol. 1, Ljubljana: DZS, 1963, p. 179.

5 Martin Viehhauser, "'Das Schulwesen aber ist und bleibet allezeit ein politicum': The Felbiger General School Ordinance and School Reform in the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Monarchy", *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling: Education Policy in the Long Nineteenth Century* (eds. Johannes Westberg, Lukas Boser, Ingrid Brühwiller), London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 27; Malmenvall, Austrian General School Ordinance, p. 81; Schmidt, *Zgodovina šolstva*, p. 179.

6 Viehhauser, Das Schulwesen, pp. 27–28; France Ostanek, "Šolski sistemi na Slovenskem v obdobju 1774 do 1963", *Šolska kronika*, vol. 8, 1999, no. 1, p. 53; Simon Malmenvall, *250 let obveznega šolstva na Slovenskem: opismenjevanje in kultura v poznem 18. stoletju: razstavni katalog*, Ljubljana: Slovenski šolski muzej, 2024, p. 9; Malmenvall, Austrian General School Ordinance, pp. 81–82.

7 Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia. Die Kaiserin in ihre Zeit. Eine Biographie*, München: C. H. Beck, 2017, p. 691; Ostanek, Šolski sistemi, p. 53.

8 Viehhauser, Das Schulwesen, pp. 23–24.

9 *Allgemeine Schulordnung für die deutschen Normal-, Haupt- und Trivialschulen in sämmtlichen Kaiserl. Königl. Erbländern d.d. Wien den 6ten Dezember 1774*, Vienna: Johann Thomas Edlen von Trattnern, kaiserl. Königl. Hofbuchdruckern und Buchhändlern, 1774, p. 4.

of contemporary reform efforts was to achieve improvements in the economic sphere, increase state budget revenues, strengthen the army both numerically and qualitatively, and foster a sense of allegiance to the state among the population. None of this could have been realised without at least partial literacy among the broader strata of society and at least a basic knowledge of German as the principal means of communication of the majority population and the political elite. In the areas of teaching and textbook production, the Ordinance permitted the use of land or vernacular languages where this ensured the comprehensibility of the material presented and provided a foundation for learning German in subsequent stages of instruction. At the same time, it required uniformity in teaching methods, curricular content, and the organisation of schools. As the reform of the state gradually extended the reach of the army, administration, judiciary, and school system among the broader population, the need likewise grew for the masses to be acquainted with laws and other regulations. The state thus arrived at the conclusion that general literacy – and with it the inclusion of vernacular languages, although still under the dominant role of German – was necessary for economic development and broader societal progress. Through the everyday experience of life in and around the school, the state became "real" for the population: schools, much like military barracks, became tangible outposts of what had previously been an abstract central political authority.[10]

Since the Ordinance did not provide for guaranteed and uniform financing of the educational network, this area constituted the most pressing aspect of the reform under discussion. The funding of rural schools was to be the responsibility of local authorities, such as municipalities or manorial estates. Since the reach of main and normal schools extended beyond local boundaries, their financing was to be entrusted to school funds under the supervision of the land school commission.[11] Families of schoolchildren were also required to contribute to covering teachers' salaries, teaching materials, and building maintenance, but many were unable to do so because of poor material conditions. Disordered financing in particular compelled rural teachers to seek additional sources of income. Alongside their teaching duties, they most often performed the work of church sextons. This situation was also decisively influenced by the fact that instruction in rural areas frequently took place in parish houses, where sextons – alongside priests – were often the only literate inhabitants of many local communities.[12] It was precisely the financial dependence of many teachers on parish income that, at the level of everyday life, further reinforced the intertwining of ecclesiastical and state structures.

10 Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresia*, pp. 714–715; Andreja Eržen, Jezikovne razmere v Japljevem času, *Japljev zbornik: zbornik prispevkov s simpozija o Juriju Japlju (Kamnik, 3.–4. decembra 2009)* (ed. Marjeta Humar), Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2011, pp. 32–35; Aleš Gabrič, *Sledi šolskega razvoja na Slovenskem*, Ljubljana: Pedagoški inštitut, 2009, pp. 15–16; Malmenvall, Austrian General School Ordinance, pp. 78–80; Schmidt, *Zgodovina šolstva*, pp. 165–166.

