

Czech Catholic Modernism The Renewal of Catholic Literature Combined with Social and Ecclesiastical Reform

Tomáš Petráček

University of Hradec Kralove, Czech Republic

Abstract In Central Eastern Europe the theme of the modernist crisis in the ecclesial milieu is still a hotly debated topic. In the Czech lands this phenomenon differs in a number of moments from other countries, for instance in that the Czech reformers openly called themselves modernists willingly since 1895, as the protagonists of the revival movement of Catholic literature. This study is divided into three parts. The first one outlines the development of Czech historiography of the modernist and anti-modernist crisis in the Czech lands, which has undergone a dynamic development especially in the last thirty years. In the second part, it summarizes its results and the current state of knowledge of this historical phenomenon. The author focuses here on the specific and unique elements of Czech modernism, for the understanding of which a broader historical context of the church history of the Czech lands is necessary. In the third part the author presents the current challenges and prospects of research in this area.

Keywords Modernist movement. Modernist crisis. Czech lands history. Czechoslovak Church.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 On the Development of Czech Catholic Modernism Studies. – 3 Social Character and Other Specific Traits of Czech Modernism. – 3.1 The Historical Roots and Context of the Czech Modernist Movement. – 3.2 Directions of Renewal in the Czech Catholic Clergy. – 3.3 The Expansion of the Movement and Its Premature Fall. – 4 Challenges for the Research on Catholic Modernism in the Czech Lands.



Peer review

Submitted 2022-03-01
Accepted 2022-07-21
Published 2023-10-31

Open access

© 2023 Petracek | 4.0



Citation Petráček, T. (2023). "Czech Catholic Modernism. The Renewal of Catholic Literature Combined with Social and Ecclesiastical Reform". *JoMaCC*, 2(2), 167-186.

DOI 10.30687/JoMaCC/2785-6046/2023/02/001

1 Introduction

Like in other Catholic countries, there was an attempt in the Czech lands at the turn of the 20th century for the renewal of ecclesiastical thought and life by a group of priests, who would later be called modernists and who were stopped in their efforts after 1907 by official church bodies. The Czech reformers differ in a number of respects from other European groups, for instance in that they openly called themselves ‘modernists’ proudly and willingly from 1895, namely as the protagonists of the revival movement of Catholic literature known as Czech Catholic modernism. Still, it seems more accurate to speak of modernizing clergymen, persons, who sought to renew various areas of ecclesial life. I will divide my paper into three parts. The first one will outline the development of Czech historiography of the modernist crisis in the Czech lands, which has undergone a dynamic development especially in the last thirty years. In the second part, I will try to summarize its results and the current state of knowledge of this historical phenomenon, where we focus on the specific elements of Czech modernism, for the understanding of which, a broader historical context of the church history of the Czech lands is necessary. In the third part I will present the current challenges and prospects of research in this area.

In Central Eastern Europe the theme of the modernist crisis in Catholicism is still a hotly debated topic on which even professional church historians must walk as if on eggshells. The vocabulary and discourse of the (repressive) ‘winners’ is still commonly used, which at most speak of blunders, but which, however, excuses them by the complexity of the situation and the benefit of bringing together the ecclesiastical ranks for future confrontations with the liberal state and totalitarian regimes. The timeliness of the question and its high sensitivity, at least in the Czech (but also Polish, Hungarian or Slovak) ecclesiastical milieu, which did not go through an open historical and theological discussion as in Western Europe, were shown, for example, by the debates that led to the special issue of the *Salve* theological journal on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the publication of the crucial anti-modernist documents.¹ Inside the editorial board there was an at times heated discussion about whether and to what extent the issue should reflect the results of the forty-year research into the phenomenon of modernism and the new perspectives of modern church historiography on it, and whether the Czech ecclesial public was ready to handle this view. Obviously, it is no coincidence that the issue was only on the bookstore counters for a short

¹ Cf. *Salve. Revue pro teologii a duchovní život*, 17(3), 2017.

time, and it was the only issue of this theological review, which had been sold out before the next issue came out.

In the Czech milieu historical works, which attempt to impose a sobriety and objectivity on a theme which is burdened by its interpretation and value, and which want to show the complexity of the issue without clichés and simplifications, without a kitsch narration of the evil and tricky modernists and the heroic and vigilant antimodernists led by Pope Pius X, but also without a tendency to completely flip the gaze with the exchange of positive and negative signs, which is again something that can neither benefit real knowledge of the issue nor an understanding of the forces and trends that were in play, still encounter ideologically motivated criticism. There has been a significant shift in the field of historical research, but the reception of current Czech and international research on modernism still lags behind in the ecclesiastical circles.

2 On the Development of Czech Catholic Modernism Studies

The history of the research of the phenomenon of modernism and anti-modernism in the Czech lands can be divided into four main phases. It begins relatively early, even if we ignore the contemporary self-justificatory memoranda, declarations and memoirs of the protagonists of the modernist crisis themselves. One of the specifics of the Czech clash of modernism and integralism at the beginning of the 20th century is the fact that, with some chronological delay² and due to favourable historical circumstances in the form of the disintegration of the Austrian Catholic confessional monarchy in 1918, a national church would be established, which would hold Catholic modernism as one of the main sources of inspiration and most of its founders belonged to the spiritual streams of Czech reform Catholicism of the beginning of the 20th century in comparison with other western countries. After a two-year struggle, nearly two hundred originally Catholic modernist³ priests founded on January 8th 1920, a new Czechoslovak church, whose theological roots rely, *inter alia*, on the necessity of reconciling religion with modern science and the idea of progress. Thus at least one strictly, consciously and admittedly 'modernist Church' emerged in Europe. This Church was definitely

² Similarly, the largest Czech modernist trial, the indictment of the translation of the Bible into Czech from modernist elements, did not appear until 1925, cf. Petráček, *Bible a moderní Kritika*, 193-203.

