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Catholicism and Modernism in Bohemia and Slovakia in the First Half of the 20th Century

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1. Introduction

Although the common history of Czechs and Slovaks in the form of a single state begins in 1918 with the rise of the Czechoslovak Republic, this political development has a long pre-history. It is possible to detect strong cultural contacts between the two nations in the 19th century, in the period when they wrote their history and culture more anonymously within the framework of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Among the most significant indicators of the intellectual connection between Czechs and Slovaks I recall Jan Kollar's cultural pan-Slavism, the renewal of the cult of Cyril and Methodius on the occasion of millenary celebrations, especially in the years 1863, 1869 and 1885, Czech romantic Slovakophilism, the Detvan Association founded in Prague in 1882 to acquaint the Czech public with Slovak culture, the magazine *Hlas* [*Voice*], with T. G Masaryk's propagation of political realism and social reformism in Slovakia. The origin of Czechoslovakia as a literary-historical landmark presents itself as the culmination and confirmation of a longer period of cultural evolution. Politically, it meant for the Czech nation the conclusion of efforts for State political emancipation, for the Slovaks – it brought national freedom, which for them was shaped in the context of Hungarian politics, especially in the last three decades of the 19th century (Bela Grünwald's idea of 'big industrial' Hungarianisation, which was to serve education in particular). It meant

the abolition of Slovak grammar schools, the League for the Advancement of the Slovak Nation, the use of Hungarian even in elementary schools. So Slovaks entered into a new State union with a different status, significantly to the disadvantage of cultural and national emancipation. The two nations' different starting-positions in the process of self-awareness brought it about that the identical cultural processes which both nations went through as they united into a common state, reflect and give expression to the difference between Czech and Slovak cultural types.

This paper aims to propound a thesis about the connection and at the same time the difference between Czech and Slovak cultural development in this cultural process which both nations entered into, and at the same time to describe what is specific to each. Specifically, the purpose of the article is to show the difference in manifestations of Catholicism seeking to establish itself in the cultural sphere, which infiltrates the domain of the purely ecclesiastical (artistic activity, publicity, translation, literary and other knowledge). Even though the period of the first Czechoslovak Republic means also the beginning of modernisation in the state, in which the development of both nations kept time with the pulse of European history, my interest will be to follow the impact of this process on the young intellectual and artistic Catholic elite in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the reaction it provoked. Democratisation and modernisation in the state were necessarily connected with the process of secularisation and meant change in the spiritual climate of Europe as a whole. The starting-point, then, will be an outline of the problems in a wide context, which includes the whole European cultural sphere (especially in western Europe, by which I understand the countries with developed western Christianity or Protestantism). With this type of topic, an interdisciplinary approach is required: I shall follow it against the background of the history of philosophy (the history of ideas); in writing it the categories of the sociology of religion will be helpful. The main line of comparative research will be in literary history, with a complementary approach to general and church history.

2. Secularisation and Catholicism in Europe

The history of Europe in the 20th century is marked by a cultural process which we know as secularization. It is connected with the process of urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation of Europe. The Enlightenment, with its optimistic trust in rationality and the influential (and) practical possibilities for the human person to change the world and raise his standard of living, is considered as the beginning of secularization. This trend is responsible for a concept of historical development with constantly and uniformly growing progress. At the same time there is evident decline in religious belief in these societies. Philosophy first proclaimed secularization as the 'breakup of the world'. In the 19th century Friedrich

Nietzsche formulated the idea of the death of God, in which he did not speak about ontological denial of his existence, but about a sense of the subjective, problem-making, sceptical approach to God, with which the modern person comes: „I have killed him”. Karl Marx formulates the anti-religious position still more aggressively, in that his philosophy asserts itself in the 20th century as also a political ideology, which will sow secularization with revolution and with powerful weapons. Classical sociological theories present the secularization of modern societies as a paradigm undeniably bound up with the 20th century (E. Durkheim). They come from the incompatibility of religion and modernity, and forecast the marginalisation, the extinction of traditional religion (in the case of Europe, Christianity), possibly its internal secularization.

On the other hand, from the mid-19th century, in various European countries, a notable cultural phenomenon presents itself, that young Catholic authors, many of whom were priests, began to enter actively into literature and into the public cultural forum. This phenomenon is specific in that it is impossible to explain it as the expression of the individual activity of one creative person; in writing of it supra-personal literary-historical terms like group, source, direction, generation must be used. It is a phenomenon which must be considered in supranational, pan-European contexts: not simply that Catholic authors enter into literature and culture in various European countries, but that they connect with one another. This evident activity of Catholic artists and intellectuals must be seen in connection with secularization, and as a specific reaction to it.

In the context of the sociology of religion at present, along with secularization theories transformation theories of the encounter of modernity and religion have developed. According to them, the relationship between religion and modernity is not so simple. Even in modern societies it is possible to note strong religiosity, though in changed forms, which may be understood as one of the specific forms of modernity as a project which has a plurality of manifestations. Transformation theories allude to two exceptions, precisely in the case of western Europe and in the subculture created by intellectuals with humanist education of western type, who indeed compose a very influential elite¹. Although transformation theory considers developed modernity as possible to be recorded from the 1960s², it seems to us that

¹ R. Vido, *Náboženství a modernita v současné sociologii náboženství*, “Sociální studia”, ed. R. Vido, 2008, nr 3-4 (5), p. 30.

² From the 1960s it is possible to see an attempt to enter into a dialogue with the present-day world and current culture by official representatives of the Catholic Church as well. The Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) established a definitive reforming line in the Church. Pope John XXIII broke with the „barricade strategy” of the Church and opened it to the world, which did justice to a term beloved at the time, „aggiornamento” (bringing up to date). Pope John Paul II spoke of inculturation, expression of faith in the language of culture, without which faith remains ineffective. Pope Benedict XVI saw the position of Christians in today’s world as a creative minority („kreative Minderheit”), which does not

the notable activity of Catholic artists in western Europe already conspicuous from the end of the 19th century is one of the first reactions to the modernisation process on the side of the Catholic Church, so one of the first evidences of transformation theory. Even though this reaction comes 'from below', from lay people or rank and file priests, not from official quarters, from the upper hierarchy, it is clear all the same that it originated from an attempt to influence the cultural climate of society from the direction of Catholic intellectual and spiritual tradition. According to the Czech historian Pavol Marek, the constituting of liberal democratic industrial society places before the Catholic Church a dilemma of choice:

1. Would the Catholic Church find the means of influencing the new cultural secularizing trends in society spiritually, by using and actualising the spiritual potential gathered over the centuries?
2. Or would it close in on itself as a result of the secularizing processes, because of a defensive-aggressive attitude towards the irreligious cultural interests of modern society?