11 Engelbrecht, *Geschichte*, p. 115; Schmidt, *Zgodovina*, pp. 183–185, 189–191.

12 Malmenvall, "Austrian General School Ordinance", p. 83; Schmidt, *Zgodovina*, pp. 193–194.

Difficulties in implementing the school reform were not limited to inadequately regulated financing but also concerned school attendance, which depended both on the availability of teaching staff and school facilities and on the degree of parental awareness of the value of schooling for children. Moreover, the Ordinance did not set out any penalties for parents who failed to send their children to school. Only rarely did children attend school throughout the entire calendar year, as in the warmer months – especially in hilly, rural areas – they participated in agricultural work. By the end of the 18th century, most pupils attended school for only three to four months per year. The proportion of all school-age children who attended school at any point during this period was also relatively low, amounting to at most one third. In the Slovenian linguistic territory, only about 15% of children attended classes regularly at the beginning of the 19th century. Although elementary schooling was nominally accessible to both genders, trivial schools in Slovenian-speaking areas were attended by three times as many boys as girls. An exception was Bohemia, where by 1790 two thirds of children were attending school. This success could be attributed primarily to the personal commitment of Ferdinand Kindermann (1740–1801), a school inspector based in Prague and the Bishop of Litoměřice (Leitmeritz).[13]

The Church in the service of the state

Although the ruler was personally devout, she sought to strengthen the state by limiting the influence of the Catholic Church on public life. Responsibility for education was to be assumed systematically by the secular authorities, while Catholic religious and moral content in instruction continued to be supported. An opportunity for decisive state intervention in the field of education was provided by the decree *Dominus ac Redemptor Noster* of Pope Clement XIV (in office: 1769–1774), by which he dissolved the Jesuit order throughout the entire Catholic Church in 1773. From the end of the 16th century, the Jesuits had been the principal bearers of educational and scholarly activity in Austria and other Catholic states, particularly at the secondary and higher-education levels. Following the suppression of the Jesuit order, the Austrian state took over its numerous buildings and properties, while many former Jesuits entered state service. This created the basis for education to become primarily a matter of the state (*politicum*), and to a lesser extent an ecclesiastical concern (*ecclesiasticum*).[14]

From an ideational perspective, state intervention in the field of education – which in Austria had for centuries been administered by the Church – rested on a critique of Baroque popular religiosity, characterised by elaborate ritual

13 Viehhauser, "Das Schulwesen:, pp. 31–33; Schmidt, *Zgodovina šolstva*, pp. 180–181, 251–252, 256–257.

14 Malmenvall, "Austrian General School Ordinance", pp. 78–79.

practices, the veneration of saints, and numerous feast days.[15] The effects of this form of religiosity were increasingly opposed by Catholic intellectuals from both lay and clerical ranks, especially professors of theology. They attributed to this form of religiosity a susceptibility to superstition and idleness, which they believed caused economic and moral harm to the state. Instead, they advocated an "inner" faith focused on the reading of spiritual literature and a highly virtuous mode of life, one that would be intertwined with the expansion of literacy and a sense of obedience to state directives. Such views were advocated, among others, by the Archbishop of Vienna, Christoph Migazzi (in office: 1757–1803), who served as vice-president of the Court Study Commission (*Studienhofkommission*), the principal body responsible for the implementation of school reform in Austria.[16]

