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## POLISH SCOUTING MOVEMENT IN THE PAST AND TODAY: A DEPARTURE FROM CHRISTIAN VALUES

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/SPLP.2021.007>

### Abstract

Scouting is a community which, thanks to its method, educates young people. This is not a parish group, but scouting founder Robert Baden Powell based it on Christian values. This is indicated by numerous documents issued by the union's authorities over several decades. However, these methods have evolved and are not as transparent as it was at the beginning. Scout teams are increasingly seeing the phenomenon of departing from Christian ethics, so that, in the name of falsely understood tolerance, scouting builds its identity on modern currents, which are strangers in religion, culture and civilization. This is a problem faced by today's scouting, especially those responsible for the spiritual and religious education of young scouts and scouts.

**Keywords:** *advancement, lie, religious freedom, secularism, scouting, values, young people*

*MIĘDZY HISTORIĄ A TERAŹNIEJSZOŚCIĄ.  
WSPÓŁCZESNE PRZYKŁADY ODCHODZENIA  
OD ETYKI CHRZEŚCIJAŃSKIEJ W POLSKIM HARCERSTWIE.*

### Streszczenie

Harcerstwo to wspólnota, która dzięki swojej metodzie wychowuje ludzi młodych. Nie jest to grupa parafialna, ale założyciel skautingu – Robert Baden-Powell

oparł ją na wartościach chrześcijańskich. Wskazują na to liczne dokumenty wydane przez władze związku w ciągu kilkudziesięciu lat. Metody te jednak ewoluowały i nie są tak przejrzyste jak to było na początku. W drużynach harcerskich coraz bardziej widoczne jest zjawisko odchodzenia od etyki chrześcijańskiej, aby w imię fałszywie rozumianej tolerancji harcerstwo budowało swą tożsamość na obcych religijnie, kulturowo i cywilizacyjnie prądach współczesnych. Jest to problem, przed którym staje dzisiejsze harcerstwo, a szczególnie osoby odpowiedzialne za wychowanie duchowe i religijne młodych harcerzy i skautów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *harcerstwo, kłamstwo, młodzież, rozwój, sekularyzm, wartości, wolność religijna*

### 1. EVERLASTING VALUES OF SCOUTING

The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP) is one of the biggest youth organizations in Poland. This organization educates young people, supports their development and shapes their character<sup>1</sup>. Question: what are the methods Polish scouting uses to educate its young people? The founder of scouting, Sir Robert Baden-Powell, said: ‘If your Scouting existed without God, it would be better if it doesn’t exist at all’<sup>2</sup>. For many years, Polish scouting has been built on Christian values. ZHP has a mission – to educate young people. Scouting teaches young people about important values which they should base their lives on. Around the world scouting upholds values derived from different religions. Nowadays, young people are interested in different things such as: computers, mobile phones, tablets, the wrong friends, etc. It is important that parents, teachers and educators uphold the same values that they pass to young people<sup>3</sup>. Which values should be upheld by scout educators? The answer can be found at the source, it was defined by Sir Robert Baden-Powell. I will base my paper on the scout documents and the contemporary situation. In the beginning, I would like to present some historical facts.

Robert Baden-Powell said: ‘What sect or denomination a boy belongs to depends, as a rule, on his parents’ wishes. It is they who decide. It is our business to respect their wishes and to second their efforts to inculcate reverence, whatever form of religion the boy professes<sup>4</sup>. Young scouts will live like Christians, if their scout leader confesses Christian values<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> M. Kłosowski, *Harcerstwo – wspólnota, która wpływa na proces realizowania się młodzieży*, „Pedagogika Katolicka” 26 (2020), p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> A. Małkowski, *O wychowanie skautowe*, Chicago 1915, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> M. Kłosowski, *Harcerstwo*, pp. 89–90.