³ Here the designation 'modernist' in the spirit of the encyclical *Pascendi* is fully deserved.

not just an unimportant religious society, because in the 1920s and 1930s it gained over a million believers, aspiring to the role of the main national Church and its newly built churches became the architectural decoration of practically all of the Czech towns.⁴

It is precisely in the milieu of the newly established Czechoslovak church that the phenomenon of Czech modernism is studied, on the one hand during the first Czechoslovak Republic (1918-38), which can be described as the first phase of the development of the study of the Czech modernist movement, and then even during the communist totalitarian regime, which otherwise systematically suppressed church and religious history, which can be described as the second phase. We can find here all the typical elements and limits of such a historiography, such as the heroization of the beginnings of the church which are placed into the first decade of the 20th century. The associated cult of the founding fathers was led first of all by the first patriarch Karel Farský.⁵ At the same time a genealogy or continuity between the modernist crisis and the new church was constructed, which in addition to the history of the Czech modernist movement dealt with the entire tradition of the Czech Catholic reform thinking of the 19th century. Nevertheless, research by historians from the circle of the Czechoslovak church laid a good foundation for future historical work,⁶ whereas the Catholic side in this period presented rather one-sided critical reflections,⁷ which is understandable in the period of confessional polemics of the first twenty years, when the opposing Churches fought for church buildings and believers. Due to the dramatic political circumstances more profound historical studies were not possible in the subsequent period from 1939 till 1989.⁸

After the 1989 democratic revolution, research opportunities improved considerably, and the existing institutional and ideological limits were lifted. The phenomenon of Czech and Moravian Catholicism and its social and political engagement at the turn of the 20th century also attracted researchers from the Faculty of Arts of Olomouc University, where Professor Pavel Marek excelled in his long series of publications.⁹ From studies dealing mainly with the

4 Marek, *Církevní krize na počátku první Československé republiky (1918-1924)*, 212-52. Cf. also Jurek, *Kleine Kirche*.

5 See the telling title of the book: Farský, *Zpode jha*.

6 Selectively, see Kaňák, *Z dějin reformního úsilí českého duchovenstva*; Kučera, Lašek, *Modernismus, historie nebo výzva? Studie ke genezi českého katolického*.

7 Cinek, *Církev zbudovaná na frázích; K náboženské otázce v prvních letech naší samostatnosti*.

8 Kadlec, *Přehled českých církevních dějin*, 2, 230-7.

9 Only selectively, see: Marek, *Apologetové nebo kacíři?*; Marek et al., *Bez mýtů, předsudků a iluzí*; Marek, *Český katolicismus 1890-1914*.

socio-Christian political stream he came to the study of prominent personalities of the modernist movement and transferred adequate contemporary theoretical and interpretative approaches of Western historiography to this phenomenon in the Czech milieu. A group of historians professing the Catholic tradition and studying the phenomenon of Moravian Catholicism of the 19th and 20th centuries around Professor Jiří Hanuš and the Centre for the Study of Democracy and Politics in the second Moravian metropolis in Brno significantly contributed to this. In addition, the translations, edition of sources and theoretical works of this group significantly shifted the level of historical and theological reflection of this phenomenon in the Czech milieu. Throughout the 1990s and in the first decade of this century, research by the Czechoslovak church historians continued, but unlike the 1990s, it devoted less theoretical research to modernism and its history,¹⁰ placing greater emphasis on the history of the church after its foundation.¹¹ In the 1990s, the phenomenon was also covered by historians and theologians from the Hidden Church (*ecclesia silentii*), a part of the Catholic church living in secrecy during the Communist regime and continuing its activities after 1989, especially its Prague community.¹² Overall, however, it can be stated that thanks to the systematic research work, the knowledge of Czech modernism is on a solid level and it is clearly the most thoroughly studied issue within the Czech ecclesiastical history of the 19th-20th centuries.

A further shift in the knowledge of the phenomenon of Czech modernism occurred after 2007. Part of the narrative concerning Czech modernism was the traditional claim that Czech modernism did not show a deep interest in the theological struggles around 1900 and had a purely reformist Catholic character. As it turns out, this is not the case. At least in the field of biblical science, the Czech Catholic progressive 'modernizing' exegesis was entirely at the level of contemporary European biblical science in any other country, and in its most profiled personality (Vincent Zapletal OP) significantly penetrated into the dramatic history of this discipline at the time of the antimodernist crisis.¹³ Many Czech theologians followed their Western European colleagues in a dire fate that led them away from the pursuit of scholarly modern exegesis and into differing retreat

10 Kučera, Lášek, *Modernismus, historie nebo výzva?*; Kučera, Kořalka, Lášek, *Živý odkaz modernismu*.

11 Frýdl, *Reformní náboženské hnutí v počátcích Československé republiky*; Hrdlička, *Život a dílo Prof. Františka Kováře. Příběh patriarchy a učence*.

12 Dolejšová, Hradílek, *Budoucnost modernismu?*.

13 Weiß, *Modernismus und Antimodernismus im Dominikanerorden*; For example, the Dominican Bible scholar Vincent Zapletal (1867-1938), see Petráček, *Výklad Bible v době (anti-)modernistické krize. Život a dílo Vincenta Zapletala*; cf. shorter version in French, *Le Père Vincent Zapletal O.P. (1867-1938)*.

strategies. But their thoughts, methods and approaches, results and motivation are entirely comparable with people like M.-J. Lagrange in France¹⁴ or Franz von Hummelauer in Germany.¹⁵ It can be hoped that by studying the history of Czech Catholic theology, other interesting phenomena will be revealed that will further rehabilitate Czech theological thinking and correct too easily pronounced judgments about its inferiority, mediocrity and general uninterestingness.