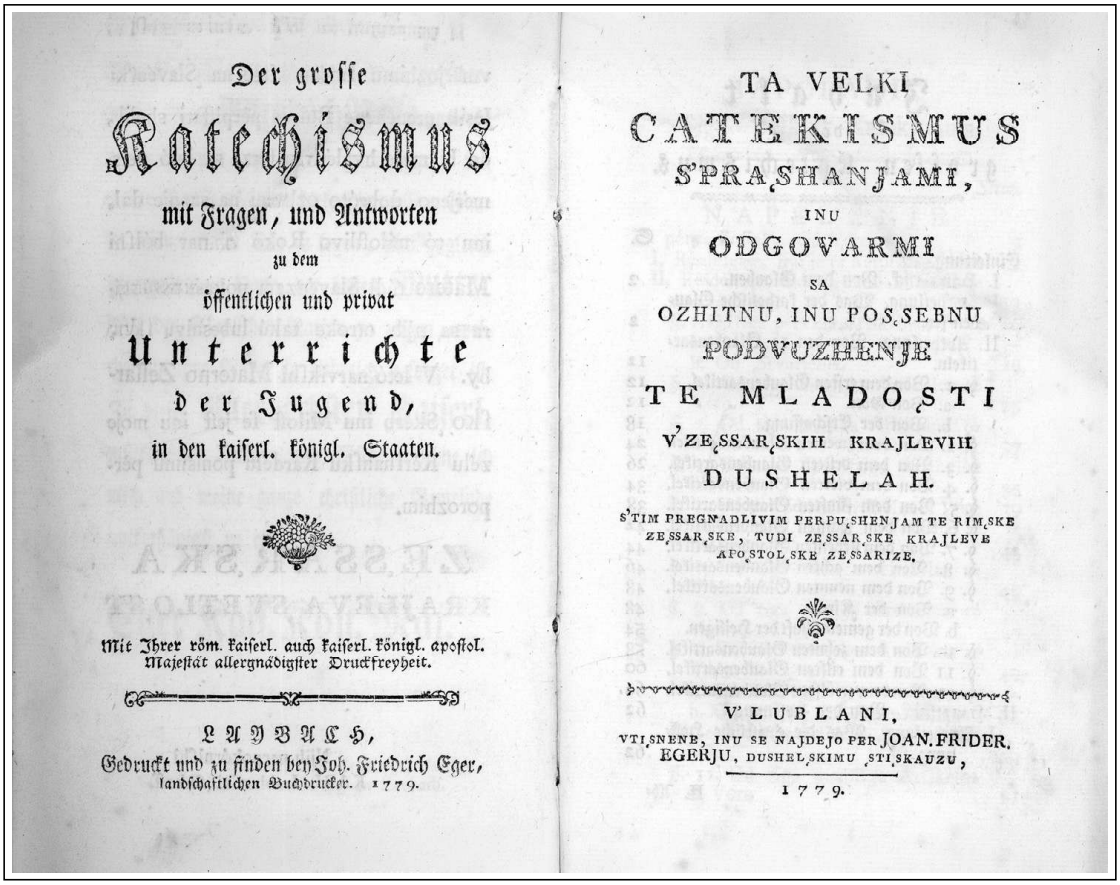
Another, substantively similar current of reform Catholicism at the time drew on Jansenism, an originally Dutch–French spiritual movement that invoked a return to the first centuries of Christianity. Jansenism emphasised humanity's inclination toward sin and the predestination of individuals to salvation, cultivated an ascetic way of life, and promoted a well-ordered structure of daily life. It also advocated modesty in ritual practice, the limitation of ecclesiastical property, the personal reading of Scripture, and the raising of educational levels across all social strata. According to Jansenist views, these were the tasks to which clergy in particular were called, winning the populace through enhanced rhetorical skills and personal example. Although the teachings of its founders were condemned by Pope Clement XI (in office: 1700–1721) in the bull *Unigenitus Dei Filius* (1713), various forms of Jansenism remained popular throughout the 18th century among noble and ecclesiastical circles in the Habsburg lands. They spread with particular persistence among lecturers at higher theological institutions, where they decisively shaped the teaching of moral theology until the mid-19th century. One of the more prominent proponents of Austrian Jansenism sympathetic to state authority was the Bishop of Ljubljana, Johann Karl Herberstein (in office: 1772–1787).[17] In these milieus, Jansenism also functioned as an expression of the prestige of the higher social strata, who were to distinguish themselves from the uneducated and "idle" popular masses. The Church's activity was to be confined to the performance of rites, preaching, the instruction of the populace, and the supervision of clerical morality.[18] The essence of the spirit

15 Harm Klueting, "The Catholic Enlightenment in Austria or the Habsburg Lands", *A Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe* (ed. Ulrich Lehner), Leiden: Brill, 2010, p. 144.