At first only a small number of the lower clergy noticed this serious cultural problem of the Church's relationship with society, made efforts for change, and organized a reform movement³, which is known in Church history as **Catholic modernism**. Catholic modernism arose as an expression of the attempt at reconnaissance of the spiritual potential of Catholicism in face of the democratization and laicisation of society. In the cultural sphere, which did not have foundations already established on religious presuppositions (autonomous morality founded exclusively in the person, law based on social consensus, Enlightenment philosophy and subjectively oriented philosophy of life, economy based on competition), Catholic modernism attempted to win a cultural space, from which it offered an alternative to secularized ideas. On the other hand – opposite, anti-modernistic tendencies appeared in the Catholic Church, based on resistance to social trends, in an effort to return to the pre-Enlightenment vision of the world which turned the Church into a cultural ghetto. Martin C. Putna calls this tendency **Catholic restoration**⁴ and considers it unsound, immature, indeed a manifestation of crisis in Church life. However, it is evident that the Catholic Church was not passive in the face of secularization, whether in progressive or restoration tendencies.

have to agree with everything that modern culture brings, but is to offer a creative alternative. So the longer-term development of the Catholic Church also offers arguments which support the transformation theory. Of course, it does not deny the secularization theory, but rather complements it.

³ P. Marek, *Cirkevní krize na počátku první Československé republiky (1918-1924)*, Brno 2005, p. 37-38.

⁴ M. C. Putna, *Česká katolická literatura 1848-1918*, Praha 1998, p. 55-98.

3. Catholicism and Modernism

Official reactions from the Catholic Church (at papal level) to intellectual and practical modernism (e. g. political modernism, social movement, women's movement, Church reform) were naturally unfavourable. In the *Syllabus of Errors* of 1864 Pope Pius IX judges as erroneous (heretical) that the Church should step down from its position as dominant power in the state. State power must respect the Church (e.g. legislation must correspond to morality, as the Church pronounces it), which thereby must have coercive authority. According to the Pope, the Church cannot reconcile itself with progress, free thinking and modernism⁵. The Church was not, however, able to stop the changes, which in the given historical situation, it was probably still unwilling to admit.

Pope Leo XIII adopted a more open position towards modern society, demonstrated in the encyclical *Libertas praestantissimum* on essential human freedom (1888) in which he formulates thoughts about Church relations with democratic states in more detail. He explains and positively evaluates democracy and the new opportunities which the modern period has brought: the Church does not stand against the spirit of research or scientific success, nor is it the enemy of education and the cultural progress of humanity; it does not adhere to any form of state organization. He defends and supports opportunities that flow from human freedom and investigation, in all questions which have no connection with Christian teaching on faith and morals. These questions „he leaves to the free judgement of scholars, without enforcement of his authority”⁶. He defines the authority of the Church in the sphere of teaching on faith and morals, in which the Pope has authority over individuals and also over the State. In his further encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), the first papal encyclical which reacts to weighty social problems, he judges communism and liberalism as political ideologies, which produce simplified political visions but do not resolve the social question. On the other side, he outlines the possibilities at the disposal of Christian democracy in the resolution of serious social problems⁷.

⁵ Pius IX, *The Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius IX. and the Syllabus of Modern Errors*, Roma, 1864, http://ia600602.us.archive.org/13/items/cihm_48367/cihm_48367.pdf [Access: 13. 5. 2013].

⁶ Leo X, *Libertas praestantissimum*, Roma 1888, p. 18, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_lxiii_enc_20061888_libertas_en.html [Access: 13. 5. 2013].

⁷ Leo XIII, *Rerum novarum*, Roma 1891, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_renum-novarum_en.html [Access: 1. 10. 2014].

Pope Pius X in the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici gregis* of 1907 reacts first of all to philosophical and theological modernism. His reflection on modernism, attempting to describe it as a coherent system can be considered as still valid. Pius X's encyclical reaches other conclusions than Pius IX's *Syllabus*, though there is a connection: it clamps down particularly on modernism inside the Church. The Pope characterises religious philosophy in the spirit of modernism as agnosticism: modernism professes the conviction that reason cannot know transcendent phenomena concerning faith and religion. Therefore it trusts in the irrational principle which Pius X calls living immanence. This comes from a particular movement 'of the heart', from feeling, from the individual person's subconscious. No doubt this approach does not deny religion, but it subjectivizes, relativizes revelation (the Bible) and the institutional element (the Church). It considers dogmas as symbols, which do not express religious truth, but represent religious experience in some way. In this way of thinking the Church's tradition is sharing of religious experience, which has particularly suggestive power, whose task is to arouse or support religious feeling. The principle of immanence and symbolism is present also in modernistic theologizing (religious formulae are symbols which reveal and at the same time veil religious experience). Pius X subsequently shows concretely how theological modernism gives false explanations in individual questions of faith, for example the person and divinity of Jesus Christ, sacraments, the Church, etc. He also repudiates practical modernism, which he characterises as Church reformism, attempting complex, particularly dogmatic and disciplinary adaptation to the modern person (the Pope mentions such points as democratization – greater lay participation in responsibility for the Church, or the abolition of celibacy). Pius X finally concludes that modernism is gnostic heresy and leads to atheism. As regards modernism inside the Church, he introduces restrictive measures, like censorship or the setting up of diocesan commissions to inform the bishop and the Pope about the spreading of "modern heresies"⁸, which brought total expulsion of modernists from theological chairs and finally excommunication⁹.

If we were to characterise the Catholic Church's attitude to society through metonyms, with the help of the ecclesiastically binding formulations of the three popes, whose pontificates cover the rapidly encroaching secularization at the turn of the 19th century, they would be refusal (Pius IX), really setting limits and indicating alternatives (Leo XIII), purging and distancing (Pius X). In this they saw

⁸ Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis. Encyclical of Pope Pius X on the Doctrines of the Modernists*, Roma 1907,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_19070908_pascendi-dominici-gregis_en.html [Access: 1. 01. 2014].

⁹ Modernists denied the branding of modernism as a coherent system of thought, indeed finally as some kind of organised conspiracy. Modernism was for them only a tendency, a direction, a phenomenon (B. Krüll, *Modernismus oder Reformkatholicismus*, Saarbrücken 2008, p. 11).

the process of secularization and modernism from outside to inside. Not only, it seems, did the rapidly developing industrialising society not count the Church as a spiritual authority. From the Church's side too there was an analogous "repudiation" of the philosophical atheism that was the beginning of secular morality and of modernism inside the Church. Both sides clearly perceived the incompatibility of religion and modernism, and placed themselves in mutually hostile positions. And yet it seems that in this battle religion drew the short straw.

