

# Damián Němec

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"Czechy. Kościół i państwo",  
Hieronim Kaczmarek OP, Kraków  
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Hieronim Kaczmarek OP  
*Czechy. Kościół i państwo*, 383 pp.  
Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2016.

It is customary that a particular country and its political situation is described by its own inhabitants, because they have grown up in the atmosphere of the culture and the history of the treated part of the world, so they can well understand it as if ‘from within’. But it also has its own pitfalls: most often, such authors express themselves in a discussion in their own country, less abroad, and sometimes their anchor in the life of a given country somewhat hinders the necessary distance or outlook. The fact that this situation is described by a man from another country and nation can be enriching in many aspects, even though he also has some rather different pitfalls.

Dr. Hieronim Kaczmarek OP is a Polish Dominican priest who assisted in the Moravian metropolis of Olomouc with the formation of young Dominican brethren from 1991–1998 and then returned to Poland. Actually, he lives in Prague as a member of the Czech Dominican community and pastor of the Polish personal parish since 2011. He has spent more than ten years in the Czech lands.

The book *Czechy. Kościół i państwo* (Czechia. Church and State) is his doctoral dissertation, which was defended in October 2016 at the Faculty of History and Social Sciences of the University of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in Warsaw under the title *Stosunki Kościół – państwo w Republice Czeskiej* (Church – State Relations in the Czech Republic) in the field of social sciences in the branch of political science. This is not a monograph from the field of law, which should be borne in mind.

This book aims to offer to Polish readers a wide and broad view of the relations between the Church (not only the Catholic one!) and the state in the terri-

tory of today's Czech Republic, because this topic is rather less traced in Polish written publications, especially political ones—the majority of Polish articles on this topic are written in the field of state ecclesiastical law. The goal set thus corresponds to the wide breadth of the subject, as is evident from the chapters' own inventory itself.

The first chapter "The Present Models of Church–State Relations" has the character of a general introduction to the issue with a focus on the political concept and above all it represents existing models, including the model of cooperation realized in the present Czech Republic. The second chapter "Historical and Cultural Conditionality of Church–State Relations in the Czech Republic" provides a brief description of the evolution of the Church-political situation from the re-catholicization of Bohemia and Moravia after the Thirty Years' War to the end of the period of persecution by the Communist regime in 1989. The third chapter "Current State Ecclesiastical Law of the Czech Republic" describes the main features, origins, and sources of the present Czech state ecclesiastical adjustment, including the Czech specifics: tripartite agreements between the relevant state administration body, the Czech Bishops' Conference and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic. The fourth chapter "Attempts to a Concordat Regulation" deals with the issue of contractual relations between the State and the Catholic Church, including the context of European Union law. The fifth and last chapter "The Determinants of Future Relations between the Church and the State" introduces changes in contemporary Czech society (secularization, the relationship of the main political parties to religious issues and the process of democratization) and in the Catholic church in the Czech Republic (presentation of the Church in the society, access to Jan Hus's inheritance and an intra-church debate about the Church's role in the society). The work is complemented by a clear chronological summary of important church-political events from 1989 to 2014 and by a rich bibliography; the text of the non-ratified draft agreement between the Czech Republic and the Holy See of 2002 is included as an addendum.

Such a wide-ranging work has one undisputed advantage: it attempts to present extensively the question regarding the Czech form of the Church–state relation in a broad context, which has not yet been written in Polish writings; the situation in this context is highlighted by the inclusion of 21 tables and two diagrams. The disadvantage of such a broad approach, however, is necessarily the schematics, abbreviation, and selectivity in the selection and description of partial facts and aspects. Therefore, some critical questions can be asked: why the author begins with a description of the historical development of the Church–state relations only from the 17th century, and thus the earlier significant events since the Christianization of this territory are neglected; whether it would be necessary and useful to take more into account the role of non-Catholic churches and religious societies (e.g., the Federation of Jewish Communities)

and the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic in shaping the ecclesiastical-political situation, because here, according to my judgment, the author is too focused on the Catholic Church; and, above all, in view of the prevailing model of cooperation between churches and the state, to what extent it is true that Church–state relations are tense in the Czech Republic, as the author states in the introduction to his publication. In view of the necessity of the above-mentioned confessional issues, it is also possible to argue with some of the assessments of the author intervening in the area of law, but in fact it is necessary to bear in mind that this is not a study in the field of state ecclesiastical law.

I am convinced that the book of Dr. Hieronim Kaczmarek is a good contribution to Polish readers and that it may encourage them to become acquainted with more detailed treatises published in Poland (predominantly in Polish).

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