A Theoretical Proposal for Reaching Irreligious Czech People Through a Mission Revitalization Movement

Petr Cincala

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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A THEORETICAL PROPOSAL FOR REACHING IRRELIGIOUS CZECH PEOPLE THROUGH A MISSION REVITALIZATION MOVEMENT

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Petr Činčala
September 2002
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CZECH PEOPLE THROUGH A MISSION
REVITALIZATION MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

A THEORETICAL PROPOSAL FOR REACHING IRRELIGIOUS CZECH PEOPLE THROUGH A MISSION REVITALIZATION MOVEMENT

by

Petr Činčala

Adviser: Jon L. Dybdahl
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A THEORETICAL PROPOSAL FOR REACHING IRRELIGIOUS CZECH PEOPLE THROUGH A MISSION REVITALIZATION MOVEMENT

Name of researcher: Petr Činčala
Name and degree of faculty adviser: Jon L. Dybdahl, Ph.D.
Date completed: September 2002

The main goal of this study was to develop a theory of missionary outreach to unchurched Czech people which is biblically informed and culturally relevant. The theoretical proposal for a plausible model of churching in the Czech Republic builds on basic theological, philosophical, and conceptual assumptions (chapter 2), a societal analysis of the problem of Czech churching (chapter 3), and a review of the issues relating to the situation of existing churches and religious movements.

Based on Wallace's theory of revitalization movements a model is developed for starting a missionary movement that aims at reaching today's unchurched and seemingly irreligious segments of the Czech population. This model allows for more flexible ways
of communicating the gospel and envisions multiple forms for developing a community of believers.

The field research underlying the theoretical proposal included ethnographic and assessment-oriented research. The ethnographic research combined qualitative and quantitative methods. A newspaper content analysis searched for dominant themes and prevalent cultural values in the newspaper media, and then analyzed newspaper articles related to religion and/or church. The ethnographic field research measuring the religiosity of the Czech people consisted of a survey of religiosity (Appendix B), and six in-depth interviews of unchurched people (Appendix A). By clarifying some aspects of the religiosity of unchurched people it contributed a depth dimension to the proposed revitalization movement model.

In order to test some emerging conclusions, a number of brief interviews with unchurched believers, active church goers, and church leaders, as well as a survey measuring the health of congregations (Appendix C) were done. The multivariate methodology generated the findings that provided the building blocks for a theory of a context-sensitive model of churching.
To my parents who taught me to believe in God
To my wife Daniela who showed me God's love in practice
To my children Timothy, Jonathan, and Nathanael who may finish the task
To all who believe God has not finished His mission in the Czech Republic yet
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Dr. Nancy Vyhmeister, your enthusiastic support, namely in editing my English, makes me stand in awe before God and praise Him for His love and the love of His servants. Dr. Randall Younker and Mabel Bowen, I also want to acknowledge your support in my interdisciplinary adventure. Without your courteous decisions in financial matters I would not have been able to finish this work free of debt and ready to implement this model in the field.

My wife Daniela, I do not have enough words to express my love and gratitude for your loving support, which was not without sacrifices. Thank you Timothy, Jonathan, and Nathanael for hanging in with me. You all have been very supportive, patient with me, and praying for me. God bless you.

Dear Lord, my heart is trembling with joy when I realize what you have done in my life. You are my strength and hope. May this work glorify you and bring salvation to many of your loved ones.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

I was born in the midst of flourishing communism. My country, the former Czechoslovakia, was at that time controlled by the Soviet Union. People were taught that there is no God, no supernatural world. Churches were allowed to function legally; however, they were more or less limited to activities within the walls of the church building. Table 1 shows how little the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church grew under the communist rule in the former Czechoslovakia. While the number of pastors doubled, the number of church members grew by less than 11.6 percent in twenty years.

Table 1. SDA Church in Czechoslovakia, 1970-1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1989</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Churches</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>7,115</td>
<td>7,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Pastors</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics; available from http://www.adventiststatistics.org; Internet.

While people received special favors for not believing in God, religious circles

1

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were controlled by the government. School systems operated on the basis of the prevailing Marxist ideology. Christianity was considered the “opium of the masses.” During this time, people were quite derogatory towards religion and sometimes even hostile to the church. The impact of the church on society throughout communist domination was very limited and the gap between the two has grown. All that the communist government used for forty years in propaganda against the church remains in the subconscious of the Czech people.¹

Although the change of political regimes in 1989 brought unprecedented possibilities for Christianity, with the arrival of new freedom the responsiveness of non-churched people toward Christianity was short-lived.