Pavel Marek judges Catholic Modernism as one of the first attempts at making contact between the Catholic Church and secular culture and as an attempt to communicate the spiritual potential of the Church to the modern person. Such initiatives came particularly from the side of the laity and rank and file clergy, who were clearly more open to modernism than were the initial attitudes of the popes. Both in the Czech Catholic Church (in the concept "Czech Catholic Church" I include also Moravia, although it had, and has, different expressions of religion), and in Slovakia, such groups of clergy with initiative came into being, sometimes with laymen among them. In the following sections I shall describe the most significant cultural and literary output of Catholic artists and intellectuals and the dynamic which their activity aroused in society and inside the Catholic Church¹⁰.

4. Modern Czech Catholic Literature

Martin C. Putna dates the beginning of Czech Catholic Modernism to 1895, when its manifesto-almanac *Pod jedním praporem* [*Under One Banner*] was published. Simply the naming of the new literary movement appears for the first time – and with approval – in Masaryk's review *Naše doba* [*Our Time*] in the same year, so that the name was quickly established; eventually the Catholic authors who

¹⁰ Although the encyclical *Pascendi* intervened expressly only against philosophical and theological modernism, the reactionary clerical wing warned that modernism strikes in every spiritual area, and explicitly also the literary. In fact, in western Europe Catholic magazines came into being that sought to offer space for young Catholics and so to communicate with contemporary culture. They drew attention to the obscurantism and inferiority of Church culture, to the tendentiousness and didacticism of the Catholic novel, to the verses that had nothing in common with poetry. By means of cultural periodicals suitable conditions arose for the development of Catholic literary criticism, which sought to formulate a positive programme for artistic creativity informed by Catholic ideas. Pius X in one of his Briefs legitimized the concept of *Modernismus litterarius* (*literary modernism*). Even though non-theological cultural periodicals were not explicitly banned, reactionary Church circles distanced themselves from them, on occasions they were put on the Index or they faced criticism from periodicals of a reactionary tone, which announced a return to the medieval order. That happened, for example, in German-speaking countries, where Karl Muth founded a magazine *Hochland* in 1903, with the aim of opening the Catholic Church to the modern world. On many occasions he faced literary attacks from the Austrian reactionary magazine *Gral*, which Richard Kralik Ritter von Meyrswalden founded in 1906 (B. Krüll, *Modernismus oder...*, op. cit., p. 93-103).

were concerned with it also identified with the name¹¹. T. G Masaryk sympathised with Catholic modernism from the beginning, and followed its activity. He perceived it as the echo of modernistic movements abroad, especially among German theologians¹² and French writers¹³. And at the same time he put it into perspective with the Hussite reformed tradition, according to him a representative cultural phenomenon which did justice to the Czech nature and specific cultural approach. He considered the manifestations of Catholic modernism as the „singing and creative Church” in face of „the attacking Church”¹⁴.

The beginnings of the cultural activity of Czech Catholic Modernism presented modern Catholic aestheticism expressed particularly in literature. The publishing-base of Catholic Modernism was the magazine *Nový život* [*New Life*]. Among the representatives of this literary-aesthetic line are Xaver Dvořák, Karel Dostál Lutínov and Sigismund Bouška. In their treatment of religious themes there is a perceptibly new way of presentation. They do not approach it deductively, as objective fact, which they would have described disinterestedly, with no connection to the perceiving subject, as was the case in the older type of religious literature. The approach of modern Catholic authors may be described as inductive, coming out of personal spiritual experience, to which they wanted to give appropriate aesthetic expression, corresponding to the modern person's experience. The modernistic principle of immanence, to which Pius X drew attention, may be identified recast into literary language, where it acquired the likeness of the attractive artistic principle of subjectivisation. Catholic modernists in their literary creation allow strong subjective spiritual experience to speak, as I may point out for example in Xaver Dvořák's poem from his collection of sonnets *Eucharist*. The original text of the poetry:

„Ó nepochopitelná! / Ó blesku náhle vzplanulý! / se chvějícími řadry Boha, / ty šílicí zde lásky věčný kvete! // Ach, touhu přejít v milovaného, / žhnout rozpálenými čivy, / zrát v srdci rozničeného, / jak víno přetajenné révy! // Ó mžiku zachycující věčnost v tváři, / ty zakřiknutý plese nevýslovně blažených, / ó zrcadlo jež vyšleává // jas paprsků všech, sluncí všech a září, / ty plné spojení snů žhavě vysněných: / jsi hrob, kam mystik srdce pochovává.”¹⁵

This same text in my loose translation:

¹¹ M. C. Putna, *Česká katolická...* op. cit., p. 273-278.

¹² Such German theologians as Joseph Schnitzer, Hugo Koch, Franz Xaver Kraus, Herman Schell, in the next generation Albert Eckhart and Sebastian Merkle.

¹³ The crisis of French positivism helped the development of Catholicism, which in literature produced Léon Bloy, Paul Claudel, Francis Jammes, Charles Péguy and other writers.

¹⁴ M. Šmíd, *Masarykův vztah ke Katolické moderně*, [in:] *Osobnost v církvi a politice. Čeští a slovenští křesťané ve 20. století*, P. Marek, J. Hanuš (ed.), Brno 2006, p. 80-81.

¹⁵ X. Dvořák, *Eucharistia. Sonety*, Praha 1918, p. 14.

[„O incomprehensible! / O lightning suddenly flaring up! / Swaying in God's bosom, / you crazy one, where everlasting love blossoms! // Ah, to pass into this beloved / to glow with burning emotions, / to mature in a heart of kindled, / like wine from the mysterious grapevine! // O glimmer catching eternity in the face, / you, hushing the unutterable jubilation of the blessed, / o mirror that beams // rays for all, sun for all and radiance, / you fully joined with the ardent dream of those lost in dreams: / you are a tomb, where the mystic buries his heart.”]

The poem is inspired by the Eucharistic cult, which belongs among the liturgical (communal) forms of devotion in the Catholic Church. Poetic language indeed keeps in step with current liturgical images and expressions of Catholic faith in the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is close to expressions coming from the mystical tradition (this point confirms explicitly the impression from the whole poem), moving in an experience of the same intensity as passionate love. Litany-like dreaming verses on the Eucharist speaking for example of intoxication with God („crazy one, where everlasting love blossoms”) are not like dogmatic language. In the less striking but equally eloquent expression about the poetic subject, which is found in the attitude of „unutterable jubilation” the identity of mystic and of complicated modern man intersect. Both are formulated with expressive closeness to the modern poetic direction (loosened rhythm, highly personal testimony, awareness of the limits of the expressible, sensual imagery).

