

Reviews

Radovan Čikeš: State and Church Relations in Slovakia: Contemporary Situation and Trends of Development

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Radovan Čikeš, a political scientist, who has been focused on the issue of the state and the church for a long time published a remarkable book in 2010 enriching the current discourse on the relations between the state and the churches and religious societies in the Slovakia.

Even though comparative politics still views religion as a rather fringe issue, the last two decades have witnessed a revived interest in the study of religion by a small, but increasing number of experts. The issue of relationship between the religions and society is becoming more urgent and topical. Čikeš is analysing this issue in the context of the relationship of the state and the church that has been dynamic since the Enlightenment.

Book is divided into six basic chapters. The first part focuses on the examined context and the work's goal, its subject and method and theoretical delimitation of the relationship between the state and the church in particular. The most extensive part is formed by a detailed analytical overview of the relationship between the state and the church in the Slovakia after 1989, which is a follow-up to a chapter on historical development of state-church relations since the end of 18th Century. Apart from an analysis focusing on the aims of political parties and statements of policy by government coalitions after 1989 that provide solutions to the question of relationship between the state and the church the author sketches trends and offers a vision of the development of the mentioned relationship in the Slovakia. This is followed by a part called Systems of State and Church Relations Abroad devoted to a comparison of individual systems. It is based on historical context and relevant social development in the compared countries. However, the last chapter as the most courageous one is oriented on trends and visions of the development of relationship between state and church in the Slovakia.

Radovan Čikeš's book has become the most exhaustive elaboration of the topic ever issued in Slovak language. Author has used a numerous relevant literature of political science primarily, but also other sources of law, historical or sociological provenience. He is pursuing his goal to enrich current ongoing discourse on the issue and concludes that in order to understand the relationship between the state and the church it is necessary to take into account the dynamics of development and comprehend the individual actors of the process. Nevertheless, the publication still raises several critical questions. Author has avoided drawing his own conclusions, so the last chapter on trends and visions is merely a summary of general trends and ways of possible further arrangement of relationship between the state and the church. Nevertheless, what is missing is own input and a deeper

reflection of what has been going on in the society. According to Roland Robertson¹ globalization bears a nature of a paradox causing absolutisation and relativisation at the same time. This refers to universalisation of the particular (global expansion of the western culture) and simultaneous particularization of the universal (western culture encounters other cultures). This paradox has projected itself even to the destiny of religion – its shape and social roles have been changing rapidly, some of the forms have become weaker, while others have been developing rapidly. Hand in hand with the globalization of religion is the growth of the effort for a dialogue, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue on the one hand and a more active religious radicalism and extremism on the other. Author has completely avoided these themes; however, they can significantly influence the arrangement of state-church relations. This relationship is not solely determined by government's statement of policy (in this part author's original input should be acknowledged) and legal documents, but mainly by movements within the society and social pressures, which later on lead to the creation of mentioned documents and policy statements.

As refers to author's methodology approach, it is descriptive and analytical. Individual thematic research spheres followed interpretation of modern history, which is rather flexible in professional literature. From the viewpoint of empirical and analytical approaches, mostly results of sociological surveys were used offering certain contemporary picture of given matters as well as their functional incorporation into the course of development.

Generally, Radovan Čikeš's book represents significant contribution to understanding the current state and church relations. World affairs persuade us more and more that religion is and always will be an important element in politics. Weighty studies on religion and politics are more or less new, since prominent works and thinking in sociology and political science have inclined to a thesis that religion will gradually become irrelevant in social life. Simultaneously with finding new global trends (such as economic globalization, democratization) initial stages of the research in the role of religion in politics must rely on vaguely defined concepts and generalizations. This is also typical for literature related to the issue of state and church relationship. Study of this issue can cause political science considerable advantages. Book is suited for political scientists, lawyers, sociologists, historians but also economists and politicians as well as for study at specialized courses. At the same time, gripping and comprehensible language opens the book to the experts as a valuable source of information.

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¹ "Religion and globalization" as an issue was elaborated for the first time by Roland Robertson in his book *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. Sage Publications Ltd, 1992, p. 224