Figure 1 shows the annual growth rate of the SDA Church from 1987 through 1998. In 1991 the rate was 6.04 percent. By 1998, the rate was 0.14 percent, lower even than the 1987 rate of 0.57 percent.² People were spiritually hungry and curious to taste the “fruits” forbidden by the communist regime; however, their attitude of intentional ignorance and resentful suspicion towards the Christian church did not change.


² Seventh-day Adventist Church, “World Church Statistics,” General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, available from http://www.adventiststatistics.org; Internet. Such a development is common for societies where sudden change was followed by transitions. Walter Sawatsky points out in describing the situation in Russia that, in the first decade following the end of communism, the churches went through “an initial phase of ‘frantic evangelism’ (1988-93), a period of review and retrenchment (1993-96), then deliberate focusing and prioritizing (1997-present) that could be described as conscious contextualizing.” Walter Sawatsky, “The Scholarly Debate over Proselytism,” Fides et Liberitas (2001): 98.
Religion in Czech society has been connected with threats to national identity.¹ For Czechs, who by their very nature avoid violent conflicts,² too much fighting in their history was connected with religion or pseudo-religion: Hussites against Hussites; Catholics against Protestants; Czechs against Hapsburgs, Nazis, and Communists.³

**SDA Church in Czech Republic**

**Annual Growth Rate (1987-1998)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig 1. Church growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 1987-1998.**

Although the Czech lands were the cradle of such Protestant movements as that of Huss (15ᵗʰ century) and the Moravians (17ᵗʰ century), today only a small percentage of

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Czechs claim to be Protestants. In spite of a nominal Catholic majority, “Catholicism is still hated in the Czech nation,” as Monsignor Jiří Reinsberg says. In fact, he states, “Not only here but throughout Europe walks a ghost that is called Christianity.”

Some scholars would take the current situation in the Czech Republic simply as a result of ongoing secularization, understood as de-Christianization, i.e., the end of religion as proposed in the secularization thesis of the 1960s. Others may see contemporary developments as a product of sinful societal structures promoted in the previous regime. Talking about faith in spiritual values, Lída Rakušanová notes that “we may not realize how deeply these relationships and roots were corrupted by the communists.” It appears that for many of the Czech people atheism or agnosticism (or simply being irreligious) makes more sense than Christianity, and this fact cannot be changed.

On the other hand, recent research in the sociology of religion suggests that

1 A survey published in 1999 showed that 4.6 percent of respondents were Protestant, and 39.2 percent were Catholic. Jean-Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer, The Reformed Family Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 146.

2 Jiří Reinsberg, quoted in Rufl, 129. I have provided translation for all Czech materials.


4 Lída Rakušanová, quoted in Rufl, 121.
secularization is not about the extinction of religion, including Christianity, but about changing the forms of being religious.\footnote{Dobbelaere, 117-20; Wilson, \textit{Religion in Sociological Perspective}, 134-35.} It is more and more evident in today’s world that human beings are religious by nature.\footnote{Gordon W. Allport, \textit{The Individual and His Religion} (New York: Macmillan Company, 1957), 2-3; Ravi Zacharias, \textit{Can Man Live Without God} (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1994), xv.} From that perspective, being irreligious is an unthinkable phenomenon. The issue, then, is not the demise of religion, but the kind of religion that is characteristic of and appealing to a given context.

**Statement of the Problem**

Awareness of these issues has given me a desire to explore the challenge of church growth and the expansion of Christianity in the face of increasing societal rejection of organized religion in the Czech Republic.\footnote{Zsuzsa Ferge, “Social Values and the Evaluation of Regime Change,” \textit{Innovation} 9, no. 3 (1996): 267; Alena Heitlinger and Susanna Trnka, \textit{Young Women of Prague} (Hampshire, England: Macmillan Company, 1998), 173.} Ten years after the fall of communism the words of Jan M. Lochman, that “the church and its message lost much of their credibility,” still ring true.\footnote{Jan Milíč Lochman, \textit{Christ and Prometheus}? (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988), 18.} Furthermore, the gap between church and society has deplorable dynamics on both sides. Dysfunctional outreach attempts leave the church ingrown and marginalized, and the major part of society unreached and ignorant about the good news of the gospel.\footnote{Heitlinger and Trnka, 13; Halík, “Church and Society,” 54.}
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to explore the contextual and institutional factors of the current Czech situation in order to develop a strategy for a revitalization movement in local congregations, rooted in Czech culture. The goal of this model is to reach secular, irreligious people for Christ. In order to achieve this, I respond to the following research questions that emerged from the research problem and purpose.