Although Czech Catholic Modernism even at the beginning of the 20th century also left further fields of literary activity (especially in the area of prose – for example the work of Jindřich Šimon Baar), gradually it modified its character in the Church reform movement with the attempt at better solution of social questions, with the development of Christian democracy, better theological formation of priests, emphasis on personal freedom and responsibility and also with critique of celibacy and other practical questions of Church life. The authors associated with the magazine *Nový život* (*New Life*) brought to the pages of the magazine intellectual and artistic inspirations from abroad (Josef Müller, Marian Zdziechowski), even though their sympathies were eclectic (authors from German theological modernism, whom T. G. Masaryk preferred and recommended, were absent).

The Catholic Modernists' position in the context of society was not simple: the pages of the journal *Nový život* were a platform apart from any other, in which the editors replied to many attacks on the part of reactionary clergy and explained their position: secular society was not particularly interested in their conflict within the Church; after various disillusioning experiences, and as a result of the fact that Czech Catholic Modernism, unlike German, did not have a solid theological foundation, T. G. Masaryk's relations with them also became twisted and complicated¹⁶. Finally the well-meant attempt of Czech Catholic Modernism at dialogue with modern culture, whether by means of the development of aesthetic

¹⁶ M. Šmíd, *Masarykiv vztah...*, op. cit., ibidem, p. 83-87.

Catholicism (art) or by way of practical reforms of the Church, was officially brought to an end in 1907, when Pope Pius X intervened radically against reforming and modernizing efforts with the encyclical *Pascendi Dominici gregis*. Even though the authors of Czech Catholic Modernism distanced themselves from theological modernism, from the Church's side they were judged as modernists, and so the ban and the judgement affected them also. In 1918, after the end of the First World War and after the rise of the Czechoslovak Republic, suitable conditions appeared for a new open approach to Catholic Modernism¹⁷. In that period the activities of Catholic Modernism radicalized their reforming demands. They asked of the Vatican the largest possible measure of Church independence in Czech and Moravia, on the model of the Orthodox Church, the making of celibacy optional, election of bishops, as against the practice of appointment of them, and other reforms (which have become reality today, for example translation of the breviary into vernacular languages, cremation of the dead.) A new development was that priests' demands reached the political level: Modernist priests who were also members of political parties discussed them in party circles, and so they reached the inner circles of party discussion and the decision-making of State organs¹⁸. Pope Benedict XV radically refused the demands of the ambassador of Czech Catholic Modernism. The outcome was the foundation of the Czechoslovak Church in 1920, which some of the modernists joined. The official Church reacted in a series of lawsuits, in which it condemned the reform programme of Catholic Modernism: for example Xaver Dvořák, author of many spiritual poems and hymns, was excommunicated, many priests from the core of Catholic Modernism went into seclusion¹⁹. In 1924 the most turbulent phase of the reactionary Church's conflict against Modernism in the Czech region came to an end. The last remnants of the spiritual people in the Church became resigned to "non-conflict" and to faith that even through the Holy Father's refusal of the reform programme the possibility of some kind of agreement and of change of views still existed²⁰. Czech historians and literary historians (Pavel Marek, Martin C. Putna) recognise a certain prescience in Czech Catholic Modernism in its position towards secular society, a sincere attempt to help the Catholic Church to get out of the cultural ghetto, and an inspiring force for other Catholic intellectuals or artists, even if they distanced themselves from them and their modernism. At the same time they recognize that the majority of Catholic church or literary historians do not attribute a positive initiating significance and inspirational influence to them²¹.

¹⁷ The position of the Catholic Church in Czech and Moravia was exceptionally complicated at that time, when the Church in general joined itself loyally to the Austrian Imperial Court.

¹⁸ P. Marek, *Církevní krize na počátku první Československé republiky (1918-1924)*, Brno 2005, p. 26.

¹⁹ M. C. Putna, *Česká katolická...*, op. cit., p. 345-351.

²⁰ P. Marek, *Církevní krize...*, op. cit., p. 8.

²¹ M. C. Putna, *Česká katolická...*, op. cit., *ibid.*, p. 24-25, 515.

In Czech culture a trend was set concerning the development of Catholic literature, which distanced itself from Catholic Modernism and looked for other literary, cultural and religious manifestations. Because of its negative attitude to secular culture (especially after the rise of the Czechoslovak Republic), and to Catholic Modernism, and because of its radical, apocalyptic, aggressive sectarian spirituality²², Martin C. Putna judges it as a demonstration of **restoration** Catholicism²³. However, this type of cultural activity from Czech Catholics showed itself, apart from anything else, in the sphere of aesthetic Catholicism, and in the publications not only of spiritual but also of literary experts (*Nova et Vetera* [*New and Old*], 1912-1922, *Archy* [*Arks*], 1926-1941), of translated Catholic literature and of their own literary creation. The dean of this cultural trend among Czech Catholics was Josef Florian (1873-1941), who as a Catholic layman influenced by the radical French convert Léon Bloy, began to work with a group of collaborators in Staré Říše on the revival of Czech Catholicism²⁴. For Josef Florian, the believing Catholic who had to combine religious faith with intellectual solidity, presented the way out of the spiritual misery at the beginning of the 20th century. From 1903 until his death in 1941 Josef Florian from his publishing house, Dobré dilo, printed editions of experts producing articles from a wide thematic spectrum, from religion through art, philosophy to natural science.

Even though the beginnings of the activity of Josef Florian and his circle really gave support in the significant struggle against secular society, especially his collaborators, authors, editors, translators and literary historians (Bohuslav Reynek, Josef Vašica and others) they brought to their creative activity qualities with which they introduced significant changes to the originally reactionary course. Josef Vašica's literary-historical contributions to the understanding of Czech baroque certainly did not flow from reactionary thinking, in an attempt to turn modern culture back to the time before the Enlightenment, or uncritically consider the baroque as the golden age of the Catholic Church. They come, indeed, from the recognition that Czech literary-historical writing does not know and value the baroque period sufficiently, and attempt to rectify the given situation. However they

²² J. Fischer, *Dějiny francouzské literatury 19. a 20. stol.*, Praha, 1983, p. 303.

²³ M. C. Putna, *Česká katolická...*, op. cit., p. 358.

²⁴ Josef Florian often, openly on the pages of magazines and in personal correspondence, worked against Catholic Modernism. Karl Dostal Lutínov tried to „convert” to the right side: „Seriously, Christians, I advise you, leave the scourge of Catholic Modernism to its fate and be born again to that to which the Lord calls you” (Š. Kohout et al. (ed.), Olomouc 2009, p. 298). Certainly he considered it a sect, but he said “about the unsuccessful sect, give it up...”; “If a perfect sect had been produced from former times, on the example of strong parents, you can see yourselves it would have been cursed long ago by the holy Roman Catholic Church. So Catholic Modernism would have deserved the name heretical sect. Till now, indeed, it is not possible, it is not possible.” (Š. Kohout et al. (ed.), Olomouc 2009, p. 299). After 1907 Josef Florian had to acknowledge at least this dignity, the dignity of a sect condemned by the Catholic Church, to Catholic Modernism.

are based on analyses of baroque texts and on convincing knowledge of the baroque phenomenon. In the same way the editorial work of B. Reynek and J. Vašica in the old Imperial journal *Nova et Vetera* [*New and Old*] brought strengthening of the cultural mission and anchoring in non-reactionary spirituality.