<sup>4</sup> R. Baden-Powell, *Aids to Scoutmastership*, London 1920, p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> A. Zellma, R. Buchta, W. Cichosz, *The (non)transgressive character of religious education form children and young people in Polish schools*, “British Journal of Religious Education” 2021,

In 1920, (5 years after Andrzej Małkowski founded first scout units in Poland) in the Resolution of the V Congress of the National Council, we can read: ‘The Polish Scouting Association is a union of Polish Christian youth, accepting people of other denominations into their organization, as long as they base their behaviour on Christian ethics’<sup>6</sup>. And the Polish Scouting ethical and social declaration of 1926 says: ‘[...] we are Christians. We treat different religious beliefs with respect. We declare a decisive fight against the enemies of religion, spreaders of moral decay and mundane materialism’. These two examples show us that the Polish scouting was founded on Christian values. That was the idea<sup>7</sup>. Father Marian Luzar in the “Bulletin of the Pastoral Department of the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association National Board” wrote about the differences between scouting and religious movements. He emphasized that scouting is to complement the educational work of the family, school and the church. He pointed out that scout leaders faced a huge challenge, because they couldn’t lead a scout unit using the same methods as a youth group in a parish or a living rosary group<sup>8</sup>.

## 2. SCOUTING VALUES

What is happening in ZHP nowadays? What are the values over 100 years since its creation? Saint Thomas Aquinas who lived in the thirteenth century introduced the concept of ‘freedom to’ and ‘freedom from’. After analyzing the documents and the work of the union authorities, I can say that this concept characterizes the modern organization. But I will explain it later in this paper. I believe that nowadays, when people mention religious freedom in ZHP, they should think about whether they speak about ‘freedom from religion’ or ‘freedom of religion’<sup>9</sup>.

The rejection of religion becomes a demand for social peace, with the hidden charge that religion is primarily responsible for violence and the lack of social peace<sup>10</sup>. The concept of freedom is also changing in Polish scouting. I can notice that they want modern scouting to profess ‘freedom from religion’ and not ‘freedom to religion’. Modern men and women do not want to be identified with any religion

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pp. 1–15 (Published Online 18 Feb 2021: The (non)transgressive character of religious education for children and young people in Polish schools: *British Journal of Religious Education*: Vol 0, No 0 (tandfonline.com) (retrieved on March 22, 2021).(retrieved on March 14, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Uchwała IV Zjazdu Naczelnej Rady Harcerskiej from 1920.

<sup>7</sup> Deklaracja etyczno-społeczna from 1926.

<sup>8</sup> M. Luzar, „Biuletyn Działu Duszpasterskiego Naczelnictwa Związku Harcerstwa Polskiego”, April, 1935.

<sup>9</sup> M. Kłosowski, *Harcerstwo*, p. 95.

<sup>10</sup> P. Roszak, *Współczesne przejawy wrogości wobec religii w perspektywie Europejskiej*, in: *Prześladowani. Przemoc i dyskryminacja na tle religijnym we współczesnym świecie*, red. K. Chołaszczynski, P. Roszak, J. Wiśniewski, Toruń 2020, p. 39.

and profess the values promoted by clergy of any denomination. Teamwork plays an important role in religious education and scout leader is ‘the first among equals.’ That means that the scout leader is the one that gives the team directions and guidance. Spiritual education and values depend on leaders, because if they value faith, they will lead others to faith. If they live Christian values, their scouts will follow the same path<sup>11</sup>.

Nowadays, ZHP has an inconsistent approach to religion, because the official documents contain different information. For example, The Scout Promise includes the service to God; the Statutes of ZHP state that organization recognizes the right of each member of the Association to personally choose a system of spiritual values; and the ”Educational Foundations of Scouting” say: “service to God results from the personal relationship to the spiritual values of life e.g. love, truth, kindness, justice, freedom, beauty, friendship, brotherhood, hope”<sup>12</sup>. How should a scout leader and a young scout understand those different guidelines?

In the Statutes of ZHP, you can read: ‘ZHP is a voluntary association open to everyone regardless of origin, race or creed. [...] The foundation of the education in the ZHP are moral norms derived from the universal, cultural and ethical values of Christianity. ZHP respects the right of each member of the Association to personally choose his/her system of spiritual values’<sup>13</sup>. ZHP gives their members the choice but Christian values are the main values. God and Christian values are inscribed in the Scout Law and Promise, they are included in the ZHP Statutes. The scouting vow is made by each scout after getting acquainted with the activities of the organization. This follows after conscious and free decision. The scout promise determines of the scout educational program, that is service to God, Poland and neighbor. It is a voluntary and individual commitment to do everything possible to live in accordance with ethical canon of the Scout law<sup>14</sup>. It is entered in the statute of the union. The Statues is the ZHP highest legal act, so, leaders and scouts should be guided by these principles. How does it look in everyday life? Often, leaders want to introduce their own rules, but ZHP is a unified organization. ZHP is an organization that gives its members certain rights and obligations. Everybody who wants to join the ZHP ranks should accept the scout values and live by them.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ob. Cit. Uchwała XXXVI Zjazdu ZHP w sprawie zmian w Podstawach wychowawczych ZHP, December 6, 2009. (Accessed November 3, 2021: <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=s-ites&srcid=YmVza2lkemtpLnocC5wbHxILWxlYXJuaW5nfGd4OjF1YjBkYzU1Y2E4YmQ5MmY>) (retrieved on November 3, 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Ob. Cit. The Statues of the polish scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP). The Statutes of ZHP as amended by 37th Congress 2011-2012. Official English translation available. Revised and updated version 39th Congress April 9, 2017. There is no official English translation.