In dealing with the Czech societal situation I was guided by the following questions: What are the major influences on the Czech people’s post-communist life? What are the psycho-social, cultural, and spiritual values and needs of Czech society? What has contributed to the present biases and resistance against the church? What is the perceived role of the Christian church in the society? What factors lead irreligious Czech people to become Christians in the present time?

In examining the church situation, the following questions have stimulated my thought and guided my research: What are the concerns and values shared today by the Christian church and the Czech society? How does the Czech Christian church respond to current societal trends? What is the history of Christian church expansion in the Czech Republic? What are the features of past and current mission movements in the Czech Republic? How do the institutional factors and contextual factors play out in church growth in the Czech Republic?

Justification of the Research

Although there is a large church-growth literature, the vast majority of it has been
done in the West, in a heavily Christian context. Some work on reaching irreligious or
unchurched people has been done in the United States, but very little in-depth work on
this aspect of church growth has been attempted in the former communist areas of
Eastern Europe. Therefore, this study in the context of Czech society is valuable not
only for Christians in the Czech Republic but for all Christian endeavors in secular
Eastern Europe. This scholarly work may also add to the theoretical knowledge about
missionary revitalization and strategy in general.

Another contribution of this study is to promote a better understanding of the
relationships between the Christian churches and society in the Czech Republic. I hope to
broaden missiological theory by illuminating the role of the church in postcommunist
society. The knowledge of this situation may serve to facilitate healing and reconciliation
of the wounded relationship between church and society.

This study is intended to encourage ministers and administrators to try new
approaches as they face the demands of postcommunist transitions. It develops a

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theoretical framework for implementing a new vision for missionary outreach which can also serve as a tool for evaluating experimental initiatives. The members of local churches can find in this study a multidisciplinary strategy for outreach and for the development of biblically informed and culturally sensitive missionary congregations.

Finally, this research fosters my life-long passion for reaching the unreached, irreligious people in the Czech Republic. It has equipped me with some of the knowledge and expertise needed to help facilitate church revitalization and mission renewal.

Research Methodologies

This dissertation required a variety of research methods. In addition to the usual bibliographic research, I used ethnographic research and church assessment methods to acquire the knowledge base on which to build the theoretical framework for a missionary revitalization movement.

Bibliographic Research

A vital part of my research methodology was the literature review. Beyond the resources of the James White Library, a search of the Internet has yielded a number of sources (books, newspapers, etc.). Thus, I have accumulated a fair number of studies related to my research, both from American and Czech perspectives.

The first area studied related to the context of the Czech society. This was done to gain a deeper knowledge of the Czech worldview and culture, issues relating to the Czech Christian church-related issues, and the relationships between Czech society and the church. This information served as a basis for the qualitative research outlined below.
The second type of literature reviewed aimed at obtaining the knowledge needed for the development of a theoretical proposal. Anticipating the specific needs of the Czech context, I reviewed mission studies including the biblical foundation for the missionary role of the church, missionary movements, types of churched and church development, and ways of reaching secular, irreligious people.

Ethnographic Research

Ethnography is a research approach that deals with groups of people in terms of a culture.\(^1\) Ethnography includes various tools of both a qualitative and quantitative nature.\(^2\) Marlin Hammersley points out that ethnographic research is used as a “first stage in the development of theory,” when the relevant variables are searched for rather than tested.\(^3\) Furthermore, “the ultimate aim or product of ethnography is a written account or representation of the total aspect of a society, culture, or social scene.”\(^4\)

When the research is focused on theorizing about a social phenomenon, qualitative research is essential.\(^5\) In this study the qualitative method provided an in-
depth understanding of relationships, meanings, assumptions, and values that form the Czech culture and are formed by the Czech worldview. Context-specific understanding was necessary for proposing meaningful missionary structures designed for reaching Czech non-churched people.¹

My bicultural experience has been an important asset for qualitative research. It allowed me to function as an outsider to observe, and as an insider to gain participant observations. This process was instrumental for gathering meaningful data.²

To ensure the validity and objectivity of my research, I used several ethnographic tools, both qualitative and quantitative: content analysis (literary approach), a survey, and in-depth interviews. I spent one year in the Czech Republic conducting the ethnographic research.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is an ethnographic technique that helps to draw conclusions by "objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages."³ I did a three-level content analysis of front-page articles of the daily Czech newspaper Mladá Fronta between August 1998 and October 1999.