Thus the fact that young Catholics like Jakub Deml, Bohuslav Reynek, Josef Vašica, Jaroslav Durych, to some extent Jan Čep, Jan Zahradníček and others joined Josef Florian had perhaps still greater meaning than publishing activity for Czech Catholicism in the 20th century. These authors are not considered as Catholic modernists, nor as “Florianists” in the history of Czech literature; they come into literature as young Catholic authors, they bring themes that draw on Catholic ideology, they publish in Catholic literary and cultural journals (*Jitro, Akord, Řád*) but they do not belong to any recognised literary or Church tendencies. It is possible to speak simply about Catholic literature, or modern Catholic literature (i.e. 20th century literature). The most significant of the Catholic authors, specifically Jakub Deml, Jaroslav Durych, Jan Zahradníček and Jan Čep, also belong with its initiator Josef Florian to the canon of 20th century Czech national literature²⁵. For the Slovak Catholicism of the first half of the 20th century they were a uniquely significant inspiration, as many of the Catholic Modernists in Slovakia acknowledged.

5. Slovak Catholic Modernism

At the beginning of the 20th century, when Czech Catholic Modernism began to be active in publications, Slovak Catholics were submerged in completely different problems: enforced Hungarisation made impossible for them the religious and cultural activity which the Church hierarchy also saw as undesirable²⁶. Therefore they tried to a much greater extent than Czech Catholics to enter the political field, with the opportunity of working in defence of national liberty for Slovaks.

²⁵ M. C. Putna, *Česká katolická...*, op. cit., p. 81.

²⁶ One of the incidents which made journalists and the European public aware of national discrimination in Hungary was when Andrej Hlinka (1864-1938), a Slovak priest and politician, was suspended because before the elections he campaigned among the people for a Slovak People's Party (the reason was Panslavism). When in 1907 he was appointed to the parish church in the town of Čemová, the parishioners asked the bishop to allow Hlinka also to consecrate the church. This request was refused. The parishioners opposed another consecrator, appointed by Alexander Párvy (1848-1919), Bishop of Spiš. On the day of the consecration, 27 October 1907, the crowds of parishioners in the street did not want to make way for the appointed consecrator to get through. At this the gendarmes received from the commanding officer the order to fire at the people. In the incident 15 people were killed, more than 60 others taking part were wounded, the others still were imprisoned and fined. Among the persons who protested against such disproportionate armed intervention and informed the European public about it, were the French writer Viliam Ritter, the English journalist and historian Robert William Seton-Watson, the Norwegian writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Czech deputies in the Austrian parliament and the president of the Austrian parliament.

Ferko Skyčák, Andrej Hlinka, and Ferdiš Juriga, politicians of the Slovak People's Party, are the most significant representatives of a line of politically-involved Catholic priests. Slovak Catholics, with their difficult national conditions in the framework of the Hungarian state welcomed for the most part the support of Czech Catholic circles (expressed for example on the pages of Catholic magazines and journals). There came to be contacts between the Slovak and Czech priesthood; the spiritual link was, apart from anything else, the devotion to Cyril and Methodius and St. Vojtech. However, certainly the basic conditions did not exist for Slovak Catholics to join the Czech Catholic reform centre²⁷.

After 1918, also, the situation in the Slovak Catholic Church was complicated; moreover, many Catholic priests were inclined towards Hungary. A corporate pro-Hungarian priestly organisation arose, against which stood the circle around A. Hlinka, with its own priestly organisation inclined towards Czechoslovakia. So it is understandable that in the 1920s group cultural initiatives of Catholic priests were not observed. It is possible to note only rare, individual attempts at literary creativity (for example Ignác Grebáč Orlov), which however did not provide an inspirational impulse for the young generation of priests²⁸. Around the 1930s Slovak Catholic priests who grew up and studied under Czechoslovak conditions, who grew up with a democratically-oriented State and its modernising processes, begin to enter the cultural field. 1933 is considered as a signal, when Rudolf Dilong brought out *An Anthology of Young Slovak Poetry*, containing poems from young Catholic authors, Pavol G Hlbina announced the rise of the literary group *Postup* [*Advance*] and the foundation of a magazine of the same name. Literary critics took note of this symptomatic activism on the part of young Catholics and labelled the rising group as Catholic Modernism, under which term modern Slovak Catholic literature established itself definitively within the framework of literary history²⁹. The concept of Slovak Catholic Modernism covers any kind of young Catholic literature until 1948. Single Catholic authors to whom it referred had reservations about this name,

²⁷ P. Marek, *Cirkevní krize...*, op. cit., p. 67. The Slovak reforming tendency entered significantly into the clergy conference at Žilina on 22.1.1919, where through the mouth of the deputy and vice-president of the Slovak People's Party P. Ferdinand Juriga it demanded the separation of Church and State, democratisation of the Church, a greater share for the laity in its government, Slovak as the liturgical language and the abolition of celibacy. He formulated these proposals into a memorandum and gave it to the minister of justice in Slovakia Vavro Šrobár. Juriga's manifesto aroused sharp discussion. Against this thesis the followers of the tendency representing A. Hlinka protested: „Hlinka's party wants to go on preserving the old hierarchical ways, defending Latin and the unmarried state” (P. Marek, 2005, p. 67).

²⁸ J. Pašteka, *Tvár a tvorba katolickej moderny*, Bratislava 2002, p. 67.

²⁹ Július Pašteka judges that the term Catholic Modernism expresses in principle the favourable reception of Catholic poets by Evangelical literary critics: Milan Pišút, Dobroslav Chrobák, Štefan Krčméry, Rudo Brtáň, who helped to put this expression into circulation (J. Pašteka, *Tvár a tvorba...*, op. cit., p. 33-35).

which they judged to be arbitrary and mechanical, as indeed it was. For they had nothing in common with real philosophical or theological modernism. Even if they had critical reservations towards most of Slovak Catholicism, which they considered for the most part as uncultured and popular in programme, their attitude is perhaps for the most part characterised as moderate reformism. Apart from that, Pius X's encyclical *Pascendi Dominici gregis* was taking vigorous action against modernism within the Church, which could be dangerous for their existence.

