

Recenzie

ČÁKY, Milan: Constantine and Methodius in Political Relationships
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History of Great Moravia has always evoked a lively interest among historians, theologians, political scientists, archaeologists, etc. In this publication Milan Čáky tries to evaluate the performance of Constantine and Methodius in Great Moravia mainly from the point of view of political relationships within which they had been performing and he discusses their political message as well.

The author of this interesting work has stated two main hypotheses:

- 1) The performance of the Byzantine mission was from the beginning not only religious and cultural but, indirectly, also political.
- 2) The activity of the archbishop Methodius had also a state-political importance and it was directed to the independence of Great Moravia.

Although in the introduction Čáky writes (p. 10) that the ambition of his work is mainly to define political relationships and not to spread historical knowledge he could not deny his history education which is understandable from the point of view of methodology as the theme is historical one. Therefore he has used mainly the documents issued by Peter Ratkoš and Richard Marsin as well as the works of important historians researching this period (e.g. L. E. Havlik, M. Kučera), archaeologists J. Dekan, J. Poulik, theologians V. Judák, J. Ch. Korec, and others.

The work is divided into 7 chapters and concluded by the most important documents of that time, bulls and papal letters. In the whole work there is an evident effort of the author for a politological analysis of the key documents originated mainly from the papal office. Firstly, the author focuses on the political aspects of the Christianisation of the Slavs.

It would be suitable to characterize the concept of Christianisation in the context of the whole Christianity, e.g. in comparison with Christianisation of Kiev Russ which would point at the specificity of the researched Christianisation in our territory.

It is similar on p.30 where the author explains the consecration (not the christening) of the church in Nitra by archbishop Adalram. As the author correctly says, this was not the only activity of Adalram.

Čáky begins his explanation with the decay of the Avar khaganate and the process of a new social identification of the Slavs using mainly translated primary historical resources (chronicles, letters, papal bulls, legends and literary works) that means he is preceding ad fonts. He is especially interested in the iro-scottish mission and its activity. It is a pity that this mission is not analysed in depth in connection with the Benedictine order although, concerning the content, it was not important.

In this part the author analyses the concept *Sloven*, *Slovak* and their Latin equivalent, *Slavus*, *Slovakus* but he did not express his attitude to the conception of some historians who consider Great Moravia to be the state created by the Slovaks. This opinion had appeared in Slovakia in the recent decade.

In the second chapter he completely analyses the mission of Constantine and Methodius from the point of view of Christianization and politics stressing that ‘*the arrival of Constantine and Methodius was a new impulse not only in education but also in the development of cultural and Christian life because the educational activity of both Solun brothers was connected with princely educational institution*’ (p. 70).

The third chapter is devoted to the specific problem of the approval of the Slavic liturgy. There appears a question: if, except for Latin, Greek and Hebrew, also the liturgy in Slavic language was accepted by the Apostle See, then why also the acceptance of a liturgy in German or Roman languages was not discussed? It was understandable that the Slavic liturgy had to face a rejection of Latinists (mainly in the East Frankish Kingdom) who stressed a united liturgy and one common liturgical language – Latin.

It is generally accepted that the language was a strong tool of Christianization through which every Christian could understand the preached God’s word and the Christian rules. The historical evidence of this was a failure of the Franciscan missions in German speaking areas and, on the other hand, a success of the Jesuit missions when the missionaries spoke the language of common people.

The problem of using the liturgical language concerned also translation of the Bible into national languages. Ordinary people did not understand Latin and thus they could know the God’s word only from church services. Therefore some theologians like J. Wicklyf, J. Hus and others supported translations of the Bible into national languages. However, this happened sooner than in the times of reformation. It is necessary to say that the Bible was translated to the Czech and English language already before its translation to German by Luther.

Čáky noticed that the denotation of an enemy as a heretic actually raised and maybe also solved a political problem. Such an argumentation was valid also for further church-legal regulations. The question is if it is possible to speak about democratization of the faith in this connection. This problem is partly discussed also in the following chapters.

In the fourth chapter the author deals with the issue of the then political thought and the personality of Svätopluk. The political characteristic of the relationship between Svätopluk and the Apostle See, Svätopluk and Methodius is very interesting and suggestive. The author stresses that “*in this situation there appeared new tasks for Methodius: to help Svätopluk stabilize the state politically and to spread Christianity among still pagan tribes of the Slavs. It means that there originated the beginnings of the connection of secular power (throne) and the Church Holy See.*” (p. 120)

The author pointed at political pragmatism of Svätopluk which showed to be the only suitable variant for that time. Čáky devoted the following chapter to the performance of Archbishop Methodius mainly within the political relationships in Great Moravia.

Next chapter deals with the problem of victory of the Latinists and the expulsion of Methodius’ followers. We agree with the opinion of the author that the activity of Methodius was directed not only to religious strengthening, i.e. creating of the united and independent diocese, but also to the independent political development of Great Moravia. Creating of the school system was a big contribution. And “*a school system*

has remained politics at any time” as later also Maria Theresa said. Therefore there were efforts to liquidate the schools which were created in the time of the mission.

The question of the evaluation of the bishop Wiching has remained open. He was a Benedictine monk who came from Swabia. He followed the interests of the East Frankish Kingdom and Roman Catholic Church as well. From the political point of view he cannot be evaluated nationally, after all, he followed also partly the interests of Svätopluk whose favour he was able to gain. He proved his capabilities in politics when he became the chancellor of the emperor Arnulf and soon a pasovski bishop as well.

Last chapter of the publication belongs to the most interesting chapters from the point of view of political science. The author analyses church character of the Cyril – Methodius tradition and speaks about the message of Great Moravian traditions in the following years. According to the author: *”...cultural and missionary work of Constantine and Methodius has had a political meaning for all Slavic nations.....it is (L.B.) not only empty legends or romantic stories”* (p. 205).

As a conclusion we can say that the author analysed in detail the documents which played a significant role in forming the national consciousness but also in the establishment of the common state of the Czechs and Slovaks as well as in creating the message in the preamble of the Constitution of the Slovak republic. The author justifies the Slovaks who in the preamble of the Constitution refer to the Cyril-Methodius tradition as one of the basic resources of our state identity: *“The values created by (Constantine and Methodius – L.B.) are parts of our today’s values and therefore they are maintained in the Constitution of the Slovak republic including the political message of the state sovereignty”* (p. 210).

Here Čáky points also at the institutions which bear the names of the faith messengers – the University of Constantine Philosopher in Nitra and the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava.

The book of Čáky brings the readers a lot of information as well as ideas to reflect and discuss. The publication is supplemented by pictures.

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