The first level was descriptive and measured the frequency of particular words. After categorizing the 1,072,966 words that appeared in the material, I was able to

¹See Olsen, 27.


³Marshall and Rossman, 98.
identify a group of frequently used words and to trace the frequency and use of specific religious terms.

The second level was an evaluation of the 2,087 collected newspaper articles. This evaluation was quantified through a fixed set of questions. The variables were social values and meanings. The purpose of this evaluation was to find any significant correlations between specific variables.

The third level was an in-depth content analysis of selected articles that presented data relevant to this study. The purpose of this analysis was to describe patterns, sequences, and processes of the Czech religiosity.

Survey

A survey of 350 people was conducted among irreligious people selected by convenience sampling throughout the Czech Republic. This survey was designed to

1I applied the findings of Stephen Olsen's ethnographical research of Czech culture and values. He developed seven historical themes reflected in Czech cultural values: tragedy-oppression, protest-regeneration, myth-symbolism, pacifism-avoidance, unity-toleration, humanism-holism, and criticism-negativism. Olsen, 41-65. In the evaluation of the articles I tested how these historical themes are played out. Furthermore, I tested to what degree values proposed by William Wonderly and Eugene Nida are reflected in the Czech newspaper. William L. Wonderly and Eugene A. Nida, "Cultural Differences and the Communication of Christian Values," in Readings in Missionary Anthropology, ed. William A. Smalley (South Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1978), 58.

measure the religious status of secular people. I used a modified scale adopted from
*Measures of Religiosity.*¹ The questionnaire is included in appendix B.

Interviews

I conducted in-depth interviews (1-4 hours) with six purposively² selected Czech
irreligious people. The purpose of the interviews was to research their understanding of
life, the underlying values they hold, and their attitudes toward religion. After exploring
the assumptions of the respondent, the conversation focused on the respondent’s view of
the topics under consideration. Although the conversation was informal rather than
formal and structured, it was guided by a list of questions³ (see appendix A) adopted and
modified from *Measures of Religiosity.*⁴

Church Assessment Research

In order to understand the dynamics involved in both Adventist and non-
Adventist congregations, I used an inventory called “Natural Church Development
Survey,” developed by Christian Schwarz.⁵ This instrument measures the growth and

¹Peter C. Hill and Ralph W. Hood, Jr., *Measures of Religiosity* (Birmingham,

²Purposive sampling describes selection of samples based on my knowledge of a
specific population, and the nature of my research aims. It allowed me to select the most
visible irreligious people, based on my judgment. Rubin and Babbie, 266.

³Marshall and Rossman, 82.

⁴Hill and Hood, 166-168.

⁵Schwarz’s research project included 1000 churches, in 32 countries and on 5
continents. Through his research he developed eight essential qualities of healthy
health of churches, not by numbers but by qualities such as empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships.1

Part of Schwarz's project in the Czech Republic was collecting survey data from various churches in order to create a standardized profiling. More than 4,000 surveys were collected from 200 churches and eight denominations. With permission from both Schwarz and his Czech national partner I used the data for analyzing church institutional factors.

By conducting twenty interviews with the leaders and members of various religious groups in the Czech Republic, I learned more about the missionary structures within and also outside the mainline Christian churches. After obtaining some basic statistical data about sects and cults,2 I focused several interviews on growing religious churches. His perspective on church growth dwells on "biotic" principles or "natural" laws. Christian A. Schwarz, Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches (Carol Stream, Illinois: ChurchSmart Resources, 1996), 7.

1Ibid., 22-37.