According to Petra Zemanová, Slovak Catholic Modernism was named at the beginning by analogy with Czech literature³⁰. However, Slovak authors could relate to Czech Catholic literature from Josef Florian's circle, not to Catholic Modernism at the turn of the 19th century. From this point of view, faced with the failure of the second Catholic literary journal *Prameň* [*Source*], in which he was involved editorially, Rudolf Dilong pointed out really by contrast of similar things and with unconcealed distaste:

„Our circles gave us up long ago, while Czech Catholics did not give up their Durych, Zahradníček, and others, while Catholics in France did not give up their Claudel, and so on. Our authorities recognise as a Catholic poet one who writes verses to the Queen of the Holy Rosary or in the calendar of the St. Vojtech Association. That is the situation of Catholic Modernism in Slovakia”³¹.

The Church hierarchy in Slovakia, then, did not react repressively against Catholic Modernists; there was no conflict displayed on the side of the Church, but rather ignorance and lack of interest with which individual Catholic authors had difficulty. As regards the concept itself – if it really originated on the basis of analogy with Czech literature, which is possible – it was a confused concept, led by non-Catholic literary criticism unaware of the situation within the Church, equating any kind of modern Catholic literature with Catholic modernism. The concept of Slovak Catholic Modernism established itself also after 1990, when in Slovak literary learning the time came for ‘filling the white spaces’ and the removal of ideology. According to Július Pašteka, synthesizer of Catholic Modernism and editor of many volumes by Catholic Modernist authors, the appeal of Catholic Modernism has not lost its validity, because it corresponds with similar modern tendencies in other European literatures, so it should be kept also in future³². However it should be understood as chiefly a literary-group name, which certainly as a metonymy overlaps with the ecclesiastical-theological concept, but from which it must be distinguished in content and in scope.

³⁰ P. Zemanová, *Formovanie slovenskej katolíckej moderny ako kultúrny a literárny problém*, „Slovenská literatúra”, ed. M. Hamada, 1992, nr 3 (39), p. 229-240.

³¹ R. Dilong, *Slovo k našej situácii*, „Prameň”, ed. K. Geraldini, R. Dilong, 1937, nr 2, p. 227.

³² J. Pašteka, *Tvár a tvorba...*, op. cit., p. 18.

Contemporary literary history in Slovakia speaks of **two waves of Slovak Catholic Modernism**³³. To the core group of the authors of the first wave of Catholic Modernism and the founders of Slovak Catholic Modernism³⁴ belong Rudolf Dilong and Pavol Gašparovič Hlbina. They devoted themselves to the development of modern Catholic aesthetics in literary, especially poetic creativity, in examples, in contributions to journals and in editorial work. P. G Hlbina was the first of the progressives who opened up aesthetic-conceptual questions of Catholic literature:

„Poetry for Catholicism is the synthesis of ancient perfection with ardour for the ideal, for eternity and God, ‘a beautiful Athenian vase full of the flowers of Calvary’, soul and body. We have found in poetry the devout daughter of the Catholic Church and its beloved sister, Beatrice, who leads us out of Hell, through Purgatory, to the Kingdom”³⁵.

Catholic poetry in his definition is the product of European cultural processes from Antiquity, through the Middle Ages up to the present time, synthesizing intellectual and physical, spiritual and aesthetic experiences. It is impossible not to notice the emphasis on the significance of aesthetic values for the Catholic Church, the sincere cry ‘poetry / beauty saves us!’ – formulated in Dante’s metaphor in the *Divine Comedy*. P. G Hlbina strives further over theoretical and practical adaptation of so-called ‘pure poetry’ in Slovakia³⁶. The second of the founders, R. Dilong, did not pay too much attention to theoretical requirements: according to him it was important to give space for the individual poetic nature. Neither did the journals *Postup* and *Prameň*, which he edited, create any foundation group of Catholic authors; certainly they gave space also to Catholic poets, but similarly to national authors, leftists, ruralists, so they were not limited in ideology or tendency. They acted on the concept of spontaneous openness to contemporary culture and to all the authors who showed interest in them. They did not have any formulated collective aesthetic or ideological programme they needed to offer, apart from the gesture of openness and a programmed clear alternative towards modern times and the avant-garde tendency. As regards poetic creativity, for Rudolf Dilong and Pavol G Hlbina experimentation in expression is typical, the attempt at avant-garde –

³³ S. Šmatlák, *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry II*, Bratislava 2001, p. 341.

³⁴ M. Hamada, *Poézia slovenskej katolíckej moderny*, Bratislava 2008, p. 631.

³⁵ P. G Hlbina, *Meditácie*, „Postup”, red. K. Geraldini, r. 1934, nr 5/6 (1), p. 9.

³⁶ The creator of the concept of „pure poetry” is the French Jesuit Henri Brémond (1865-1933) who wrote the books *Pure Poetry* (1925) and *Prayer and Poetry* (1926). Pure poetry must be freed from any kind of didacticism and utilitarianism, presents aesthetic mysticism, since pure poetry, even though it is not prayer, urges to prayer. Pavol G Hlbina was an expert in his theory, wrote and published articles about it, and eventually also translated *Prayer and Poetry* (1943). In the first articles on Abbé Brémond’s concept, Pavol G Hlbina used the name „genuine poetry”, which was the term in Slovak adopted by F. X. Šalda.

especially poetistic and surrealist – literary expression. Rudolf Dilong expressed his way to the avant-garde, together with his relationship with the contemporary, spontaneously and trustingly, in the article *Cesta k mladému svadobníkovi* [*Way to the Young Wedding Guest*]:

„When I opened my eyes before the book *Stars and Sorrow*, I saw into poetry. Poetry freed from the old customs of the so-called lyric, I became a friend of everything seen. And it was life that I saw, life and its manifestations... From that time, as after the *Young Wedding-Guest*, it was and is about new life. Life, which enables us to run forward, whose energy makes it possible for us to take part in new ages, in coming ages. It is about this life pure and simple, and we have faith in it. Faith, which no theory supports, but which is supported by life itself (...) When we stopped by you, blessed today, and when we experienced the departure of dead fathers, (...) the song of time so captivated us, of great time, striking and punctual. We became defenders of poetic time, because in time there is no eternity (...) Today with its moments and interventions is so fascinating, that I am wild with it³⁷.

In Dilong's best books of poetry (*Hviezdy a smútok* [*Stars and Sorrow*], *Mladý svadobník* [*Young Wedding Guest*]), it is possible to recognise that he succeeded in combining avant-garde expression with personal and religious themes. This adaptation of avant-garde poetics took place without acceptance of avant-garde noetics, which were, naturally, antireligious. (K. Marx, S. Freud). The creativity of both initiators of Catholic Modernism, indeed, was characterised by verbal hedonism, displaying plays on words which reached absurd comparisons³⁸.