In recent years, several projects have emerged that significantly change our knowledge of the overall context of the modernist movement in the Czech lands at the turn of the 20th century. Interesting new works on anti-clericalism in the Czech lands,¹⁶ studies on priestly identities and their changes in the 19th-20th centuries have been written¹⁷ or most recently on the phenomenon of Czech ultramontanism in the Central European context.¹⁸ Catholic modernism has also become a subject for literary science and literary history,¹⁹ including a series of editions of important documents.²⁰ A large number of specialized studies have also been created, such as critical biographies of important actors.²¹ Recently, works reflecting the Catholic women's movement and its emancipatory efforts in Czech Catholicism at the turn of the 20th century have also appeared.²²

3 Social Character and Other Specific Traits of Czech Modernism

3.1 The Historical Roots and Context of the Czech Modernist Movement

In the traditional historical interpretation of Czech modernism in the Czech historiography, it bore the character of a reform Catholicism and was entirely intellectually derived from German 'Reformkatholizismus'.²³ Czech personalities are, for instance, completely

¹⁴ Montagnes, *Marie-Joseph Lagrange*.

¹⁵ On other personalities in context, see Petráček, *Bible a moderní kritika*, 53-80.

¹⁶ Balík et al., *Český antiklerikalismus*.

¹⁷ Fasora et al., *Kněžské identity v českých zemích (1820-1938)*, 7-14, 131-80.

¹⁸ Fasora et al., *Papežství a fenomén ultramontanismus v českých zemích*.

¹⁹ Putna, *Česká katolická literatura v evropském kontextu 1848-1918*, 261-328.

²⁰ Kohout, Marek, Svozil, *Korespondence katolické moderny*.

²¹ Havel, *František Reyl*.

²² Havelka, *Katolické političky? Český katolický feminismus (1896-1939)*.

²³ Marek believes that "not a single original thinker was found among the Czech modernists" and that "theological modernism was almost absent" in Marek, *Český katolicismus 1890-1914*, 294.

absent from the synthetic work of Claus Arnold, although otherwise its scope is admirably pan-European.²⁴ Except for some specificities in the form of references to supposed roots like Hussitism and the Unity of the Czech Brethren, Czech modernism at first glance can truly appear to be an unattractive derivative of German Reform Catholicism, although in fact it represents an interesting European case in several important areas.

But let us return to the beginning. Czech church history experienced several dramatic transformations, when part of the country's population belonged to the Hussite movement during the 15th century, while the confessional map of the Czech lands became even more complicated during the 16th century. In any case, after the Battle of the White Mountain, the state forced a re-Catholicisation of the population, which affected about 85% of the population in Bohemia. Nevertheless, the religiously Catholic character of the higher and folk culture of the Czech lands deep was undisputed well into the 19th century; the re-Catholicization was carried out thoroughly and in depth.²⁵

As in other European countries, the position of the Catholic Church in society began to change through the secularisation in the 19th century. Industrialization and urbanization took place here quite early, for which the Czech ecclesiastical elites were not prepared, and a large part of the new social strata of workers and entrepreneurs left the Church. In particular, the lower clergymen were the protagonists of the 'national revival', they stood at the birth of modern Czech language nationalism, but due to their position within a privileged state church in the Austrian monarchy they could not use this merit to greater appeal for the fusion of national and religious identity like in the case of the Polish or Slovak nations.²⁶ This becomes evident when the emerging national elites choose an intrinsically anti-Catholic concept of the historical narrative of the Czech nation, allowing them to define themselves against the Habsburg dynasty and the Austrian monarchy and to justify the pursuit of their political goals. Already in the second half of the 19th century the Czech lands were characterized by the development of a dual tradition of historical memory, one originally Catholic based on the cult of the Bohemian saints and devotion to the Habsburg dynasty (to save Catholicism in the country) and the nationally progressive tradition, which on the contrary built on the non-Catholic periods of Czech history and celebrated the legacy of historical personalities such as M. Jan

24 Arnold, *Kleine Geschichte des Modernismus*, 158-60

25 Louthan, *Converting Bohemia*.

26 Petráček, *In the Maelstrom of Secularisation, Collaboration and Persecution*, 23-5.

Hus, the Hussite commander Jan Žižka and the bishop of the Unity of the Brethren Jan Amos Comenius.²⁷

Already at the end of the 19th century, the position of Czech Catholicism was very complicated; at a time of raging nationalism, a contradiction between authentic Czechism and Catholicism was postulated – with good conscience and awareness, one could supposedly not adhere to both. At the same time 90% of the populace still figured in the Catholic registries of course. The connection with the Habsburg state rather harmed the Church, the clergy encountered manifestations of resistance in the public, there was a hidden *Kulturkampf*. Even in the countryside, the natural popular mass Catholicism was beginning to disintegrate. In Moravia, these processes took place later and with less intensity, so it was logical that many Catholic clergy endeavours began here, in order to prevent the disintegration of ecclesiastical life that was already seen in Bohemia.²⁸

At the end of the 19th century, the Czech Catholic clergy still had more motivation and reasons to think about the need for change and reform than in other neighbouring countries. Moreover, it could rely on the older domestic tradition of Catholic reform impulses, which went back to the Enlightenment and the ‘Jacobin’ clergy with sympathy for the ideas of the French Revolution,²⁹ of the 1830s or of the revolutionary years of 1848-49.³⁰ Though not fulfilled, the idea of reviving Christianity and the Church and changing course away from ultramontane Catholicism was still alive despite all attempts to systematically suppress it in the clergy, and modernizing authors would soon proudly claim all the relevant personalities and their legacy.³¹

3.2 Directions of Renewal in the Czech Catholic Clergy

One can discern two directions of renewal, whose origins date back to the 1890s, when the appeals of Pope Leo XIII began to operate in combination with the increasing pressure of modernization and secularization and also in the Czech milieu the arrival of a strong generation of prominent priestly personalities. The Czech modernist movement was a matter of the clergy; lay figures were involved only in political and literary activities. The first topic of renewal concerned the revival of Catholic literature, the enhancement of its aesthetic

27 On the construction of historical memory in terms of Hussitism and Czech history, cf. Rak, *Bývali Čechové. České historické mýty a stereotypy*, 51-62.