2A discussion of sects and cults as growing movements is valuable for this study. Dean Kelley published results of his research about the growth of American conservative churches in 1972. Here he explained that only churches that are distinguished by traits of strictness and social strength were actually growing. Dean M. Kelley, Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion (New York: Harper & Row, 1972). Churches with these dynamics are called sects. Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1985), 21; Bryan R. Wilson, "Sect or Denomination: Can Adventism Maintain Its Identity?" Spectrum 7 (Spring 1975): 34-35, 34-43. The research of Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge in the United States and Europe expanded Kelley's theory, claiming that sects become more active in the context of strong conventional religions, whereas cults tend to thrive where the conventional religions are weaker. Stark and Bainbridge, 495. Cult movements tend to
groups in the Czech Republic. The focus of these interviews was on ways of reaching and sustaining new converts.

Finally, I interviewed two pioneers of the SDA Church in the Czech Republic. After introducing my research and exchanging formalities, the conversation concentrated on the historical development of the SDA Church in the Czech context. These interviews provided a better understanding of circumstances and conditions of the church’s growth or non-growth. From this information implications for the present were drawn. All the above research methods were used to lay the foundation for developing a theory to reaching irreligious Czech people.

form in situations where the market of faith is weakened and pluralized. Cult movements are more tolerant than sect movements and add something new to the common religious culture. Cult movements are perceived by society as a new faith that offers a new worldview, a new concept of reality, a new god. In this process the unchurched become churched. (ibid., 25-29; Rodney Stark, The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 33-38.

Zdeněk Vojtíšek devotes his book to the development of nontraditional religions in the Czech Republic. In the third chapter he provides information and references with addresses of solicited religious groups such as Anthroposophy, Bhagwan Sri Rajneesh, Faith Movement, Hare Krsna, Imanuelites, Jehovah’s Witnesses, followers of Sun Myung Moon, Mormons, followers of Yoga, Satanists, and Scientologists. Zdeněk Vojtíšek, Netradiční náboženství u nás (Prague: Dingir, 1998), 35-80.

Rodney Stark’s research on conversion of unchurched or irreligious people to a new religious movement is notable and relevant. He discovered that the “only ones who joined were those whose interpersonal attachments to members overbalanced their attachments to nonmembers.” He says that “attachments lie at the heart of conversion... Conversion tends to proceed along social networks formed by interpersonal attachments.” On the other hand, people who express considerable interest in doctrines did not join the movement when they had “many strong attachments to nonmembers who did not approve of the group.” Stark, 16-18.
Delimitations

Although a significant part of my research is data of technical nature (findings of ethnographic and church assessment research), I do not include the qualitative social science data directly because it is not the main focus of this study. The qualitative research, however, contributed to the knowledge and understanding crucial for the development of a mission revitalization movement. I limited the qualitative research to obtain relevant data.

This research may apply to other postcommunist societies; nevertheless, my research was limited to the context of the Czech society. The scope of this research does not include testing the model; this may be the subject of further study.

While other disciplines such as communication theory, organizational management, and leadership theory might contribute valuable insights to this study, I chose to draw only from the following four disciplines: theology of mission, missionary anthropology, sociology of religion, and church growth strategy.

Definition of Terms

Because this study draws terminology from several disciplines, it is necessary to provide definitions of key terms for a clearer understanding of the subject.

Revitalization movement: The term “revitalization movement” has been used by anthropologists to describe processes and adaptations that reduce “stresses” or “internal structural contradictions” in the life of a society and lead to a cultural or worldview
change. Though this term is used for societal and religious movements in pre-modern societies, it implies dynamics that are comparable to modern societies as well. In this research, a revitalization movement designates a group of people with a renewed missionary zeal towards resistant and unreached people.

Local missionary structure: Structure is often thought of as something static or institutional (a building or an institution). However, all living organisms have structure and form. Winter uses the term “redemptive structures” when speaking about reaching people. By functional structures Schwarz refers to avoiding dysfunctional aspects of church life, such as “discouraging leadership structures, inconvenient worship service times, [and] demotivating financial concepts.” The term “local missionary structure” is used to describe all intentional activities, dynamics, and activities aimed at reaching a specific group of people, here irreligious Czech people. In this study, a “local missionary structure” is considered to be one of the primary contributors to the revitalization movement.

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3 Schwarz, 28-29.


