

# Church-State Separation and Church Property Restitution in the Czech Republic

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**Abstract** This article aims to present the recent change in the church-state relations in the Czech Republic. The change consists of restitution of church property taken away by the communist regime and the financial separation of churches and religious societies from the state. The article briefly overviews the church-state relations in Czechoslovakia before 1989 especially with regard to the issues of property and finance. The focus is on the legislation of 2012 and the contracts between the state and churches and religious societies that both resolved the restitution of church property taken by the communist regime and initiated the process that will lead to a complete financial separation of churches from the state.

**Keywords** Church-state separation · Church finance · Property restitution · Czech Republic

The post-communist transition is a long-term process. While some reforms can be implemented overnight, other changes take decades. Church-state relations in the Czech Republic provide excellent evidence for this. Religious freedom was reinstated immediately after the 1989 revolution and religious organizations were also re-established very soon afterwards; although churches had to wait for more than two decades for the final settlement of their relationship with the state.

However, it must be noted that the 2012 settlement of church-state relations in the Czech Republic goes beyond restitution for the wrongdoings of the communist regime. The 2012 statute ‘on Property Settlement with Churches and

*Religious Societies*’ (Act no. 428/2012 Coll.) and subsequent contracts between the state and churches began a new era of church-state relations in the Czech Republic. After a transition period of 17 years, churches and religious societies will become financially fully separated from the state. Note that the separation discussed here concerns property and financial separation. The state still maintains a certain degree of regulation over churches while assuring certain privileges to those fulfilling conditions specified by the law ‘on freedom of religious expression and the position of churches and religious societies’ (Act no. 3/2002 Coll.).

Reaching a settlement between the state and churches and religious societies was particularly difficult due to the specific position of religion within the Czech society as a whole. The Czech Republic is famous for its low level of religiosity or high level of atheism (see, e.g., Greeley 2003, Norris and Inglehart 2004). However, this is a somewhat superficial observation. Czech sociologists of religion refer to the specific nature of Czech religiosity (e.g., Nešpor 2010, Hamplová and Nešpor 2009, Nešporová and Nešpor 2009, Hamplová 2008, Lužný and Navrátilová 2001). Major churches are losing adherents and the number of people without religious affiliation is increasing (see official census data in Table 1). On the other hand, these numbers do not reflect individual religiosity or spirituality. Also the belief in fortune tellers, horoscopes, faith healers and good luck charms is quite high in comparison with other European countries. Thus, Czechs seem to be without church affiliation rather than atheist.

The religiosity among Czechs and their attitude towards religion are affected by several historical factors. A major move against the Catholic Church arose with the nationalistic movement in the nineteenth Century which connected Catholicism with the ruling Austrian monarchy. The discontent led to creation of the nationalist semi-protestant Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church. Anticlericalism was also a

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**Table 1** Official census data with respect to religious affiliation 1921–2011 (percentage)

	1921	1930	1950	1991	2001	2011
Roman Catholic Church	82.0	78.6	76.7	39.0	26.8	10.4
Protestant Church of the Czech Brethren	2.3	2.7	4.5	2.0	1.1	0.5
Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church	5.2	7.4	10.6	1.7	1.0	0.4
Without religion	7.2	7.8	5.8	39.9	59.0	34.5
No answer/Don't know			0.3	16.2	8.8	44.7

significant factor in the interwar Czechoslovak Republic and after the Second World War it was strengthened by the anti-church policies of the communist regime. Despite a minor religious revival in the late 1980s and early 1990s, major churches were not able to regain popular support; sociologists attribute this to the problem of religious socialization (Hamplová and Nešpor 2009), alternatively it may be attributed to the general economic development (Minarik 2014).

With regard to the church-state settlement, the important characteristic of the Czech population is its anti-church, and especially anti-Catholic, attitude rather than atheism. Moreover, the anti-church attitude is a matter of habit rather than a conscious choice (Nešpor 2010); it stems from past rather than present controversies. From the anti-church perspective, the desirability of the settlement is ambiguous. On the one hand, financial separation may be seen as the final stage of secularization of the Czech society. On the other hand, it must be noted that the Catholic Church is the major recipient of the property restitution and financial compensation. In spite of the generally anti-church attitude of the Czechs, the Catholic Church has not withdrawn from the public sphere and the increase of its material resource was feared to increase its influence in the society.