28 Petráček, *In the Maelstrom of Secularisation, Collaboration and Persecution*, 25-8.

29 Tinková, *Jakobíni v sutaně*.

30 Schultze-Wessel, *Revolution und religiöser Dissens*, 37-70.

31 Cf. Kaňák, *Z dějin reformního úsilí českého duchovenstva*.

quality, especially following the French example, which provided the opportunity to discuss openly many questions about the position of religion and Church in modern society. As this was a movement of young priests, part of it was a demarcation against the older conservative generation of Czech priestly elites. Literature played an important role in constructing national and individual identities;³² the reformers regarded an increase in its quality as a tool for restoring influence on society and at the same time legitimizing the position of Catholicism as the main thought direction of the present.³³ Many clergymen saw the ideal state in the connection between the priesthood and writing activity.³⁴ The main platform for reform were journals around which there were circles of modernizing priests. It was the literary criticism of this artistic revival within the Catholic Church that was called Catholic modernism, a name which the members proudly took as their own.³⁵ In 1895 the almanac *Pod jedním praporem* (Under One Banner) was published, to which 51 Catholic authors contributed.

The profiling personalities in these circles were Karel Dostál-Lutinov and Sigismund Bouška and although they began their activities already around 1892, they formed as Czech Catholic Modernity only at the Prague congress in August 1897, where nearly 150 participants gathered. In addition to literary and artistic issues, there were papers and discussions on the topic of liturgical renewal and social issues. A programmatic speech explicitly mentioned the necessity that “the Christian revolution of life – social, political and religious – must be in step with our literary revolution”.³⁶ The above-mentioned papers and published magazines demonstrated how well the Czech milieu was familiar with contemporary similarly tuned authors from the German milieu, Herman Schell, Albert Ehrhard, Franz Xaver Kraus, but also Italian authors such as Geremia Bonomelli and Romolo Murri.

The second direction was a Christian-social movement, which developed rapidly in the 1890s in an effort to organize politically the Catholic population and mobilize it to defend Christian values and the positions of the Catholic Church in society at the time of the expansion of the general suffrage.³⁷ From the beginning, it suffered from fragmentation into a number of competing streams and until 1918 it

32 Boldt, *Kultur versus Staatlichkeit*, 69-71.

33 Putna, *Česká katolická literatura v evropském kontextu 1848-1918*, 34-5.

34 Holát, *František Teplý-archivář a kněz*, 48.

35 Frýdl, *Reformní náboženské hnutí v počátcích Československé republiky*, 23.

36 Marek, *Apologetové nebo kacíři? Studie a materiály k dějinám české Katolické moderny*, 83.

37 General equal suffrage for men was introduced in 1906, see Urban, *Česká společnost 1848-1918*, 518-30.

failed to transform itself into a truly effective political force. However, it played a role in bringing together both engaged priests and lay people whose ambition was to reform society, but also all institutions in it, including the Catholic Church.³⁸ Political engagement, nevertheless, was a thorn in the eye of the local Church hierarchy, which eventually banned the profiling magazine *Nový život* (New Life).³⁹ The hierarchy tried to discourage the clergy from political life through investigations and canonical visitations of the priests who were critical of their bishops for their passivity (Jan Šrámek, Josef Svozil). There were attempts to push the most agile of them to the margins (Emil Dlouhý-Pokorný).⁴⁰ Many figures then combined activity in both main directions of reform, literary and social-political.⁴¹

Both of these directions then merged at the only at the Velehrad congress in August 1899 and were joined by other prominent personalities. In the area of ecclesiastical matters, they were mainly interested in a pastoral streamlining of the Church's activities and adjustments to practical life that would bring religion closer to modern man. It arose from a broadly debated 'priestly question', discussing the role of a priest in contemporary society, in particular the issues of material well-being, patronage law, celibacy, and the relationship with the emerging civil elites; especially teachers that were emancipated even within the Austrian monarchy and freed themselves from a past when the schools were under the supervision and control of the clergy. The teachers had reserved an almost hostile relationship with the Church and religion and struggled with the clergy for the position of the intellectual and moral leadership of the local communities.⁴²

The motivation of priests like Karel Dostál-Lutinov⁴³ was the revival of the nation through the renaissance of Catholicism at all levels, artistic, religious, social and political. They strove for a revival of Catholicism because they believed in its potential to stimulate the development of society and, as a modern line of thought, wanted to put it again at the centre of events and developments. At the same time, they were experiencing the apparent deviation of a large part of society and culture from religion and Catholicism, and the inadequacy of the Catholic Church's contemporary form and its forms of proclamation and ministry, perceiving the need to cope with scientific

