

World of Bohemian Priests

Lukáš Fasora, Jiří Hanuš, Tomáš W. Pavlíček et al., *Priests' Identities in the Czech Lands (1820–1938)*, Prague: Nakl. Lidové noviny 2017, 318 pp.

The thematic monograph, whose research theme and methods of processing are represented by Lukáš Fasora, Jiří Hanuš and Tomáš W. Pavlíček, can be included in today's relatively numerous publications on secularization processes in modern times.¹ The Roman Catholic Church, which had the most members in the Czech Lands, had to come to terms with this trend, as its leaders in the period of the Habsburg Monarchy were largely manifested as truly active advocates of allegiance to the ruling dynasty. In this context, it is appreciated that, in the individual papers, this fact is respected as one of the value frameworks for confirming, blurring, finding, locating and, if necessary, re-questioning the priests' identities at the chosen time. However, it is clear that some of the authors take into account the fact that the emergence of the independent Czechoslovakia in 1918 was a real revolution, as it were, in the position of the Roman Catholic Church in society. Indeed, in the selection of the clergymen that is discussed here this fact is not emphasised enough as a turning point.

The publication contains fourteen biographical studies on Catholic churchmen, among whose authors we find three historians and only one of the authors was ordained as a deacon. Therefore, there is no Catholic priest represented as an author. Among the selected personalities, there are only three members of German nationality: provincial Redemptorist priest Andreas Hamerle, Apologist Ambros Opitz and "rebellious" ecclesiastical historian Eduard Winter. We do not find in it priests who had left the Catholic Church before the First World War (František Loskot, Josef Svozil, Ladislav Knute) in consequence of the anti-modernistic campaign of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, or after 1918 (Bohumil Zahradník-Brodský, his brother, Premonstratensian Bohdan/Isidor Zahradník, Karel Farský, Matěj Pavlík/Gorazd). The organizers of this research initiative wanted above all to create a collection of biographies of Catholic priests who remained faithful to their religious beliefs although some of them had some difficulties with this. The biographical studies on these actors are structured according to common criteria, so that it is possible to compare the motivations and attitudes with which they compensated for the secularization of society and other forms of modernism. In this regard, the focus is on their own power position, and the issue of their understanding their mission as being an exclusive

1 See e. g. Tomáš Petráček, *Výklad bible v době (anti-)modernistické krize. Život a dílo Vincenta Zapletala OP*. Praha 2006 (published in French translation, too); Pavel Marek, *Čeští křesťanští sociálové. Příspěvek k problematice programových a organizačních základů českého politického katolicismu v letech 1894–1938*, Olomouc 2011; Martin Schulze Wessel, *Der römisch-katholische und russisch-orthodoxe Klerus als Träger religiösen Wandels in den böhmischen Ländern und in Russland 1848–1922*, München 2011; Stanislav Balík — Lukáš Fasora — Jiří Hanuš — Marek Vlha, *Český antiklerikalismus. Zdroje, témata a podoba českého antiklerikalismu v letech 1848–1938*, Praha 2015.

mediator of their faithful encountering God, and the world of the “Supernatural” (p. 13).² It also concerns their identities as a result of fighting against opponents, sources of mobilization and motivation to act, and finally, the emphasis is on the role of the priest’s identity in relation to expectations of “those” others.

The greatest benefit from thus conceived historical analyses can be seen in the division of their protagonists into individual groups according to the common formative experiences of their generation: 1. Pre-March, which was forced to cope with the aftermath of the French wars in the form of restoration tendencies in the Austrian state, and striving at the time of its pastoral duties for the restoration of relations between the clergy and the lay people (e.g. Valerián Jirsík, Bishop of České Budějovice, and the specialist in teaching the Scripture Jan Zátka). 2. The generation of the time of the revolutionary upheavals in the years 1848–1849, whose hopes were dashed by the 1855 Concordat (for example, patriotic country priest Beneš Metod Kulda, the sharp-tongued polemicist always faithful to the Church Antonín Lenz, and the popular missionary Andreas Hamerle). 3. The generation which had to face the social consequences of the unilateral abrogation of the Concordat (1870) and the subsequent Liberal Church Reform (1874). The Roman Catholic Church was then split between respect for the revival of its activities after the First Vatican Council (1869–1870) and “doubts about the correctness [of this — NB. J. Št.] Conservative path” (p. 219, where the Christian-social activist Ambros Opitz is mentioned, as well as the Czech country preacher Karel Habersberger, and the Vice-rector of the Czech College in Rome, the Slavic-minded František Zapletal). 4. The generation hit the hardest by the “crisis of modernity, reaching the highest degree of plurality” and at the same time responding differently to the stimuli coming from the Czech and German national society (cit. 219, where its representatives are named as the Archdeacon of many years standing in Prague-Smíchov Jan Pauly, and famous Catholic poet Jakub Deml). 5. The generation of the post-war revival of Catholicism viewing with some embarrassment the affinity of the Church towards the new Czechoslovak state. It was particularly difficult for the Church to find a degree of ecclesiastical modernity that would be more generally acceptable (Modernist Emanuel Masák, Catholic politician and ideologist of the Estates state Bohumil Stašek, and ex-communicated priest Eduard Winter).