5 Schwarz, 28.
Contextual and institutional factors: These two terms are used in church growth literature in relation to society and church. Dean Hoge and David Roozen introduced these terms in an attempt to "conceptualize the factors possibly influencing church trends."\(^1\) Societal developments over which the church does not have any influence are described as contextual factors. Institutional factors, on the other hand, are those that are linked with and influenced by the church.\(^2\)

Worldview: Some scholars define worldview in general terms as a religion, ideology, or simply a "set of beliefs about the most important issues in life."\(^3\) For anthropologists, "worldview" is a more specific term and refers to "a set of images and assumptions about the world" or "the central governing set of concepts and presuppositions that [a] society lives by."\(^4\) Although people may not be conscious of their worldview, it underlies their actions and gives them meaning.\(^5\)


\(^2\)Ibid., 318.


\(^5\)Kearney, 10; Marguerite Kraft, 4.
Culture: This term is used with a variety of meanings and, when not defined, may cause misunderstanding. Some refer to culture when speaking about art or philosophy. In this study the term culture is used to represent a “more or less integrated system of ideas, feelings, and values” consisting of “the beliefs, behaviors, norms, attitudes, social arrangements, and forms of expression that form a describable pattern” in the lives of the members of a society.

Overview of the Dissertation

The introductory chapter states the problem and purpose of the study, describes the methodology, and gives definitions of terms. The second chapter provides the theoretical foundation for this study and a framework for the proposal of a missionary revitalization movement.

Chapter 3 analyzes the societal factors, looking at the Czech worldview in light of a brief overview of Czech history, the present Czech view of religion, and a profile of Czech cultural values.

Chapter 4 looks at the institutional factors, and evaluates missionary effectiveness in the light of selected historical highlights of Czech Christian movements, the church leaders’ view of mission, and a profile of current major religious groups.

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2Ibid.

3LeCompte and Schensul, 21; see also Kraft, *Christianity*, 69-70.
Based on the previous chapters, chapter 5 proposes a new perspective (mazeway) for a missionary movement in the contemporary Czech context, and searches for plausible ways of communicating the gospel, for meaningful organizational structures of new believers, and for potential ways to expand the movement.
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR A LOCAL MISSIONARY STRUCTURE

The purpose of this chapter is to lay the conceptual, theological, and philosophical foundations for the proposal of a missionary movement. A theoretical framework is outlined in three parts which describe the process of putting together a missionary strategy.

The first part deals with theological presuppositions on which the reality of the church and its role are based. The second part discusses how to communicate that reality to the unchurched people. A sociological perspective is taken in order to apply the established biblical basis for mission. The quest of several scholars for plausible churching within the Czech context is reviewed and evaluated. The third part discusses how change can be brought about. Here I explore the theory of revitalization movements, which can provide an appropriate methodological tool for developing a strategy for reaching out to irreligious Czech people.

The Missionary Role of the Church

Before the three sections of this part—the meaning of the church, missionary nature of the church, and structures of a missionary movement—are fully unfolded, I
consider it necessary to clarify that I firmly believe in God as revealed by the Scriptures. God is not only the creator, sustainer, and maintainer of creation,¹ who desires to be feared, glorified, and worshiped (Rev 14:7), God is also a Father who loved the world so much that He sent “his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV).² God is involved in the lives of all humans—His creatures—as “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt 5:45).³

God’s accepting and unconditional grace has been revealed by His gift of salvation offered to all people (Eph 2:8). God has a passion for all people with no difference, “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). As a loving Father, God endlessly seeks humans where they are and longs to save them from evil for eternal life (Luke 15). Therefore, the deepest source of mission is God Himself and His love. Mission has originated in the heart of God (missio Dei) and God is a “missionary God.”⁴

God is both the authority and reason for mission, and the Scriptures are a primary

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²Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations are from the New International Version.


source of His revelation. Although there might be different interpretations of the Bible, which may lead to different conclusions among scholars, it is beyond the purpose of this study to elaborate on various speculative biblical arguments. For this study the Bible is the philosophical foundation. Biblical principles are normative and become relevant as they are applied in a specific context.

For that reason, this part explores a biblical understanding of the church. Amidst post-communist societal transitions and challenges, the church has been searching for its face in the “new” context. In such a process it is necessary to look back to the biblical and theological foundation of the church’s existence. Facing the wide societal rejection of the church and the challenge of church expansion among the Czechs, I look at the primary biblical values for the church and its role in society while answering three basic questions: What is church? What is the church for? If the church is missionary in its nature, what are the implications for church structure?