38 On political Catholicism in the Czech lands before WWI, see Marek, *Český katolicismus*, 115-66.

39 Soldán, *Karel Dostál-Lutinov a Nový život*, 63-96.

40 Marek, *Emil Dlouhý-Pokorný*, 145-50.

41 Cf. Marek, Trapl, *Mons. František Světlík (1875-1949)*, 23-39.

42 Petráček, *In the Maelstrom of Secularisation, Collaboration and Persecution*, 40-1.

43 On the various sources of his thought, see Soldán, *Karel Dostál-Lutinov a Nový život*, 7-30.

discoveries and political and social transformations of the modern era. This required putting aside the passivity and repetition of traditional approaches and the need to search for new expressions and forms.⁴⁴ Like modernizing clergy in other countries, Czech modernists emphasized that Catholic modernism was as old as Catholicism itself: at all times, men appeared indicating that the Church had to adapt to new circumstances in certain minor matters, and that in certain essential things it had to return to the old arrangements and principles, to Christ and the Gospel. The aim was to reconcile the new era with the Catholic faith by appropriate reforms, to rectify the external practice of the Church, without interfering in any way with the questions of doctrine.⁴⁵

On the pages of the modernist journals in 1896 through 1907, general and specific criticism of the bishops appears; the debate was extensive: on celibacy, its non-observance and possibly making it voluntary, reform of the breviary, and the introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy.⁴⁶ Criticism of the bishops and their over-affiliation with the state, their exaggerated calls for obedience from the priests, broaching the celibacy questions, informing about the modernising authors in Germany, Austria and Italy led to their magazines being banned and the creation of new ones, published under pseudonyms and radicalizing some members.⁴⁷

In May 1902 in the Czech lands, the Land Unity of the Bohemian Catholic Clergy emerged as the corporate organization of the Catholic clergy, which achieved recognition from both the ecclesiastical and state authorities. The movement, which began with the demand for the revival of Catholic literature and art, gradually transformed itself into a movement demanding social, national and ecclesiastical reforms. Here, we can discern another important specific element of Czech 'modernism'. As the capable leaders of this organization found compromise formulations of their demands without demanding direct doctrinal changes, the Czech modernizing movement had a mass base, representing at the time of its dissolution 2.375 priests.⁴⁸ Members of higher ecclesiastical circles, such as canons and holders of Monsignor titles and other prominent publicly known personalities of Czech Catholicism were involved in its activities.⁴⁹ By joining the Unity, they tried to influence its further development and direction,

⁴⁴ Marek, *Apologetové nebo kacíři?*, 88.

⁴⁵ Dostál-Lutinov, *Nový život*, 7(10), 1902, 275-6.

⁴⁶ On the development of the Czech liturgical movement, see Kopeček, *Liturgické hnutí v českých zemích a pokoncilní reforma*, 100-49.

⁴⁷ Cf. Marek, *Emil Dlouhý-Pokorný*, 153-68.

⁴⁸ Frýdl, *Reformní náboženské hnutí v počátcích Československé republiky*, 29.

⁴⁹ Such as Baar, Kroihor or Dvořák

as conscientious church leaders were also aware of the need to do something to change the secularization trends in Czech society. This is related to a second peculiarity of the Czech situation, namely that in Bohemia and Moravia the Catholic modernist movement had a mass character with large participation of the local Czech-speaking Catholic clergy and was truly organizationally connected,⁵⁰ including regular meetings with the participation of nearly three hundred members, although the internal diversity was still high.

3.3 The Expansion of the Movement and Its Premature Fall

The movement soon encountered resistance on the part of the bishops, as the text of the reformer Karel Dostál-Lutinov of 1903 tells us, where right in his introduction he admits that they had begun as “Church properly celebrating”, restoring ecclesiastical art, and did not even think of reforming Church. Nevertheless, a portion of the hierarchy instigated investigations, closings, bans, expulsions of theologians and a press campaign against the movement. Young priests full of idealism and enthusiasm for the Catholic Church embarked on a cultural struggle. They tried to defend the Church against the secular world, but except for the field of art they could not fulfil their aspirations. Concerning the problem of faith and modern science, they were only poorly prepared by their ecclesiastical formation, concerning the social question they could not overlook the misery and inequality in their own priestly ranks: how could it be claimed that the Church was on the side of freedom, when priests were not allowed to read what they wanted, how to defend the order of the family, when one looked at the consequences of celibacy, and when even in the national area the representatives of the Church committed injustices. The young priests recognized that the reform of life had to come with the reform of literature, and so Catholic modernism unwittingly found itself among the reformers. Because they called for healing, they were rebuked as traitors and expelled from the Church. They were opposed by Church conservatives and by enemies of the Church at the same time. Catholic modernism might be stifled, but its ideas had to prevail.⁵¹ This text from 1903 demonstrates that despite distrust and opposition from local bishops and episcopal ordinariates, modernizing priests would not let themselves become discouraged and continued to pursue their activities.

At the assemblies and congresses, most maturely and complexly then at the Third Congress in Přerov in July 1906, the movement

⁵⁰ Marek, *Emil Dlouhý-Pokorný*, 84-8.

⁵¹ *Nový život*, 8(2), 1903, 50-1.

finally formulated a programme, which demanded the democratisation of the Church, the election of bishops, and fraternal relations between the bishops and priests, a greater influence of the laity on ecclesiastical affairs, the creation of a Czech patriarchate as a re-renewal of the tradition of Cyril and Methodius, making celibacy voluntary, a reform of the patronage right and an assurance of the material security of the clergy. There were also demands for the possibility of celebrating the liturgy in the vernacular, for reforming the teaching of religion in schools, for the freedom of association for the clergy to defend their interests, and for a theological education, which was adequate to contemporary challenges and allowed for autonomy in thought and character. In doing so, the priests repeatedly rejected the attacks on the Church and religion in society and emphasised their commitment to the papacy and the Church.⁵²