<sup>14</sup> E. Gąsiorowska, *Wychowawcza rola przyrzeczenia i prawa harcerskiego*, in: *W poszukiwaniu przygody*, red. E. Gąsiorowska, E. Kulczyk-Prus, Łódź 2013, p. 46.

### 3. SCOUTING TODAY

In 2017 the ZHP General Assembly adopted a resolution in regards to the role of religion and spiritual development in the Scout Educational System - Resolution No. 9. In the first point of the resolution, the Assembly emphasizes that there is no clear understanding of spirituality and spiritual development, religion and faith in the scouting programme. The resolution lists elements that needed clarifications such as the role of religion, the role of faith, the role of Christian values, the role of spirituality, education and supporting spiritual development. Point four of the resolution emphasizes that ZHP should specify which of those elements the Association considers as mandatory for its members. The Assembly gives steps at which a decision should be made<sup>15</sup>. On 29th February 2020 in Warsaw there was a conference about the role of religions in the Polish scouting. It is one of three planned nationwide leaders conferences focused on spiritual and religious education, the role of spirituality and faith in scout education and works with spirituality in scout practice. The second conference was held on 8th June 2020 in Poznań. The conference cycle is part of the implementation of the Resolution No. 9 of the 40th ZHP Assembly on the role of religion and spiritual development in the Scout Educational System. The final effect should be materials, thoughts and, perhaps, recommendations for delegates to the next Assembly of ZHP.

At present, many conversations and articles on religious freedom are being published. In January 2020, the article by Mr. Rafał Klepacz was published in the scout magazine *Czuwaj*. Mr. Klepacz in his article rejects many aspects of religious education and religious freedom. Mr. Klepacz proclaims total “freedom from religion”. He is often recommending the expulsion of “God” from the Scout Promise. In his article as a reason, he is pointing atheists, and he claims that allegedly we Christians are trying to prove that atheists have a god. He is trying to prove that Christians find it problematic, accepting atheists into scouting, as that would require a change of the Scout Promise. In the article, Mr. Klepacz also asks the question: do the parents of the scouts agree that the young man should commit to serving God with his whole life<sup>16</sup>? If parents enrol children to scouts, they are aware of the methods and values being in the core of this organization.

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<sup>15</sup> Uchwała XL Zjazdu ZHP nr 9 z dnia 10 grudnia 2017r. w sprawie roli religii i rozwoju duchowego w Harcerskim Systemie Wychowawczym. Accessed March 14, 2021. [https://apps.powerapps.com/play/3aa72b2f-ee91-473f-833b-6f0085a13c18?tenantId=e1368d1e-3975-4ce6-893d-fc351fd44dcd&source=portal&screenColor=rgba\(105%2C%20180%2C%2069%2C%201\)&ID=113](https://apps.powerapps.com/play/3aa72b2f-ee91-473f-833b-6f0085a13c18?tenantId=e1368d1e-3975-4ce6-893d-fc351fd44dcd&source=portal&screenColor=rgba(105%2C%20180%2C%2069%2C%201)&ID=113) (retrieved on March 14, 2021).

<sup>16</sup> R. Klepacz, *Dyskusja o wychowaniu duchowym i o wychowaniu religijnym*, „Czuwaj” 383 (2020) 1, pp. 16–17.