The separation and property restitution in the Czech Republic is worthy of attention also in the comparative perspective. Firstly, compared to other Central European post-communist countries, the restitution of church property took much longer. In Poland, the restitution of church property began already in 1989, before the first free elections. In Hungary, the process began in 1991 and the final settlement was enacted in 1997 (Kuti 2009). Slovakia also enacted the restitution of church property in 1993 and unlike in other countries the law also concerned Jewish property confiscated after 1938 (cf. Kuti 2009). In Romania, the restitution process was complicated and not straightforward, although, the legislation was completed by 2002. The only unresolved matter concerns the property of the Greek Catholic Church transferred to the Romanian Orthodox Church by the communists (for more details see also Stan and Turcescu 2007).

Secondly, the settlement in the Czech Republic goes beyond mere restitution of church property and it alters the model of church-state relations. There are several models of church-state relations adopted by the post-communist countries (Stan and Turcescu 2011, Tomka 2005, for an overview

of different countries, see also Ramet 2014). According to Stan and Turcescu (2011), in the separation model no denomination is supported by the state in any way. In the pluralist model (adopted by Hungary, Bulgaria and Latvia), all churches are treated equally and they all receive support from the state. In the dominant religion model (adopted by Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Estonia and Lithuania) the majority religious group enjoys a privileged status, formally or informally. In all Central European post-communist countries, churches receive financial assistance from the state, either in the form of subsidies (Slovakia, Slovenia) or as compensation for previous property confiscation (Poland, Hungary).

After a transition period of declining state subsidies, Czech churches and religious societies will be financially fully separated from the state. Of course, financial matters constitute only one part of church-state relations; although, an important part from the perspective of church independence. In this respect, the Czech church-state settlement represents a significant step from the pluralist model to the separation model, an unprecedented step in the post-communist region.

This article presents the settlement itself as well as the circumstances under which it was developed. The article is organized in the following way. The following section provides a brief overview of church-state relations in the Czech lands, particularly the confiscation of church property after the Second World War and the system of financing introduced by the communist regime. The third section describes the post-communist restitution of church property. The fourth section deals with the transition period that will lead to the completion of the financial separation.

## Church-State Relations in the Czech Lands

Two aspects of the church-state relations in the Czech lands are important with regard to the settlement. The first concerns the church ownership of land, buildings and other assets. It must have been established what property churches actually owned and what property was unjustly taken by the communist government. The following part focuses on the Catholic Church which owned most of the property belonging to churches and religious societies in the Czech lands. The second aspect deals with the financial relations between the state

and the churches, particularly any obligation on the part of the state towards the finances of the churches.

The Catholic Church has accumulated its property over the course of the centuries. The legal status of the church property had changed over the course of time and particularly with regard to the Czech lands, the church has lost and regained its property several times. A historical account is far beyond the intent of this article. However, it is important to note certain historical arrangements that affected church property and church finance, namely the reforms of Emperor Joseph II at the end of the eighteenth century which were subsequently developed and became the basis of the legal system adopted by Czechoslovakia in 1918.

Josephinian reforms from the 1780s significantly altered church-state relations within the Austrian Empire. Many religious orders and congregations were abolished and their property was confiscated. However, the property was not taken by the state but given to newly-established religious funds. The returns arising from the property of the religious funds were used to finance the reorganization of the church structure. The Catholic Church was seen as one of the pillars of the state and it assumed certain roles within the public administration in the Austrian Empire.

The property of the religious funds was badly managed and its value has diminished over the course of time. The property was often transferred to powerful nobleman under unfavourable terms and the state would occasionally use the returns to cover budget deficits. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the system of financing was reorganized. Firstly, Emperor Franz Joseph I agreed to subsidize the religious funds. The law of 1874 intensified state supervision of church property to prevent its decline or misuse. The law also introduced a kind of church tax and an obligation on the part of religious funds to subsidize the income of priests. Although due to bad management of the religious funds, this was not operational. New laws enacted in 1885 and 1898 (known as ‘*congrua laws*’) introduced state subsidies for Catholic priests with insufficient income. Protestant ministers were not eligible for these payments as individuals, although, the state would also subsidize Protestant churches (Kříž and Valeš 2013, Kříž 2010).

