

Andreas Gottsmann. *Rom und die nationalen Katholizismen in der Donaumonarchie: Römischer Universalismus, habsburgische Reichspolitik und nationale Identitäten 1878-1914.* Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010. 408 S. \$110.00, broschiert, ISBN 978-3-7001-6596-5.



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One cannot understand the Habsburg Empire without studying the Catholic Church. From the reign of Charles V, the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, and to the Dual Monarchy, Catholicism has, for better or worse, played a crucial role in the Empire. In “Rom und die Nationalen Katholizismen in der Donaumonarchie. Römischer Universalismus, habsburgische Reichspolitik und nationale Identitäten 1878-1914”, Andreas Gottsmann demonstrates the centrality of the Church in the Habsburg Empire’s twilight years. Using recently-opened Vatican archives, Gottsmann inserts the Church into the center of national strife at the turn of the century. Although the diversity of Austria-Hungary precluded a single, overarching thesis, forcing Gottsmann to organize the book along geographical lines, one can extract the following common themes: the papacy was unable to appease nationalist forces without sacrificing its supranational character; it feared mass apostasy, increasingly struggled to find suitable bishops in diverse areas, and faced challenges to change the language of the liturgy. Gottsmann concludes that the Church did not take a clear line on these issues and that ideas of Christian univer-

salism not only failed to prevent national strife but confessional identity was crucial to nation-building in many parts of the Habsburg monarchy.

The South Slavic region contained, arguably, the most intense ethnic conflict, but the papacy viewed it, initially, as a ripe target to expand Catholicism. Pope Leo XIII (r. 1878-1903) opened his reign with a concerted effort at expanding the Church into Bosnia and appealed to Catholic Pan-Slavism. His encyclical, “Grande Manus,” organized a church hierarchy for Bosnia and Montenegro and established celebrations for a Cyril and Methodius day. The force behind this encyclical was the Pan Slav, Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, who urged greater tolerance of Church Slavonic in the liturgy. Strossmayer wanted to use the Church to unite the South Slavs and to prevent conversions to Orthodoxy, which contained elements attractive to nationalists. In addition, in areas such as Dalmatia, younger clergy advocated similar aims, such as the use of Church Slavonic liturgy, which Gottsmann views as a ploy to implement vernacular languages in mass. Many Croat

clergymen argued that dioceses, such as Zengg, had received privileges to use it for centuries and interpreted it as a national right, while bishops, such as Andrej Maria Sterk, provoked Italian anger by displaying a flag of Cyril and Methodius and refusing to use Latin in baptisms.

This Catholic offensive faced opposition, not surprisingly, from the Austrian government, elements in the Vatican, and Italians in the coastal areas. “Grande Manus” angered Russia, which feared a Catholic onslaught against Orthodox Slavs, and the intervention of Francis Joseph forced the papacy to back off its grandiose goals. In 1892, the Congregation of Rites announced that Church Slavonic could only continue where it had already existed and without vernacular elements. Gottsmann contends that this decision, along with others in 1898 and 1906 solved nothing, writing “Der Hl. Stuhl reagierte mit Unverständnis und widersprüchlichen und unrealistischen Direktiven” (p. 191). Bishops found it impossible to enforce these decrees, even when Pope Pius X (r. 1903-1914) attempted to restrain his predecessor’s Catholic offensive. Ultimately, Gottsmann argues the Church became a battleground between nationalities, such as Italians and Croats in Dalmatia, due to disputes over the language to be used in mass and everyday issues such as allocating money for repairs of Church institutions. Meanwhile in Bosnia, the Church offensive only firmed up national lines as Muslims and Orthodox reacted against Catholic missionaries.

Although the Church played little role in nation building in Bohemia, the symptoms of nationalism appeared between Germans and Czechs in the realm of Church politics. In 1903, Monsignor Franz Schindler attempted to separate the Bohemian dioceses into German and Czech units with a vicar for the minorities in each new portion. A bitter fight erupted as Czechs accused the Germans of splitting up Czech lands with the purpose of Germanizing it. The Czech clergy, however, successfully opposed this plan. In the linguistic

realm, Germans desiring vernacular language in mass simply converted to Old Catholicism, which elected priests and used German in its liturgy, or Protestantism. The “Los von Rom”-movement aided this trend in Bohemia, and between 1898 and 1906 approximately 10,000 converted to Old Catholicism and 46,500 left the Church for Protestantism (p. 197). In addition, by 1914 the monarchy struggled to find moderate Czech or German bishops who could satisfy the German and Czech populations.

Unlike in Bohemia, the Church played a central role in nation building for Ruthenians in Galicia and Romanian Greek Catholics in Hungary. Most Ruthenians were illiterate and received, therefore, their news at mass. The clergy became, thus, political leaders and led a movement to resist the Polish-dominated Church in Galicia. The papacy feared that Ruthenians, especially students at the Lemberg seminary, were nationalists with sympathies for Orthodoxy and forced reform of suspect orders, such as the Basilians, by the Jesuits to remove this influence. In Hungary, Romanian Greek Catholics found their national identity in response to Magyarization. Fear of losing ancient Church privileges in a Magyar-dominated episcopacy induced reactions among the minorities of Hungary. The papacy tolerated Romanian national aspirations in hopes of converting other Romanians away from Orthodoxy. The Vatican also refused to recognize Magyar in Hungarian mass for fear of it being a tool of Magyarization, noting that of Hungary’s 150 parishes, only 50 were Magyar. Yet, for fear of apostasy in Hungary, the papacy tolerated, unofficially, Magyarization and agreed in 1912 to allow Magyar in non-liturgical portions of the mass.

Gottsmann’s argument is another strike against the crude assertion that language created nations. It is clear in this work that confessional identity played a critical role in nation-building in the southern and eastern portions of the Habsburg Empire. He locates the roots of this trend in

the Josephinist system, which made priests in these regions governmental representatives as well as clergymen. In response to assimilation pressures in the late nineteenth century, priests in these same areas, which lacked industrialization and a middle class, became defenders of the national interests, giving the nation a sacred quality. Gottsmann concludes that the Vatican struggled to respond to this challenge. If it failed to appease nationalist trends and demands for vernacular languages, it faced mass apostasy. If the Church yielded, however, to these aspirations, Catholicism could disintegrate into national churches, in a similar fashion as the Orthodox Church.

“Rom und die Nationalen Katholizismen in der Donaumonarchie” is crucial for understanding the complex problems of Austrian-Hungary in its final years. Gottsmann’s work is broad and encompassing, yet the diversity and complexity of centuries of local developments in religious practice forces him to illustrate aspects of Alltagsgeschichte in the debates over Church policy. If, as a result, the book suffers, at times, from too much detail, that must be seen as necessary for a study of this nature. In sum, Gottsmann has provided historians of the Habsburg Monarchy with an encyclopedia, replete with photos and biographies of over 100 bishops and Vatican officials, of the Church in a diverse and complicated empire.

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