#### 4. CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS OF SCOUTING

One of the examples relating to the violation of religious freedom (especially visible in today's world) is the society of people declaring themselves as LGBT society. Many people involved in the upbringing and creation of Polish law would ask the question of how scouting relates to the spreading LGBT community. The scouting authorities have not yet issued an official position, but looking at the members of ZHP, we can see many signs that identify the followers of the aforementioned movement. On the clothes of girl scouts and scouts you can see rainbow colors, which are not always colors of the rainbow in the biblical understanding. Instructors create materials that covertly convey LGBT-related content to scouts. Instead, I will start by explaining some concepts. Probably everyone knows the extension of the LGBT abbreviation, but at his point think it should be emphasized once again. LGBT stands for: lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender people. It was born in the 1960s in the USA as a movement for the liberation of sexual minorities<sup>17</sup>. It was quickly spreading around the world. It arrived to Poland much later. The first legal organization was established only after the fall of communism in 1990. It was created under the name Lambda. Nowadays, at least 25 strictly LGBT organizations operate in Poland. At this point I will quote a quote from Mother and Father Foundation report.)

From the beginning of the 1990s, and especially intensively after 2000, LGBT organizations began to emerge in Poland. Since 2001, public street marches have become the main political tool. The most famous social campaign was the action «Let them see us» organized by KPH in 2003, consisting in the presentation of thirty homosexual couples on billboards across the country. The culture of LGBT communities is also promoted by numerous festivals around the world (e.z. The Festival of Rainbow Families in Warsaw)<sup>18</sup> (Wieczorek 2017, 647).

The above report confirms to us everything we see in society. The initiatives in dictated in the report evoke conflicting emotions. And you can see this is getting bigger<sup>19</sup>. In society, we see more and more attacks from the LGBT community on religious followers. Incl. The image of Holy Mother of Częstochowa with a rainbow halo<sup>20</sup> or a rainbow flag at the statue of Jesus Christ in front of St. Cross on

<sup>17</sup> B. Wieczorek, *Homoseksualizm*, Warsaw 2017, p. 644.

<sup>18</sup> Op. Cit. Ibid., p. 647.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Laboratory of Religious Freedom, Report presenting cases of violations of the right to religious freedom in Poland in 2020, Pelplin 2021, p. 198 and 205. (Published Online 6 Mar 2021: <https://laboratoriumwolnosc.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/LWR-Raport-2020.pdf> (retrieved on November 3, 2021).

Krakowskie Przedmieście in Warsaw<sup>21</sup>. I do not want to defend the followers of the Catholic religion. But it religious people are required to respect and tolerate LGBT members. And the members of the aforementioned ideology themselves do not respect the previously defended tolerance and freedom. There is a want to take away the ability from parents to choose content that they want to convey at a given age of their child. Because „experts” of the mentioned ideology many times stated that sexual situations for a given age are normal and they placed it in textbooks or guides for teams, as it was in the group I discussed i.e. in scouting. Many people who stand at the side of LGBT ideology are followers of Catholic religion. Polish bishops in the latest position of the Polish Bishops’ Conference on LGBT+ emphasize that those people cannot be excluded from the Church community. I, the quoted word of the shepherds of the Polish church, will apply to scouting. The scout community cannot exclude its members who have a different opinion. After all, the Polish Scouting Association is an association open for everyone, regardless of origin, race or religion and membership in the Polish Scouting Association is voluntary, as we can read in Statute. In the Church, disfellowshipping is associated with an act of apostasy. In the case of scouting teams, making a decision – conscious, own and free- about leaving the scouting community<sup>22</sup>.

The identification of some people in scouting with LGBT ideology took place in 2015. Then came the LGBT movement. The Polish Scouting Association started cooperation with activists of the above mentioned movement. A program proposal of the Main Headquarters of the Polish Scouting and Guiding Associations for terms was released, entitled *Everyone different, everyone equal*. And in 2018, a guide for teams was also published, entitled “*Graduation Tower*” in which young people are getting used to homosexuality and other deviations. *Spiritual and Religious Education of the Warmia and Mazury Banner of the ZHP* was the only one to react. The aforementioned team issued a statement on July 7, 2018 in which it emphasized the respect for other people is important. However, under the banner of tolerance, you cannot attitudes with not everyone agrees and which are not natural for everyone. A Christian, that is also a scout, does not condemn man, but his behavior and deeds that are contrary to moral principles and natural law<sup>23</sup>. The statement and the behavior of the higher authorities caused a “storm” in the ZHP and at the rally in Gdansk. After these events, leaflets about the „Rainbow HP”

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. P. 197.

