

ABSTRACT

The aim of the thesis ‘The Evangelical Society of People’s Education in Cieszyn (TEOL) – publishing and educational activity (1881–1905)’ was to document and present the publishing and educational activities of the Cieszyn’s Society, indicate its role in the process of shaping the national, cultural, and religious identity of the Polish Evangelical community in Cieszyn Silesia in the years 1881 – 1905 in historical and cultural context of these times.

The dissertation consists of eight chapters. The first one presents a general historical overview of Cieszyn Silesia taking into account administrative, economic, and political conditions as well as characteristic aspects of social, national, and cultural life which influenced the local Lutheran community in the late 19th and early 20th century. The second chapter characterizes the circumstances that led to the foundation of TEOL, its objectives, organizational structure and the main stages of its activity.

The next chapters bring the analysis of the publishing repertoire – a typologically ordered review of the main operating segments of the Society’s publishing activity, preceded by the discussion of the organisational and material aspects of editorial activities (chapter 3). The fourth chapter presents the repertoire of religious literature, represented most extensively by original works or translations (homiletics, prayer books and devotionals, dogmatic literature and Church history, missionary literature). Chapter 5 discusses didactic literature, for schools but also for personal use (educational materials, songbooks), self-study literature and for public education (TEOL readings and reports, popular science works, polemical and abstinence texts, fiction). Chapter 6 presents TEOL press organs, opinion-forming for the local protestant community, popularising literature and readership: ‘Evangelical Calendar for the Year ...’ (since 1882) as well as the biweekly ‘Friend of the People’ (since 1885). Chapter 7 outlines the cultural and educational initiatives undertaken by the Society: lectures, contests, exhibitions and forming of its own library. Chapter 8 presents activities for the popularization of literature: both ‘its own’ – published by the Society, as well as the nationwide.

All the activities undertaken by TEOL were supposed to address the reading, educational, cultural and religious needs of Polish Lutherans mainly from Cieszyn Silesia, but also from other regions, to educate, raise national awareness, shape national and moral attitudes, form opinions on social issues, as well as reading opinions. The Society wanted to shape, through books and the press, an integral and versatile Pole’s identity – a Lutheran, cognisant and involved in not only religious, but also social and cultural activity.