The second wave of Slovak Catholic Modernism comes from 'fringe' culture – from the seminary in Spišská Kapitula (northeast Slovakia). It seems that, precisely there, favourable spiritual conditions were created, but also human and intellectual conditions for future priests, because many of them showed such individuality in creating and thinking that they were capable at the same time of collaborating in literary and editorial projects. The philosophy teacher was Ladislav Hanus (1907 – 1994), a young priest studying in Innsbruck, who was familiar with new theological sources, especially Romano Guardini and Peter Lippert. As well as being an inspiring teacher, he wrote some books of essays, in which he dealt with the philosophy of culture (*Rozprava o kultúrnosti* [*Talks about Culture*], *Rozhládenia* [*Looking Around*]). Ladislav Hanus was aware of the need to open a 'window on Europe' for Slovak Catholicism:

„Let us join ourselves with French, German, Hungarian, Czech religious creativity...³⁹.

³⁷ R. Dilong, *Cesta k Mladému svadobníkovi*, „Prameň“, ed. by K. Geraldini, R. Dilong, 1936, nr 1, p. 223.

³⁸ M. Hamada, *Sizyfovský údel*, Bratislava 1994, p. 101.

³⁹ L. Hanus, *Nové požiadavky katolíckeho života*, „Kultúra“, ed. by M. Šprinc, J. Sedlák, 1941, nr 2-3 (13), p. 60.

Hanus' original investment was that he did not take this inspiration mechanically, but understood the need to reflect the cultural conditions which characterised Church and society in Slovakia. In principle he demonstrated fundamentally the disorders of the reactionary Catholic Church in Slovakia and diagnosed its unhealthy manifestations (national chauvinism, negative relationship with the contemporary, confessional fanaticism, supernaturalism), expressed in kitsch Church art. Another thinker from Spišská Kapitula was Josef Kúttník Šmálov (1912-1982), who presented himself chiefly as a literary critic. Josef Kúttník Šmálov, as a critic came out most radically against surrealism in Slovak literature. With his sharply-formulated literary-critical judgements he made bonds with authors on the avant-garde wing of Catholic Modernism (Dilong and Hlbina), with whom he wanted to settle accounts, because in his opinion his own refined sensuality concealing itself under the appearance of mysticism had already done enough damage⁴⁰. On the other hand, among the authors whom he evaluated positively was Janko Silan (1914-1984), a priest from the Spišská Kapitula area, linked with the subjective poetic symbolism of Ivan Krasko (1876-1958).

The authors of the second wave of Slovak Catholic Modernism approached their cultural task with unambiguous ideological determination. They were conscious of their duty to communicate with contemporary culture and to bring to it genuinely spiritual cultural impulses inspired by Catholicism. It is possible to recognise that clearly in the ideas of the journals which they edited: *Obroda* [Regeneration] (1943-1944) and *Verbum* [Word] (1947-1948), which, unfortunately, were of brief duration, and soon disappeared due to political circumstances (*Obroda* – because of military events, *Verbum* – because the Communists came to power).

6. The Czechoslovak contexts of Catholic culture

On the margins of Czech / Slovak contacts between creative literary Catholic authors it must be recognised that, especially in the 1930s, there were a number of Slovak Catholics connected with Czech culture in various ways. František Skyčák, Pavol G Hlbina and Ján E. Bor studied theology in Prague. Janko Silan began as a poet in Prague, where thanks to the financial support of the Julius Zeyer Fund for Czech academic science and culture he published his first work, *Kuvici* [Owls] in 1936. Pavol G Hlbina, Rudolf Dilong, Janko Silan, Josef K. Šmálov, Gorazd Zvonický and Vojtech Mihálik (who is better known as a Communist poet but who nevertheless began as a poet of Catholic Modernism) all published in Czech Catholic journals. On the other hand, in Slovak Catholic Modernist journals many articles can be found referring to and relying on the cultural

⁴⁰ J. K. Šmálov, *Literárna kritika ako poznávanie a hodnotenie*, Bratislava 2004, p. 142.

movements of Czech Catholics⁴¹. Both Catholic critics – Ján E. Bor and Josef Kútňík Šmálov – were markedly influenced by the views of F. X. Šalda. The poet Jan Silan was acquainted with Jakub Deml and Josef Florian, Rudolf Dilong's avant-garde creation is not wholly explicable without the influence and example of Vítězslav Nezval. Dilong, in the Congress of Czechoslovak Writers in Trenčianské Teplice in 1936 got to know and turned to Jaroslav Seifert, who makes a reference to him in his book *Všechny krásy světa* [*All the beauty of the world*]. Apart from Rudolf Dilong, Pavol G. Hlbina also, and Paľo Oliva, a priest of the younger generation of Catholic Modernists, and a talented poet with a tragic fate reminiscent of Jiří Wolker, absorbed Czech poeticism into their creations (Paľo Oliva fell ill with tuberculosis after five months of pastoral work, went to the Tatras for treatment, but without success, and died at the age of 27).

The idea of Cyril and Methodius and St. Vojtech as spiritual binding and cultural symbol was much closer to Slovak Catholics than the noted cult of St. Stephen's crown in Hungarianizing ideology. However, Slovaks were disappointed with the preference of the Hussite tradition over those of St. Vojtech or St. Vaclav in the Czechoslovak Republic. Similarly the concept put across of one Czechoslovak nation and Czechoslovak language was not sufficiently authentic⁴², so that at the end of the 1930s political tendencies grew also among Slovak Catholics striving to assert political autonomy. As that happened in the context of the beginning of the Second World War, the division of the state into the protectorate of Czech and Moravia, and the wartime Slovak republic under the dictatorship of fascist Germany, it also meant the cultural isolation of both nations. This, indeed, is the theme of the overall scope of this work.

7. Conclusion

The history of philosophy in the 19th and 20th centuries and the cultural changes called forth by the industrialisation of Europe mirror the separation of

⁴¹ For example: M. J. Milov: *Josef Florian, Catholic and Writer*, „Prameň“, ed. by K. Geraldini, R. Dilong, 1936, nr 1 (2), p. 7-10.

⁴² It is possible to introduce at least one example from the journal „Postup“, Koloman K. Geraldini's open answer to a Czech reader's letter: „Only a few people today believe in the idea of one Czechoslovak nation and in a Czechoslovak language, and the only ones who proclaim it are those paid to do it, people who are not fit for anything, except to upset us and you with their cock and bull stories. Neither do you, citizens of the Czech nation, believe in such nonsense, nor do we, members of the Slovak nation. Why squabble about things that are perfectly clear? If our fathers thought, and think, that our love for one another could not be lasting while we were two nations and two languages, it means that they did not trust one another, and wanted to hide lack of real love in formalism. And where, if you please, does that lead to? To concealed hatred. Let us defend ourselves from what was caused by the fall of the former monarchy“ (K. Geraldini, *Pozdrav mladým Čechom*, „Postup“, ed. by K. Geraldini, 1934, nr 4 (1), p. 1).

society from religion, in which sociology places the secularisation theory, judged as an indisputable paradigm. Even the first reactions on the part of official representatives of the Catholic Church confirm the incompatibility of Catholicism and Modernism, which, however, made the Church a cultural ghetto. On the part of the lower clergy and the laity, however, it is possible to recognise a notable growth of cultural activity, and that would be in the direction of acceptance of Modernism, but conversely of the reactionary struggle against it. These are the first preliminary signs of the so-called transformation theory, according to which religion would not be separated from modern society, would also have its place in it, indeed the religious expressions of the modern person would change.