16 Michael Printy, "Catholic Enlightenment and Reform Catholicism in the Holy Roman Empire", *A Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe* (ed. Ulrich Lehner), Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp. 188–189, 195; Malmenvall, "State and Christian Enlightenment", p. 810.

17 On Herberstein's work and his position within the cultural-ecclesiastical currents of Central Europe, see Edo Škulj (ed.), *Herbersteinov simpozij v Rimu*. Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 2004.

18 Matjaž Ambrožič, "Cerkvene razmere v Japljevem času", *Japljev zbornik: zbornik prispevkov s simpozija o Juriju Japlju (Kamnik, 3.–4. decembra 2009)* (ed. Marjeta Humar), Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2011, pp. 810–811; Klueting, "The Catholic Enlightenment", pp. 132–133, 152; Ulrich Lehner, "The Many Faces of the Catholic Enlightenment", *A Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe* (ed. Ulrich Lehner), Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp. 21–22.



Der grosse
Katechismus
mit Fragen, und Antworten
zu dem
öffentlichen und privat
Unterrichte
der Jugend,
in den kaiserl. königl. Staaten.

Mit Ihrer röm. kaiserl. auch kaiserl. königl. apostol. Majestät allergnädigster Druckfreyheit.

LAYBACH,
Gedruckt und zu finden bey Joh. Friedrich Eger, landschaftlichen Buchdrucker. 1779.

TA VELKI
CATEKISMUS
S'PRAŞHANJAMI,
INU
ODGOVARMI
SA
OZHITNU, INU POS,SEBNU
PODVUZHENJE
TE MLADOŞTI
V' ZE,SSAR,SKIH KRAJLEVIH
DUSHELAH.

S'TIM PREGNADLIVIM PERPU,SHENJAM TE RIM,SKE ZE,SSAR,SKE, TUDI ZE,SSAR,SKE KRAJLEVE APO,STOL,SKE ZE,SSARIZE.

V' LUBLANI,
VTI,SNENE, INU SE NAJDEJO PER JOAN. FRIDER. EGERJU, DUSHEL,SKIMU ,STI,SKAUZU,
1779.

Jurij Japelj (1744–1807), a canon of the Ljubljana cathedral, served as the editor of the first comprehensive catechism for youth in Slovenian territory (Ta velki catekismus s' praşhanjami, inu odgovarmi, Ljubljana, 1779). This work was based on a template by Christoph Migazzi (1713–1803), Archbishop of Vienna (in office: 1757–1803). The catechism features parallel German and Slovenian texts. The image shows the first page of Japelj's catechism (Library of the Slovenian School Museum, sig. 7716).

of Enlightenment Catholicism can be captured in the demand for responsibility toward oneself and one's neighbour, with faith serving above all as a pragmatic means to achieve a virtuous life.[19]

The involvement of the Church in strengthening the school network merged in the following decades with the plans of Joseph II. He conceived the position of the Catholic Church in society as an extension of the state. Joseph's outlook was grounded in an Enlightenment interpretation of the ideals of natural law, according to which the ruler was no longer the guardian of the orthodoxy of his subjects, as had been the case in previous centuries, but rather the custodian

19 Ambrožič, "Cerkvene razmere", p. 19.

of the common good within the sphere of worldly affairs. This understanding conferred upon him both the right and duty to intervene in the religious domain as well, which continued to be regarded as part of public life. Rulers of "enlightened absolutism", of whom Joseph was a characteristic representative, were not yet familiar with a separation between Church and state. According to Joseph's understanding, the state was therefore legitimately entitled to assert its authority by administering ecclesiastical property, establishing new dioceses and parishes, dissolving monasteries of contemplative orders (such as the Carthusians or Cistercians), and generally directing the activity of the Church, particularly in the fields of education and charity.[20]