In the growing atmosphere of the anti-modernist struggle, the Unity was increasingly confronted with the enmity of bishops who did not trust the priestly corporate organization, accused them of modernism and gradually banned one reform journal after another.⁵³ The escalating pressure culminated in a series of measures at the turn of 1906-07, such as the ban on reading the latest modernist magazine *White Banner* in November 1906. In February 1907 the bishops dissolved the Unity of the Catholic Clergy. As in Germany with measures of bishop Keppler against Reformkatholizismus in 1902, also the Czech modernising movement was suppressed by the bishops even before the actual papal decision, because they perceived it as a dangerous critical current precisely because of the representation of a large number of priests. After both papal anti-modernist documents were issued, the bishops' ordinariates confirmed the prohibition of the Unity as a modernist organization, the ban was confirmed also by the state bodies at the request of the bishops. As with modernizing authors in other countries, it was futile to argue that the Unity and the personalities organized in it were not affected by the papal anti-modernist documents.⁵⁴

Attempts were also made to publish two journals in 1907 and 1908, where the legacy of the movement was formulated by the pen of Dostál-Lutinov.

Catholic, or Christian-democratic, modernism is on the side of the future, because it accentuates not only Catholicism, which is the religion of the Bohemian nation, but also Slaviness, cultivation, freedom and social reforms. Catholic modernism has a noble, harmonious, reasonably progressive programme on sound foundations. Even

52 Frýdl, *Reformní náboženské hnutí v počátcích Československé republiky*, 28-9.

53 Cf. Marek, Trapl, *František Světlík*, 30-3.

54 Frýdl, *Reformní náboženské hnutí v počátcích Československé republiky*, 30.

though it has been pushed down and crucified today, it will soon be resurrected with Christ.⁵⁵

The relatively easy suppression of such a mass movement was due to a number of factors, starting with the generally high discipline and obedience of the clergy given by their formation in the priestly seminaries.⁵⁶ This includes the existential uncertainty fostered by the state's support for the state church. Furthermore, there were still civil laws that prevented ordained priests who had left ministry from marrying legally. Overall, not many priests left the Church; in many cases they were clergymen who had lost a religious type of faith and then found employment in civilian professions. But among those who left the Church were some of the leading representatives of Czech Catholic modernism.⁵⁷ Much more frequent reactions consisted in going into internal exile with feelings of disappointment and bitterness. The reform movement that broke out at the end of the First World War was then all the more intensive, before being ecclesiastically repressed after two years, leading to the establishment of a modernist National Czechoslovak Church.⁵⁸ A certain continuity could be maintained concerning literary modernism, where the Prague group was able to re-organize and to continue its work, albeit strictly confined to the revival of Catholic literature and art.⁵⁹

4 Challenges for the Research on Catholic Modernism in the Czech Lands

The Czech modernist movement had an apologetic tendency, it wanted to defend the place of the Church in society, which entailed the need for the Church to respond to the transformations of the world, society and science and to deal with them honestly. Marek states that Czech Catholic modernism was an integral part of the modernist tendency, but like this tendency in general it did not have time to mature, there was no real organised movement and programme, both of which remained in the undeveloped initial form. Czech Catholic modernism was to be only a reflection of and response to European reform efforts due to the absence of original ideas, of radicalism

⁵⁵ Rozkvět, 1(13), 1907, 55, 30 March.

⁵⁶ Cf. Petráček, *In the Maelstrom of Secularisation, Collaboration and Persecution*, 95-7.

⁵⁷ E.g. František Holeček, Emil Dlouhý-Pokorný, Ladislav Kunte, František Loskot, or Josef Svozil, yet it was a very small group of the several thousand members of the Unity, cf. Marek, *Emil Dlouhý-Pokorný*, 192.

⁵⁸ Schultze-Wessel, *Revolution und religiöser Dissens*, 117-76.

⁵⁹ Putna, *Česká katolická literatura v evropském kontextu*, 515-22

and a broader base.⁶⁰ While the first part of Marek's judgment corresponds to historical facts, the next assessment about the absence of a real program and a real movement character seems to be somewhat harsh. I believe that the demands of the Unity of the Catholic Clergy were clear, actually quite courageous and were based on their own tradition and the current situation, as well as inspired by the discussed reform steps in the German language space. It was a priestly reform movement, so their level of radicalism seems to be appropriate, they could hardly go further or deeper in their demands. With a few exceptions, as well trained and disciplined catholic priests they did not want to mobilize the laity or to establish a new church. But where else in Europe did such a broadly organized, at least modernizing movement, with a characteristic representation of a higher clergy, originate? Moreover, the situation was complicated by the severe exclusion of Catholicism from the national cultural and historical tradition in civil society and the close ties of the official Church to the state and its power structures. Despite all these limitations, they also attracted for their struggle collaborators who had a complicated relationship with Catholicism such as the writer Julius Zeyer, top artists such as Felix Jenewein and František Bílek. Their struggle was watched by the period press, and the radical politician Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was also very interested in it.⁶¹

Despite all the reservations and the loss of positions, the Czech Catholic clergy at the beginning of the 20th century included very interesting personalities who carefully followed foreign spiritual and intellectual currents and creatively developed their own impulses for the restoration of ecclesial life. It is true that also in the Czech milieu, despite the claim of the Encyclical *Pascendi*, there were considerable differences in the ideological focus in the 'ranks' of the 'modernists' who in the Czech case formed a real movement but not a school. The suppression of the Unity led some leaders to increase their engagement in the field of the political-social Christian movement, which the bishops also did not view favourably, but could not forbid directly. As a result, after the end of the First World War, various smaller Christian parties could join together to form one influential party affecting the appearance of the First Czechoslovak Republic.⁶²

One of the challenges facing Czech modernism and integralism is the need for deeper research in the archives in Rome. While we have the events in the Czech territory well described, partially also based on foreign sources of ecclesiastical and diplomatic provenance,

60 Cf. Marek, *Apologetové nebo kacíři?*, 88.

61 Šmíd, *Masaryk a česká Katolická moderna*.