The Czechoslovak Republic established in 1918 adopted with certain exceptions the legal order of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and legal position of religious groups and their property did not change. A major occurrence affecting the property of the Catholic Church was the land reform introduced between 1918 and 1920. The reform endeavoured to redistribute large land properties, i.e., those consisting of more than 150 ha of agricultural land or 250 ha of land in general. These confiscations were compensated according to pre-war prices which was certainly not a just compensation due to wartime inflation. The land reform was not targeted specifically to the Catholic Church or any other religious organization and it is not a part of the post-communist restitutions or the church-state settlement.

On the other hand, the fact that the church property was subject to the land reform testifies that it was considered as private property; publicly owned lands were excluded from the land reform. The land reform was not completed in the interwar period and the issue regarding the realization of the fulfilment or revision of the land reform was again taken up by the communists in the post-war era.

The communist coup of February 1948 started a new period of church-state relations in Czechoslovakia. Following the example of their Soviet masters (see Froese 2008), the Czechoslovak communists sought to exterminate religion and the Catholic Church in particular as it represented a challenge to their totalitarian claims. A natural step was to deprive churches of their property and thereby reduce their independence. This was done in various ways: the communist officials distorted existing laws (in the form of the revision of land reform and post-war anti-German laws) to legalize the confiscations and also employed force and frauds to transfer many ownership titles. It is important to note that the takings of church property were mostly illegal; thus, the legitimacy of restitution claims is both moral and legal.

In 1949, the communist government introduced new laws governing the relations between the state and churches and religious societies. Among these new laws, the act ‘*on Economic Security of Churches and Religious Societies by the State*’ (Act no. 218/1949 Coll.) is particularly relevant with regard to church property and finance. The law was based on the *Congrua* laws from the nineteenth century. However, the attitude of communists was quite different from that of the Austrian Emperors. All church property not appropriated by the state was put under state supervision and priests and church officials were to receive a salary from the state. The law introduced an institute of state approval, a necessary condition for a priest or a pastor to receive the salary. Providing religious services without the state approval constituted a crime (‘obstruction of state oversight of churches’). By means of these expropriations and state-paid salaries, churches lost their economic independence. The institute of state approval was a standard tool of control and also the elimination of potential dissidents among priests until the end of 1980s, even in the period when physical elimination of regime’s opponents was relatively uncommon.

Some historical considerations have been reflected upon also in the debate over the property settlement. Government-procured legal expert opinions from leading Czech academic institutions agree that the Catholic Church was indeed the owner of its property as we understand the concept ownership today (opinions reprinted in Kolář and Kříž 2012). Dissenting opinions still exist (e.g., Kindl and Mikule 1998), although they are rather rare among the experts. Kříž and Valeš (2013) also emphasize that the communist regime without any doubt regarded church organizations as the owners (explicitly in the Act no. 218/1949 Coll.) and it never invoked the

argument that church property would become public property or owned by the state. Such property rights of the churches were also confirmed by the Constitutional Court reviewing the settlement act in June 2013.

### The Restitution of Church Property after 1989

The 1989 revolution ended the period of communist rule in Czechoslovakia as well as other Central and Eastern European countries. The following transition period profoundly changed the political, social and economic life in the region. The reestablishment of private property was one of the key elements of post-communist transformation. It included two fundamental processes – property restitution and privatization. While the first aimed to compensate for unjust confiscations by the communist government, the other mostly dealt with the property developed under the communist rule.

The process of property restitution was a complicated one. Crowder (1994) provides a useful overview and a critical perspective with respect to the Czech restitution process as he points to the fact that extensive restitution options created uncertainty in property rights, and thus hindered privatization and foreign investments. It must be noted that the discussion about property restitution in the early years of transition went beyond economic arguments and its purpose was beyond that of other privatization methods. Rather, it was part of the dealing with the injustices of communist regime and the arguments were of a moral nature. However, Kuti (2009) raises legal and moral doubts with respect to the legitimacy of post-communist property restitutions.

The original conception of broad property restitution was soon replaced by a rather limited approach. The focus was mostly on agricultural and forest land, as well as rental apartment buildings. Several statutes were adopted in the early 1990s and amended in subsequent years stipulating the obligation of the state, its bodies and other public entities to hand over real property upon a request from the original owners or their successors. Only in specific cases where it was not possible to transfer the original property, would the entitled person be compensated with a substitute property (e.g. another parcel of land of a similar value) or to receive a financial compensation.

