



Jirí DVORÁČEK: *Die Apostolische Exarchie
in der Tschechischen Republik. Studien
zur Geschichte, Gegenwart und Zukunft
einer griechisch-katholischen Ostkirche*

[The Apostolic Exarchate in the Czech Republic.
Studies on the history, the present, and the future
of an Eastern Greek Catholic Church]

[Eichstätter Studien — Neue Folge. Band 83].

Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2020. 272 pp.

In recent years, we have seen an unprecedented wave of migration in Europe, which brings with it new questions and challenges for political communities and for church communities, too. In both cases, the right answer must be sought, also in the legal sense — both in secular law and in canon law. This situation is present to a limited extent also in the Czech Republic.

For religious communities this creates a need for appropriate pastoral care for the newly forming groups of believers, who often belong to other groups of God's people than the predominant part of God's people, for whom pastoral care and its necessary structures have been created over the centuries. Since immigrants come to a large extent from Eastern countries, where the Eastern Catholic Churches have been in operation and their members have been living for a long time, special knowledge of the life and structures of the Eastern Catholic Churches is required, especially with regard to the structures that are used for smaller or “fringe” groups

of Catholics. From this perspective, the choice of subject of the Author is very effective, precisely because not only the situation of the Greek Catholic Church in the Czech Republic is considered and elaborated upon, but also the legal institution of an exarchate in Eastern Catholic Churches is much more generally presented.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, Part A, deals with the history of the apostolic exarchate in the Czech Republic with a long perspective. First, it deals with the history of the Greek Catholic Church and the territory of former Czechoslovakia. It starts from the mission of Sts Cyril and Methodius in the 9th century and continues with a description of the practice of Slavic liturgy in medieval Bohemia. Based on two unions, the Brest-Lithuanian (1595) and the Uzhorod (1646), it describes the emergence of the Greek Catholic eparchy in Mukachevo and its continuation after the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918. Their continuity was disrupted by violent and illegitimate state intervention in 1950, when the Greek Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia “voluntarily returned to the womb of Orthodoxy” and was not restored by the state until 1968 in the form of a unique eparchy based in Prešov, Slovakia. After the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993, separate structures were created: first, the vicariate of the Prešov eparchy was erected in 1993, and finally in 1996 an apostolic exarchate was established with a somewhat unusual definition: for all Catholics of the Byzantine rite in the Czech Republic. Subsequently, in 1997, a number of married priests (originally Roman Catholic), secretly ordained up to 1989, were included in this exarchate.

Part B of the book, in turn, first deals with the legal status of exarchates in general within the formulation of the codes of law of the Eastern Catholic Churches in the 20th century. It emphasises the proper distinction between the terms “rite” and “church *sui iuris*,” taking into account the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council. It then thoroughly describes the legal status of the apostolic exarchate in the Czech Republic. From the point of view of canon law, it describes the structures of the apostolic exarchate for the exercise of the Church’s three powers — legislative, executive, and judicial — and offers a presentation of individual bishops working in the exarchate. From the point of view of Czech State ecclesiastical law, it mentions both general legislation regulating the position of ecclesiastical institutions and especially the position of the apostolic exarchate, with an emphasis on the difficult question of its financing.

Part C of the book deals with the question of the possible future canonical status of the apostolic exarchate. First, it finds a solution to the difficult question of whether this exarchate is a church *sui iuris*, and answers it in the negative. It then analyses the possible future eventualities of the position of the exarchate: transformation in the eparchy *sui iuris*,

incorporation into the Slovak metropolitan church *sui iuris*, the position of the extraterritorial eparchy of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church *sui iuris* (affiliation to the eparchy in Mukachevo, subordinate directly to the Apostolic See), or incorporation into the structures of the Latin Church *sui iuris* in the Czech Republic. At the same time, it points out the advantages and disadvantages of particular solutions, without, however, it being possible to submit a proposal for clearly the most suitable solution.

The work contains an extensive bibliography, focused mainly on the German-language publications, along with 19 appendices, which suitably illustrate the data described in the book.

The reviewed book is an amended version of the habilitation thesis defended in 2019 at the Catholic University of Eichstätt. Its author, Jiří Dvořáček, has long been devoted to the topic of the Eastern Catholic Churches and he has the appropriate training — he is currently the only holder of the title Doctor of Oriental Canon Law (*doctor iuris canonici orientalis*) in the Czech Republic. In order to deepen his knowledge, he participates in the annual informal scientific meetings of the professors of oriental canon law associated with the Pontificio Istituto Orientale Roma (both their teachers and their graduates). He not only has extensive knowledge of the academic literature and legal sources on the Eastern Catholic Churches and the structures of the Greek Catholic Church in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, which were written in Czech or Slovak, but also has many publications published in Italian, German, and English. He has deepened and completed this fundamental knowledge through his practical involvement in the Apostolic Exarchate in the Czech Republic, especially since 2011 as a judge at the Metropolitan Court in Prague, where he is primarily responsible for legal matters relating to the faithful of the Apostolic Exarchate.

Damián Němec

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9960-2452>