The convergence of ideational and practical reasons for cooperation between the Church and the state was reflected at the end of the 18th century in the introduction of religious instruction into compulsory elementary education, which constituted one of the most significant consequences of the Austrian school reform. In this way, the teaching of Catholic religious and moral doctrine for the broad population was extended from churches to the school environment and, through the accelerated publication of catechisms, contributed to the spread of practical literacy. As a result, religious instruction in the Central European context for more than a century and a half assumed the character of teaching religious content and virtuous living on the basis of rational definitions and causal questions and answers. In this process, its traditional dimension of bearing witness to faith – directed toward a personal relationship with God and participation in the spiritual and sacramental life of the Church – receded into the background. Faith thus became primarily a foundation for shaping an individual's industrious way of life and moral responsibility toward others, society, and the state.[21]

The influence of Prussia and Pietism

Lutheran Prussia was regarded as a model of progress in the field of mass elementary education from the late 18th to the early 20th century.[22] Compulsory attendance at elementary schools in Prussia was first prescribed in 1763, when King Frederick II the Great (reigned 1740–1786) issued the General State School

20 Ambrožič, "Cerkvene razmere", pp. 13, 15; Klueting, "The Catholic Enlightenment", pp. 144–146, 150; Malmenvall, "State and Christian Enlightenment", p. 812.

21 Alojzij Slavko Snoj, *Katehetika: didaktična izhodišča religijskega, verskega in katehetskega pouka*, Ljubljana: Salve, 2003, pp. 42–43, 47, 52–55.

22 Marcelo Caruso and Daniel Töpper, "Schooling and the Administrative State: Explaining the Lack of School Acts in Nineteenth-Century Prussia", *School Acts and the Rise of Mass Schooling: Education Policy in the Long Nineteenth Century* (eds. Johannes Westberg, Lukas Boser, Ingrid Brühwiller), London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 41.

Regulation (*Generallandschulreglement*), regarded as one of the most important documents in the history of European education. The initiative for adopting this document stemmed from the observation that the Prussian army – which had shortly before emerged victorious from the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) – contained too few literate officers, to the detriment of its effectiveness. The Ordinance stipulated that pupils could complete their education only once they were proficient in reading and writing and had acquired a basic knowledge of the Christian faith. Despite the state's expressed determination to regulate elementary education, the effects of the Ordinance remained limited. The principal reasons for these difficulties were the small size of the state administration, which was unable to effectively oversee the school reform, and the reliance on Lutheran pastors, who were for the most part not trained educators and who emphasised the religious dimension of education in their work.[23]

Even before the emergence of the Enlightenment, social and cultural development in Prussia was shaped by Pietism, a Lutheran spiritual movement that sought to intensify religious devotion, promote morally exemplary living, and expand literacy for the purposes of studying Scripture and fostering general education. By emphasising personal responsibility and self-reflection in individual and communal life, Pietism approximated Enlightenment ideals and functioned as a catalyst for processes of modernisation. At the same time, the movement distinguished itself from the Enlightenment by affirming the primacy of faith in all spheres, the value of public expressions of religiosity, and the assurance of the Lutheran Church's freedom of action in relation to the state.[24] Pietistically oriented Protestant pastors, university professors, and state officials in Prussia contributed to the initiation of the process of establishing a modern school network at the elementary, secondary, and higher levels.[25]

August Hermann Francke (1663–1727), a theologian and founder of Pietism, transformed the city of Halle in Saxony at the turn of the 17th to the 18th century into a model centre of education. During this period, he established a range of institutions, including a pedagogical institute, a Latin grammar school, and an elementary school for children of both genders. His principal aim was to provide conditions for the intellectual and personal formation of gifted pupils and students from diverse social backgrounds, who would disseminate Pietist ideas among the population, since their solid education would grant them access to influential positions within the state and ecclesiastical apparatus. The essence

23 James V. Horn Melton, *Absolutism and the Eighteenth-Century Origins of Compulsory Schooling in Prussia and Austria*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 173–175.

24 Martin Gierl, "Pietism, Enlightenment, and Modernity", *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (ed. Douglas H. Schantz), Baltimore: Hopkins Press, 2019, pp. 348–350; Malmenvall, "State and Christian Enlightenment", p. 816.