Churches and religious societies were not entitled to any property restitutions under the general restitution laws. From the beginning, legislators have envisioned a separate settlement with respect to religious organizations. The first statute dealing with the church property was the so-called ‘Enumeration Act’ (Act no. 298/1990 Coll. ‘on the Arrangement of Some Property Relationships of Monastic Orders and Congregations and the Archbishopric of Olomouc’). The statute has enumerated certain parcels and buildings that have been confiscated from religious orders

and were to be restituted to them. It also dealt with the buildings of Olomouc seminary, which was important for reestablishing the education of the Catholic clergy.

The Enumeration Act enabled religious orders to restore their activities in Czechoslovakia. However, the property restitution was limited to buildings for accommodation and religious services and did not include economically productive property that was once used to provide for maintenance costs. Also the property was often returned in a very bad state. Moreover, the statute has been interpreted by courts as to preclude any further claims by the religious orders (Kříž and Valeš 2013).

Two minor but important property arrangements were adopted in 1991. First, some property of the state was transferred to municipalities (Act no. 172/1991 Coll.). This transfer included some of the most valuable real estate property formerly owned by churches. This resettlement of property owners was not a problem per se as municipalities were obliged to return property under general restitution laws as well as legislation proposals for church property restitution at that time. However, the rearrangement is relevant from the perspective of the final settlement, as the municipalities do not have such an obligation.

Secondly, the law has prohibited the transfer of property that was originally owned by churches, religious societies and religious orders (Act no. 229/1991 Coll., par. 29). The aim was to simplify the process of property restitution for the future. It also raised legitimate expectations of property restitution among churches and religious groups. On the other hand, this arrangement combined with the prolonged discussions on the final settlement left some of the valuable property undeveloped as the owners had no incentives to invest into a property of uncertain legal status. In several districts across the country, the blocked property accounted for more than 20% of the total area, in certain municipalities it could have been up to 80% (Hupková, Havlíček and Reeves 2015).

The first proposal for church property restitution was drafted in 1992. It was not proposed by the executive branch of government as was usually the case, but rather by a group of members of parliament. The proposal followed the same principles as the general restitution laws; i.e., the property restitution would include agricultural and forest lands and buildings for agricultural production as well as buildings and parcels within municipalities. Although the proposal got the support of the majority of representatives, it was not adopted by the parliament due to the specific voting procedure in the Czechoslovak federal parliament (Kříž and Valeš 2013).

After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993, the Czech government was rather reluctant to reconstitute the church property. The period of extraordinary politics (to use the term coined by Leszek Balcerowicz) had already gone and settlement with the churches and religious societies was not regarded as one of the priorities by Czech politicians. Between 1993 and 1997, the government chose to use the

‘executive way’ of restituting church property. That is, churches and religious groups could claim property taken by the communists and the executive branch would decide whether to transfer the property to the claimant or not. However, only a few dozen claims out of five thousand were successful before the 1998 election ended the process. During the next ten years, the restitution process only progressed with regard to the Jewish community and the claims from the Holocaust, not from the communist era of repression.

Only in 2007 did the Czech government attempt to settle the issue again. A government commission prepared a proposal based on the following principles: first, religious orders and congregations of the Catholic Church would receive both economic and non-economic property; secondly, all other institutions of the Catholic Church (parishes, dioceses, etc.) and other churches and religious societies would only receive property intended for religious purpose; and thirdly, churches and religious societies would only receive financial compensation for the property not restituted (Kříž and Valeš 2013). Municipalities would not be obliged to retribute any property they owned. The total value of the original church property was estimated to be worth 134 billion CZK. The assessment of value was prepared by a government commission and the method was approved by the Ministry of Culture and the Ernst & Young consulting firm. The data were supplied by different government organizations. As it would be too costly to appraise individual buildings and parcels of land, statistical methods were employed instead. Out of the total of 134 billion CZK, property worth 51 billion CZK would be restituted in kind and 83 billion CZK would be paid in financial compensation. The compensation would be paid over 60 years with a 4.85% interest rate.

The aforementioned proposal was rejected by parliament. Although the parliament commission established to deal with church property settlement expressed its approval with the intention of the restitution and of compensation for the churches for what they owned before the communist coup in 1948, it also disputed the extent of compensation and it recommended the cabinet to renegotiate the settlement with churches. There was no consensus over the settlement within the government coalition and the opposition parties (the socialists and the communists) strongly opposed the government proposal.