Further, the article summarizes the spheres of creative and intellectual and artistic activity of Czech and Slovak Catholics, and that in the period from the end of the 19th century until 1948, so from the beginnings of Catholic Modernism until it was banned, and until the repression of Catholics in the cultural sphere, which was evoked by the political accession of the Communists to power. Comparison confirmed the notable interest of Czech and Slovak Catholics in literature (particularly in poetry, among Czechs also in prose, literary criticism and literary history, translation, publishing activity and in editorial direction of their own magazines and journals) and at the same time showed their mutual spiritual and artistic contacts and their knowledge of relatedness with cultural Catholicism in the other European countries.

The beginnings of modern Catholic aestheticism among the Czechs are attached to the group called Catholic Modernist (Karel Dostál Lutínov, Xaver Dvořák, Jindřich Šimon Baar), which originated in 1895, was suppressed in 1907 by the Bull *Pascendi Dominici gregis* of Pius X, and indeed until 1924 developed its modified activity in the direction of practical Church reform. Catholic aestheticism in literature developed also in the group gathered around Josef Florian, where such creative individuals grew up as Jaroslav Durych, Jan Zahradníček, Jan Čep, Josef Vašica, Bohuslav Reynek, who at the same time changed the originally reactionary course of the journals published by Josef Florian.

Catholicism in Slovakia at the turn of the century was too absorbed in political activity. It is possible to speak of Catholic aestheticism in the sense of beyond-individual, group activity from 1933, to which year the rise of Slovak Catholic Modernism is dated. The first wave of Catholic Modernism (Rudolf Dilong, Pavol Gašparovič Hlbina) was absorbed in the avant-garde impulses of its literary creativity; in the relationship to society and secular culture it was characterised by spontaneous openness, but at the same time by its own ideological lack of definition. The second wave of Slovak Catholic Modernism is characterised, apart from the spiritualisation of poetic creativity (Mikuláš Šprinc, Paľo Oliva, Janko Silan), by critical cultural reflection on Slovak Catholicism (Ladislav Hanus) and art (Josef Kúttník Šmálov).

Czech and Slovak literary learning was interested in this parallel cultural activity, in different naming strategies: while among the Czechs only the first, initiating group, which was connected with practical modernism and reformism in the Church (although not with theological modernism), called itself Catholic Modernism, in Slovakia the concept of Catholic Modernism identifies itself with any kind of cultural activities among Catholics from 1933 until 1948 (although they also have no connection with theological modernism; it is a matter rather of moderate reform in the Church).

Abstract / Summary:

This paper deals with the mutual relationship between the process of modernisation and traditional religion (Christianity) in the context of European thinking at the turn of the 19th century, as well as in the first half of the 20th century. It analyses and synthesises the knowledge of Czech and Slovak literary scholarship concerning the literary and cultural activity of Catholic intellectuals and artists. The following comparison points out different methodological approaches and terminological concepts of Czech and Slovak literary history.

The diverse cultural activity of Catholics (Catholic modernism, modern Catholic literature summarily referred to as Catholic aestheticism) in the environment of the first Czechoslovak republic (1918 – 1939) is understood as one of the first reactions to the process of the secularisation of society. In conjunction with the reactions of the Catholic Church against secularisation and modernisation at the level of high hierarchy (Papal encyclicals), they offer case materials for validating the secularisation and transformation theories which developed within the sociology of religion. The research has proved that the secularisation theory, which is based on the thesis of the incompatibility of religion and modern society, cannot be considered the absolute and sole paradigm of their relationship. Modernisation of society at the turn of the 19th century had an activating impact on Catholics, which supports the assertion of the transformation theory according to which religion will not be excluded from modern society, only the displays of religion of the modern man will change. The interdisciplinary and interliterary approach I used in my work enabled me to explain the complex cultural processes and their consequences, which are also characteristic of contemporary culture in the Central and Eastern European environment.

Key words:

Catholicism, Secularisation, Modernism, Czech, Slovak Culture

Abstract in Polish:

Naukowy artykuł zajmuje się wzajemnym związkiem między procesem modernizacji i tradycyjną religią (chrześcijaństwem) w kontekście europejskiego myślenia na przełomie 19. – 20. stulecia i w pierwszej połowie 20. wieku. Analizuje i syntetyzuje wyniki czeskiej i słowackiej nauki o literaturze (literaturoznawstwa) o literackiej i kulturalnej aktywności katolickich intelektualistów i artystów. Ich dalsze porównanie (komparacja) wskazuje na inne metodologiczne procedury i terminologiczne koncepty czeskiej oraz słowackiej historii literatury.

Różne kulturalne zajęcia katolików (katolicka moderna, katolicka literatura modernistyczna, sumarycznie nazwany katolickim estetyzmem) w środowisku pierwszej Republiki Czechosłowackiej (1918-1939) rozumie się jako jedną z pierwszych reakcji na proces sekularyzacji społeczności (społeczeństwa). Wraz z reakcją Kościoła katolickiego wobec sekularyzacji i modernizacji na poziomie wysokiego szczebla hierarchii (encykliki papieskie) pojawia się przykładowy materiał do sprawdzenia kwestii teorii transformacji i sekularyzacji, które się rozwinęły w ramach socjologii religii. Badania wykazały, że teorię sekularyzacji, która opiera się o tezę niezgodności religii i nowoczesnego społeczeństwa, nie można uznać za absolutny i jedyny paradygmat ich związku. Modernizacja społeczeństwa na przełomie 19. i 20. stulecia wpłynęła na aktywizację katolików, co jest dowodem ważności teorii transformacji, według której religia nie będzie wyłączona z nowoczesnego społeczeństwa, ale religijne manifestacje (przejawy) człowieka nowoczesnego się zmieniają. Interdyscyplinarne i międzyliterackie (pomiędzy literaturami) podejście, które sobie wybrałam dla opracowania problematyki, umożliwiło wyjaśnienia złożonych procesów kulturowych, których konsekwencje znaczą także współczesną kulturę w Europie Środkowej i na obszarze Europy.

[Polish translation by Marek Mariusz Tytko]

Key words in Polish:

katolicyzm, sekularyzacja, modernizm, kultura czeska, kultura słowacka

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