62 See Fiala et al., *Český politický katolicismus 1848-2005*, 183-4; Marek et al., *Jan Šrámek a jeho doba*, 405-48.

we lack the reflection of the relevant Roman bodies, especially the Congregation of the Holy Office.⁶³ The study of the opponents of the modernists, the figures of the integralist camp, works that would deal with their personalities, their arguments, and their mutual cooperation are even more absent.⁶⁴ Due to the political developments in Central-Eastern Europe, the relationship between state, church and religion is unexpectedly topical. The matter is not only about the knowledge and the treatment of the past. The main motive of the entire crisis was the answer to the question of how the Church and Christianity can and should cope with the dynamic transformation and development of society and the thinking of its time.

Bibliography

- Arnold, C. *Kleine Geschichte des Modernismus*. Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2007.
- Balík, S. et al. *Český antiklerikalismus. Zdroje, témata a podoba českého antiklerikalismu v letech 1848-1938* (Czech Anticlericalism: Sources, Themes and Form of Czech Anticlericalism in 1848-1938). Praha: Argo, 2015.
- Boldt, F. *Kultur versus Staatlichkeit. Zur Genesis der modernen politischen Kultur in den böhmischen Ländern im Widerspiel von kulturellem und politischem Bewusstsein bei den böhmischen Tschechen und Deutschen bis zum Jahre 1898*. Praha: Vydav. Karolinum, 1996.
- Cínek, F. *Církev zbudovaná na frázích* (A Church Built on Phrases). Olomouc: Nákladem 'Našince', 1923.
- Cínek, F. *K náboženské otázce v prvních letech naší samostatnosti* (On Religious Questions in the First Years of Our Independence). Olomouc: Nákladem Lidových závodů tiskařských a nakladatelských, 1926.
- Dolejšová, I.; Hradílek, P. (eds). *Budoucnost modernismu?* (The Future of Modernism?). Praha: Ročenka časopisu Getsemany, 1999.
- Farský, K. (ed.) *Zpode jha: Vznik církve čsl* (From Under the Yoke: The Origin of the Czechoslovak Church). Praha: Nákladem vlastním, 1921.
- Fasora L. et al. *Kněžské identity v českých zemích (1820-1938)* (Priestly Identity in the Czech Lands (1820-1938)). Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2017.
- Fasora, L. et al. *Papežství a fenomén ultramontanismu v českých zemích* (Papalism and the Phenomenon of Ultramontanism in the Czech Lands). Praha: Academia-Masarykův ústav a Archiv AV ČR, 2018.
- Fiala, P. et al. *Český politický katolicismus 1848-2005* (Czech Political Catholicism, 1848-2005). Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2008.
- Frýdl, D. *Reformní náboženské hnutí v počátcích Československé republiky. Snaha o reformu katolicismu v Čechách a na Moravě* (Reform Religious Movement in the Beginnings of the Czechoslovak Republic: The Efforts to Reform Ca-

⁶³ A preliminary evaluation of the reception of Pascendi in the Czech lands can be found in Weiß, *Reports*, 111s.

⁶⁴ We can use as an example the lecturer of the theological school of the congregation of the Redemptorists Václav Smolík, who issued a commented translation and interpretation of the Encyclical *Pascendi*: Smolík, *Encyklika*.

- tholicism in Bohemia and Moravia). Brno: Nakladatelství L. Marek, 2001. Edice Pontes pragenses 14.
- Havel, M.O. *František Reyl. Kněz, vědec, politik* (František Reyl: Priest, Scientist, Politician). Červený Kostelec: Nakladatelství Pavel Mervart, 2016.
- Havelka, J. *Katolické političky? Český katolický feminismus (1896-1939)* (Catholic Women Politicians? Czech Catholic Feminism (1896-1939)). Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2018.
- Holát, P. *František Teplý – archivář a kněz* (František Teplý – Archivist and Priest). České Budějovice: Pavel Holát Im Eigenverlag, 2003.
- Hrdlička, J. *Život a dílo Prof. Františka Kováře. Příběh patriarchy a učence* (Life and Work František Kovář: The Story of a Patriarch and Scholar). Brno: Nakladatelství L. Marek, 2007.
- Jurek, D.J. *Eine kleine Kirche in Europa. Die Tschechoslowakische Hussitische Kirche im Wandel zwischen Nationalkirche und europäischem kirchlichen Akteur*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019.
- Kadlec, J. *Přehled českých církevních dějin 2* (Overview of Czech Church History 2). Řím: Nakladatelství Křesťanská akademie, 1987.
- Kaňák, M. *Z dějin reformního úsilí českého duchovenstva* (From the History of the Reform Effort of the Czech Clergy). Praha: Nakladatelství Blahoslav, 1951.
- Kohout, Š.; Marek, P.; Svozil, O. (eds). *Korespondence katolické moderny. Dopisy Jindřicha Šimona Baara a Karla Dostála-Lutinova z let 1896-1917* (Correspondence of Catholic Modernity: The Letters of Jindřich Šimon Baar and Karel Dostál-Lutinov from 1896-1917). Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2011.
- Kopeček, P. *Liturgické hnutí v českých zemích a pokoncilní reforma* (The Liturgical Movement in the Czech Lands and Post-Consular Reform). Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2016.
- Kučera, Z.; Kořalka, J.; Lášek, J.B. (eds). *Živý odkaz modernismu. Sborník příspěvků z mezinárodní konference, pořádané Husitskou teologickou fakultou Univerzity Karlovy v pražském Karolinu dne 29. listopadu 2002* (A living Legacy of Modernism. Collection of Contributions From the International Conference Organized by the Hussite Faculty of Theology of the Charles University). Brno: Nakladatelství L. Marek, 2003.
- Kučera, Z.; Lášek, J.B. (eds). *Modernismus, historie nebo výzva? Studie ke genezi českého katolického modernismu* (Modernism, History or a Challenge? A study on the Genesis of Czech Catholic Modernism). Brno: Nakladatelství L. Marek, 2002.
- Louthan, H. *Converting Bohemia. Force and Persuasion in the Catholic Reformation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Marek, P.; Soldán, L. *Karel Dostál-Lutinov bez mýtů, předsudků a iluzí* (Karel Dostál-Lutinov Without Myths, Prejudices and Illusions). Třebíč: Arca JIMFA, 1998.
- Marek, P. *Apologetové nebo kacíři? Studie a materiály k dějinám české katolické moderny* (Apologists or Heretics? Studies and Materials on the History of Czech Catholic Modernism). Rosice u Brna: Nakladatelství Gloria, 1999.
- Marek, P. *Český katolicismus 1890-1914, Kapitoly z dějin českého katolického tábora na přelomu 19. a 20. století* (Czech Catholicism 1890-1914, Chapters from the History of the Czech Catholic Camp at the Turn of the 20th Century). Rosice u Brna: Nakladatelství Gloria, 2003.