The new cabinet of Petr Nečas once again drew up the proposal in 2011. This new proposal was based on the previous one. In particular, it stuck to the estimate for the total value of church property confiscated by the communist regime. However, the approach to the restitution was changed. In-kind property restitutions were extended to all churches and religious societies (not only religious orders of the Catholic Church), although only the State and its organizational units were obliged to return the property. The property held by municipalities and regions and private persons would be completely excluded and further restrictions applied for the property developed after government confiscation and land

held for public purposes. A cut-off date was added to the bill so that the law applies only to the confiscations after February 25th, 1948, the date of communist coup d’état. Due to extended restitution in kind, financial compensation decreased to 59 billion CZK. The compensation would be paid over a period of 30 years with no interest. However, every year the remaining principal would be raised according to the inflation rate from the previous year.

The bill was introduced in January 2012. The debate in parliament lasted for almost a year and the law was finally adopted in November 2012. The bill was first approved by the Assembly of Deputies (the lower house), but voted down by the Senate (the upper house) dominated by the social democrats. Finally, the Assembly of Deputies overturned the decision of the Senate with a close vote. The settlement was uniformly rejected by the communists, the social democrats and a populist party Public Affairs, a former member of the government coalition. It was upheld by the ruling rightwing coalition of the Civic Democratic Party and the conservative TOP09 party supported by defectors from the Public Affairs.

The law is effective as of January 1st, 2013. Within a year dating from that day, churches and religious societies could file claims for property they wish to have restituted. The claims have been handled by respective owner, that is, the state and its organizations. The most important bodies involved are the State Land Office (formerly the Land Fund of the Czech Republic) and the Forests of the Czech Republic, the institutions responsible for management of state’s landed property.

The restituted property consists mostly of forest lands. In the 2007 negotiations, the churches have claimed 261 thousand hectares of land in total. The Ministry of Culture has independently verified the ownership of 225 thousand hectares. However, this number includes only holdings of the Catholic Church larger than 150 ha of agricultural land and does not include property held by religious foundations and non-Catholic churches. The Land Fund records showed that it manages 48,412 ha of agricultural land previously owned by churches and the Forests of the Czech Republic have managed 151,777 ha of such land. The rest of the land formerly owned by churches belonged to municipalities, military forces, national parks or private persons and thus was not eligible for restitution.

It is to be noted that the financial compensation for individual churches does not reflect the property held by the particular church prior to February 1948. While the Catholic Church was the owner of virtually all church real property prior to the communist coup, it will only receive 80% of the total compensation to all churches and religious societies. The state had only established the total value of the compensation and allowed the churches to divide it among themselves according to their will. The division was done on the basis of the value of confiscated property as well as the share on the state financing at that time. The Catholic Church had thus renounced a substantial share of its claims. On the other hand,

it might have increased the motivation of non-Catholic churches to be involved in the process and to support the settlement. Also the redistribution of the compensation countered the anti-Catholic rhetoric in the process of the negotiation of the settlement.

The settlement statute also mandates contracts between churches and the state. In such a contract, a church accepts the settlement consisting of in kind restitution and financial compensation and affirms that it will not raise any further claims. The state also accepts the obligation to pay financial contribution over the transition period (see below). The contracts between churches and the state increase the level of certainty for the churches that the settlement will be realized. If any future government would revise the statute, courts shall uphold contractual entitlements on the part of the churches. This is particularly important in the Czech situation where there has been no consensus on the settlement. Although the dominant parties of the new government coalition formed after the 2013 elections, the social democrats and the populist party ANO, are critical of the settlement, they have not altered the law in any way.

The process of restitution is still not fully completed. Thus, it is not possible to evaluate how precise the estimates were. Until the end of 2016 churches had received about 36 thousand hectares of agricultural land, 88.5 thousand hectares of forests and over 400 buildings. Most of the property was returned in 2014 and 2015 and over 96% of the claims had been settled by the end of 2016. An agreement was reached between the church and the state in most cases. Some property claimed by the church was not restituted because it did not meet the criteria specified by the law. Several cases were submitted to be decided by courts including several important historical monuments. A preliminary estimate of the value of the property restituted in 2014 by the Czech Statistical Office revealed that the average value of the restituted property was below the estimates used to determine the total value of restitutions and compensation. However, such valuation is problematic with regard to the value of the original church property since the most valuable property in land was transferred to municipalities and it is not subject to the restitution.