25 Gierl, Pietism, p. 351.

of Francke's pedagogy lay in the formation of the pupil's will through the regular reading of appropriate literature, a precisely prescribed daily schedule, and personal reflection on actions performed or omitted, as well as through quarterly examinations assessing the entirety of the knowledge acquired. "Corrupted" human nature – which, in accordance with the traditional Lutheran view of the human person, is capable of doing good only by virtue of divine grace – was to become receptive to God and to one's neighbour through external supervision that was at the same time personally internalised. The individual was thus to develop a "piety of the heart", regarded as the fundamental driving force of an earthly society ordered according to God's design.[26]

In general, it can be argued that Catholic priests and Protestant pastors played a key role in disseminating the spirit of the Enlightenment among the predominantly peasant population of Central Europe, especially through preaching in churches, visiting households, teaching in schools, and writing or translating various manuals. In this way, they expanded their position of spiritual authority through education and supported the central postulate of the Enlightenment – the elimination of intellectual ignorance and the enhancement of labour efficiency for personal and societal well-being. One such example is provided by the collection of entertaining and instructive stories entitled *Aid Handbook for Peasants* (*Noth- und Hülfsbüchlein für Bauersleute*, 1788), which ranked among the most popular works of the 18th century. Its author was the Prussian writer and educator Rudolph Becker (1752–1822), a representative of the Lutheran strand of the German Enlightenment. It was intended primarily for rural youth and, through narrative and illustrations, conveyed basic knowledge of agriculture and medicine while promoting an industrious, frugal, and pious way of life. It was printed in approximately half a million copies, translated into various languages, and went through 119 editions. It was also available in Slovenian – the translation was prepared by Marko Pohlin (1735–1801), a member of the Discalced Augustinian order, a priest and linguist, and one of the leading representatives of Enlightenment-oriented clergy in Carniola. The mission of instructing the populace not only in spiritual matters but also in practical and economic skills – as encouraged by Enlightenment thought – persisted among the Central European clergy in the following decades, even as the Enlightenment gave way to other intellectual currents, such as the formation of national consciousness.[27]

26 Malmenvall, "State and Christian Enlightenment", pp. 816–817.

27 Andrej Studen, "Z vzgojo do največje možne sreče ljudstva: nekaj poudarkov iz zgodovine »razsvetljevanja ljudstva« na Slovenskem v 18. in v prvi polovici 19. stoletja", *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino*, vol. 54, 2014, no. 1, pp. 15–17; Lehner, "The Many Faces", pp. 14–15, 27; "Malmenvall, State and Christian Enlightenment", p. 818.

Conclusion

The establishment of compulsory elementary schooling in the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy at the end of the 18th century cannot be explained solely by reference to the cultural changes brought about by the Enlightenment or to the increasing centralisation of the state. The driving force behind the reform process was the interplay of Enlightenment ideas, state intervention, and the organisational capacity of the Catholic Church. The Theresian–Josephinian reforms clearly defined education as a state responsibility, yet in its actual development they relied on existing ecclesiastical structures, pedagogical personnel, and Catholic religious and moral content.

A comparison with Prussia confirms that school reform in both the Austrian and Prussian contexts primarily pursued pragmatic objectives: strengthening the state's economic efficiency, administrative reliability, and military power. Reformist currents of Christianity – Enlightenment Catholicism in the Austrian lands and Pietism in Prussia – provided the ideational framework that endowed education with ethical legitimacy and embedded it in the everyday life of the population. Clergy and pastors functioned as key intermediaries between state objectives and the popular masses. Through teaching, preaching, and the writing of manuals, they implemented Enlightenment demands for literacy and industrious living "on the ground".

In the Austrian lands, including the Slovenian linguistic territory, the process was initially slow due to material constraints, a shortage of qualified teachers, and low school attendance. In the long term, however, it consolidated the school as one of the central institutions of social formation. The school reform contributed to the spread of literacy, the gradual incorporation of vernacular languages into education, and the increased presence of the state in the everyday lives of the population. The Enlightenment in the Central European context cannot be understood as being opposed to Christianity, but rather as a multilayered historical process in which cooperation between state policy and ecclesiastical institutions played a decisive role in the emergence of a modern educational and social order.

As this study is theoretical in nature, no new research data were generated.

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