Another strong point of this publication lies in the cultural and anthropological approaches to the chosen subject, which are mainly contained in the final summary of its interpretation. In this context, let us mention the phenomenon of the priest’s loneliness under the pressure of modern times, that of a man active “on the ground”, who does not have, in extreme cases, a sense of being appreciated for his difficult mission not only by the church hierarchy and his colleagues, but also by ordinary believers or by various priesthood societies. Furthermore, there is the ambivalent role played by the so-called Romanism, that is clergy studying in the Vatican, which, on the one hand, earned them special confidence with the Papal Curia and predestined them to take up leading positions in the home hierarchy, although, on the other hand, its accent on conservative values was not able to slow down the pace of secularisation tendencies. To this it is necessary to add the concept of the negotiation of boundaries

² Quotation marks are borrowed from the original text.

between the spiritual profession and the social and cultural environment in which the priest is active, which seems to be the key to finding the most optimal place for the Church not only in modern but also in post-modern times. It is a bit of a pity that in the publication under review only in the most extreme cases is a tension between the male identity and the priest's calling palpable, as was the case with Jakub Deml, and especially with Eduard Winter. These are the contributions from the authors Jiří Hanuš and Miroslav Kunštát.

To sum up, we have before us an editorial initiative whose quality is above average. Its temporal delimitation can be accepted without critical comment. Contributory factors behind the high quality of the book are copious notes, a list of sources and relevant literature, an English summary, and a detailed name index. Because it also reads well, it has a chance to attract not only historians and colleagues from related social sciences, but also a broader reading public. There is a welcome section for me regarding the late Bolzanist of South Bohemia, the patriotic priest Jan Zátka. Miroslav Novotný describes in it vividly how his pedagogical opinions provoked conflicts with his conservative superiors, without it having a negative effect on his remarkable appreciation in the milieu in which he moved. The framework of the initial assignment goes beyond the scope, in methodological terms, of the essay by Tomáš W. Pavlíček about Karel Habersberger. He used micro-historical approaches to analyze the conflicts with his parishioners as a "poor" yet short-tempered parish priest in the "poor" village of Rousínov, located near Rakovník. However, some of his generalized insights would require more systematic verification to be considered conclusive. In the contribution he wrote jointly with Markéta Skořepová there is no systematic explanation of why Jan Pauly, chairman of the reformist Catholic Clergy Association, whose modernizing activity was suspended by the Church hierarchy in 1907, no longer participated in its activities after its restoration in the years 1918–1920.

The informative value of the book 'Priests' Identities in the Czech Lands (1820–1938)' and that of its analytical contribution would be undoubtedly increased by the consideration of a questionnaire survey initiated by the end of the year 1918 by Bohumil Zahradník-Brodský, a leading personality in the radical faction "Focal Point" of the Catholic Clergy Association in Bohemia and Moravia. The emphasis is placed in the book, inter alia, on a contradiction between the charismatic mission of the clergyman, ecclesiastical discipline and the male identity of the priest. Moreover, a systematic analysis would be needed to establish the fact that in the renewed activities of this association involved only to a small extent the German clergy. Similarly, it would be advisable to take into account the tendency to "Czechify" the Catholic clergy, seeing the fact that after 1918 the Episcopate was formed, with the exception of Litoměřice and until 1926 the Brno Diocese, from Czech bishops.³

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3 Comp. Martin Schulze Wessel, O. C., p. 249.