- Marek, P. *Církevní krize na počátku první Československé republiky (1918-1924)* (The Ecclesiastical Crisis at the Beginning of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918-1924)). Brno: Nakladatelství L. Marek, 2005.
- Marek, P. *Emil Dlouhý-Pokorný. Život a působení katolického modernisty, politika a žurnalisty* (Life and Work of a Catholic Modernist, Politician and Journalist). Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2007.
- Marek, P. et al. *Jan Šrámek a jeho doba* (Jan Šrámek and His Time). Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2011.
- Marek, P.; Trapl, M. *Mons. František Světlík (1875-1949). Nástin života a díla katolického politika a novináře* (Mons. František Světlík (1875-1949). An Outline of the Life and Work of a Catholic Politician and Journalist). Rosice u Brna: Nakladatelství Gloria, 2001.
- Montagnes, B. *Marie-Joseph Lagrange. Une biographie critique*. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2004.
- Petrářek, T. *Výklad Bible v době (anti-)modernistické krize. Život a dílo Vincenza Zapletala* (Interpretation of the Bible During the (Anti-)Modernist Crisis: The Life and Work of Vincent Zapletal). Praha: Krystal OP, 2006.
- Petrářek, T. *Le Père Vincent Zapletal O.P. (1867-1938). Portrait d'un exégète catholique*. Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2007. *Studia friburgensia*, Series historica 6.
- Petrářek, T. *Bible a moderní kritika. Česká a světová progresivní exegeze ve víru anti-modernistické krize* (The Bible and Modern Criticism: Czech and World Progressive Exegesis in the Whirlwind of the Anti-Modernist Crisis). Praha: Vyšehrad, 2011.
- Petrářek, T. *In the Maelstrom of Secularisation, Collaboration and Persecution. Roman Catholicism in Modern Czech Society and the State*. Lublin: EL-Press, 2014.
- Putna, M.C. *Česká katolická literatura v evropském kontextu 1848-1918* (Czech Catholic Literature in the European Context, 1848-1918). Praha: Torst, 1998.
- Rak, J. *Bývalí Čechové. České historické mýty a stereotypy* (Erstwhile Czechs: Czech Historical Myths and Stereotypes). Praha: Nakladatelství H&H, 1994.
- Salve. *Revue pro teologii a duchovní život* (Salve: Revue for Theology and Spiritual Life), 17(3), 2007.
- Schultze-Wessel, M. *Revolution und religiöser Dissens. Der römisch-katholische und der russisch-orthodoxe Klerus als Träger religiösen Wandels in den böhmischen Ländern und in Russland 1848-1922*. München: Oldenbourg, 2011.
- Šmíd, M. (2007) *Masaryk a česká Katolická moderna* (Masaryk and Czech Catholic Modernity). Brno: Nakladatelství L. Marek, 2007.
- Smolík, V. *Encyklika J.S. Papeže Pia X Pascendi Dominici gregis o učení modernistův*. Translated into Czech and explained by Václav Smolík. Praha: Nakladatelství Dědictví sv. Prokopa, 1911.
- Soldán, L. *Karel Dostál-Lutinov a Nový život. Dva sloupy katolické moderny* (Karel Dostál-Lutinov and Nový život (New Life): Two Pillars of Catholic Modernity). Rosice u Brna: Gloria, 2000.
- Tinková, D. *Jakobíni v sutaně* (Jacobites in the Cassock). Praha: Argo, 2011.
- Urban, O. *Česká společnost 1848-1918* (Czech Society 1818-1918). Praha: Svoboda, 1982.
- Urban, R. *Die Tschechoslowakische Hussitische Kirche*. Marburg a. Lahn: J.-G. Herder Institut, 1973.

- Weiß, O. *Modernismus und Antimodernismus im Dominikanerorden. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum "Sodalitium Pianum"*. Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1998. Quellen und Studien zur neueren Theologiegeschichte 2.
- Weiß, O. "Reports From the Non-German Speaking Parts of Austria-Hungary", in Arnold, C.; Vian, G. (eds), *The Reception and Application of the Encyclical Pascendi. The Reports of the Diocesan Bishops and the Superiors of the Religious Orders until 1914*. Venice: Ca' Foscary University Press, 2017, 109-19. <http://doi.org/10.14277/6969-130-0/StStor-3-5>.