### The Settlement and Financial Separation

The settlement between the churches and the state include both the restitution of church property and financial separation. The government acknowledged (in the explanatory report to the settlement bill) that property restitution and compensation is one of the requirements for the financial independence of the churches. However, due to the nature of restitution – property has often returned in desolate conditions and financial compensation is paid over 30 years – it was not deemed adequate to eliminate all state finance to churches at

once. Therefore, the law set up a transition financial scheme for 17 years that would allow churches to adjust.

Prior to the settlement, financial matters between the state and the churches were still governed by the old communist law (Act no. 218/1949 Coll., see above). The institute of state approval was abolished immediately after the 1989 revolution and the churches and religious societies were free to choose their ministers. The government has gradually increased the salaries and it has not regulated the number of church employees on its payroll; these could be both ordained and laymen. The state has also financed the overhead costs of churches and contributed to the maintenance of church property according to the law. Between 1994 and 2010 the number of church employees almost doubled (from 2578 to 4892). Although the state contribution per employee nominally doubled in that period, due to the inflation it did not change in real terms. The contribution to property maintenance according to the old law on church finance was relatively low and it has declined over the period, although, this is difficult to assess as the reconstructions and maintenance of church monuments could have also been subsidized by the state and local authorities under different public finance programs.

The transition period of 17 years has provided an opportunity for the churches to re-establish their financial independence. According to Kříž and Valeš (2013) one of the goals of the new law was to restore financial independence that was intentionally destroyed by the state in 1949. Removing all financial support at once would prevent this goal as the churches would not have time to put the restituted property into productive use.

During the transition period, eligible churches and religious societies shall receive diminishing contributions from the state. All churches financed according to the old law are eligible for the financial contribution. In the first three years (i.e., between 2013 and 2015) churches received a contribution equal to the sum received in 2011. Starting from the fourth year, the contribution is reduced by 5 % of that sum every year. The state no longer pays salaries and social security dues; the contribution is paid as a lump sum subsidy every January, it is tax exempt and churches are free to use the money as they wish. After the transition period, churches shall not receive any specific financial support from the state. They may be eligible for subsidies in healthcare, education, social work or culture; although, in financial matters they will assume the same position as any other non-profit organization.

### Conclusion

The settlement between churches and the Czech state is indeed unique. First, it has taken considerable time to settle the issue compared to other post-communist

nations. This is certainly a result of the specific religious situation of the Czech Republic. The dominant Catholic Church was once rich and influential. Nowadays, its popular support is rather low. Protestant churches and other religious groups are not doing much better. Thus, restitution of church property as well as financial compensation for the communist injustices has been a politically sensitive issue dividing the nation as well as the political representation.

There is no doubt that the Catholic Church was the original owner of the property that is being restituted. Although there have appeared opposing opinions, the professional consensus is rather clear. Even the communists have not disputed the ownership of church property. Further, it is evident that church property was taken by the communist government unjustly. Despite these facts the churches has had to dispute with the state for more than two decades. The financial compensation is still a matter of political debate as some politicians propose a revision of the statute or even the taxation of compensation payments and the transitional contributions. Such amendments would likely be stricken down as unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court, yet they enjoy popular support.

The Czech settlement is also very specific as it aims both to resolve past injustices and to separate churches from the public finance. The separation is indeed understandable with regard to the level religiosity on the part of the Czech people. On the other hand, it was the state who instituted the economic dependence of the churches. The transition period involving the decreasing financial contribution represents a compromise whereby the state ends its support of churches but provides them an opportunity to regain their financial independence.

The settlement has started a new era in the church-state relations and has created new conditions for churches and religious societies. It is a matter of future years, whether the churches in the Czech Republic will be able to manage their assets efficiently and to survive as truly independent entities. They may increase their activity and improve the quality of their services to achieve more contributions from their members and even expand their membership. Increased activity in provision of social services may improve the reputation of the Catholic Church among the irreligious population. From the sociological perspective, it will be interesting to observe the consequences for the behaviour of the churches and for the level of Czech religiosity.

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