<sup>22</sup> Stanowisko Konferencji Episkopatu Polski w kwestii LGBT+, August 28, 2020. Accessed March 13, 2021.

<https://ekai.pl/dokumenty/stanowisko-konferencji-episkopatu-polski-w-kwestii-lgbt-dokument/> (retrieved on March 13, 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Oświadczenie Zespołu Wychowania Duchowego i Religijnego Chorągwi Warmińsko – Mazurskiej ZHP. July 7, 2018. (Published Online 7 July 2018: <https://mobile.twitter.com/ArturStelmasiak/status/1016629028403412992/photo/2>) (retrieved on November 3, 2021).

appeared in the center of life and family. It can be said that is a meaningless initiative, because it's just leaflets. But under the guise of a minor action, the organizers wanted to force the union authorities to take a specific position. The center of life and family wanted to remove the "bomb" that had been planted under the family, in a place where the values respecting the family should be particularly respected. The action was to show the problem outside.

After all those events, a group of people who created the heads of the ZHP gathered, expressing categorical opposition to the promotion of homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality and other deviations among children and youth in the Polish Scouting Association. The petition was signed by 19,854 people<sup>24</sup>. The petition also contradicted a textbook published by Headquarters, which imposes homosexual propaganda and sex education. It praised: masturbation, pornography use and sexual intercourse among teenagers. The manual admits practicing homosexuals to the function of educating children and youth<sup>25</sup>. One of the activists on the website supporting the petition wrote:

„This is a betrayal of the moral values and ideals conveyed by the founders of the scouting movement in Poland and around the world: Robert Baden-Powell and Andrzej Małkowski! It is a trampling of the constitution right of parents to rise children in accordance with moral and religious values<sup>26</sup>!” (Tęczowe ZHP 2020).

## 5. SUMMARY

According to §2, para. 1 of the Statute of Polish Scouting Associations, which says that the ZHP operates in accordance with the principles, objectives and method introduced by the founder of scouting, Robert Baden-Powell and developed by Andrzej Małkowski, it can be stated that the Polish Scouting Associations departs from the most important legal act constructing the union and begins to act on its own hand<sup>27</sup>. Leaving science behind by the founding movement in the world is like fighting with religion. The process of secularization is appreciable in Polish scouting. It is based on the assumption that religion - if it were to be in public space - should be treated as a private matter. There should be neutrality in the

<sup>24</sup> TęczoweZHP, „Homoideologia i seksedukacja w ZHP.” Accessed March 14, 2021. [https://teczowezhp.pl/?fbclid=IwAR24rscYvbo2viTvpYrcsQ\\_0Q8B3Ldqj24Ce5Q8MTYrgulUaTP3-Sv4daxg](https://teczowezhp.pl/?fbclid=IwAR24rscYvbo2viTvpYrcsQ_0Q8B3Ldqj24Ce5Q8MTYrgulUaTP3-Sv4daxg) (retrieved on March 14, 2021)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Op. Cit. Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> The Statutes of the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (ZHP). The Statutes of ZHP as amended by 37th Congress 2011-2012. Official English translation available. Revised and updated version 39th Congress April 9, 2017. There is no official English translation.



public space. Polish scouts stand among such choices<sup>28</sup>. Some scouts who took the scouting vow and followed the founder's values stand up to fight for religious freedom. Others, however have consciously rejected God who is professed with the values communicated by the founders of the union and found an idol in his place. Although the Scouting Association issued a statement in which it emphasizes the moral principles on which scouting is based and sets the directions on the basis of which scout teams should operate. On the other hand, the "Graduation Tower" guide was removed from the Central Bank of Ideas and was sent for further editorial work so that it would be consistent with the values on which Scouting is based and in particular Polish scouting, which has a 100-year tradition.

One can speak for a long time about values in scouting. ZHP doesn't impose a Christian ideology. Christian values in scouting are a proposal that gives cohesion to all scouts. It is all about integrity in upbringing - lack of it destroys educational effects. There will always be people who want to impose their own opinion at all costs. Scout leaders should not give up their work. Many authorities professed Christian values and can be a model for leaders in working with young people, i.e. Robert Baden-Powell, Aleksander Kamiński, blessed father Stefan Wincenty Frelichowski. They have professed Christian values throughout their lives.

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