Meaning of the Church

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully unfold the biblical analysis of the concept of the church in the Old and New Testaments and elaborate on the contemporary discussion about ecclesiology. Provided is a brief overview of the main ideas. First, although teaching about church (ecclesiology) has been vastly developed over the centuries and many volumes have been written on the essence of church, the concept of church in the light of the Scripture¹ has not been understood unanimously and,

¹There are certain images or “mental models” connected with the notion of church in the Bible, such as “a chosen race,” “a royal priesthood,” “a holy people,” “God’s
therefore, for a long time did not attract appropriate attention. Recently, however, discussion on the meaning of the church and its mission has come alive among scholars and pastors.¹

The meaning of the word church has not always been clear. Despite all the theologizing, many people today are not sure how to understand the term church. Master John Hus described the core of the problem of understanding church six centuries ago:²

The first Czech to interpret the Greek word “ekklesia” ill understood that word. By using the designation “temple” or “church” he made the non-learned assume that the bride of our Lord Jesus Christ is a church built of stone and a church made of wood... But also those have gone astray who think that the Holy Church is the pope, or the cardinals together with the pope, or the priests, or the Christians at large, whereas the universal Holy Church is the body of all the chosen, which is known as the bride of Christ. Had the first Czech been instructed, he would not have called the “ekklesia” a “temple” or “the church” but “the body of the holy”: that would have served to create a better understanding on the part of the common people.³


²I find the comment of Hus relevant in light of the attitude of Czech people today, which is to a great degree flavored by the spirit of hussitism as the next chapter shows.

³K. J. Erben, editor of John Hus’s work, Výklad viery (Prague, 1865), 24-25, quoted in Brož, 138.
The word *ekklēsia* in the New Testament is used to designate an assembly or an event. This term does not mean and cannot be identified with a building or a religious organization.\(^1\) According to Burnett, *ekklēsia* in New Testament describes both “the universal Church which encompasses the worldwide community of Christian people,” and “the local community of Christians meeting within a specific geographical region.”\(^2\)

In the words of a Czech evangelical theologian, the church is a “communion of those who have heard and accepted the calling of God.”\(^3\) It is an “alternative society,”\(^4\) a reality of brotherhood “created by God in Christ in which we may participate.”\(^5\) In summary, church is about people. It is God’s provision for people. It is a social phenomenon designed by God in His image.

**Church–Organic Model**

In his book *Believing, Behaving, Belonging*, Richard Rice makes a clear statement


\(^2\) Burnett, 154.

\(^3\) Brož, 139.


that “Christian existence is essentially and fundamentally social in nature.” The reality of the church reflects the reality of the triune God. As the three divine persons exist in community, so the church coexists in a community. The Christian church is a community “whose inner dynamic reflects God’s inner reality.”

Such a statement implies that the church is organic and needs to be treated as such. Despite the need for some institutional elements for church such as leadership, structures, methods, the “absolute priority” must be given “to the church as organism,” says Greg Ogden in his book *The New Reformation.* As Ogden compares two models of church—organism and institution—he indicates that there is a need for “a new starting point in our concept of the church.” According to the institutional view, the church is built around the church office with an emphasis on preaching the biblical truth and living a moral life, whereas according to the organic view the starting point of church is “the whole people of God in whom Christ dwells.”

One of the most profound images of church in the New Testament is the body of Christ (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 4:12). Everyone who believes in Christ becomes part of His body, part of His community. He or she belongs to the body, as an irreplaceable

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1 Rice, 29.
2 Ibid., 31.
4 Ibid., 56.
5 Ibid.
member (1 Cor 12:18). Christ's body has many and diverse parts which belong to each other, need each other, and affect each other (1 Cor 12:12-14). Being interconnected with and governed by Christ, the diverse body functions in amazing unity (1 Cor 12:20).

All members of the body relate closely to each other and are interdependent. As various parts of the body complement each other, so do the members of the community of believers. All members contribute to the body with different gifts. Although there are different gifts, all are equally valuable and needed. In working together the body, with all its members, matures and grows towards perfection (Eph 4:11-13).

If community is as essential to spirituality as described in 1 Cor 12, Rom 12, and Eph 4, the “quality of our relationships, the intensity of our concern for one another, the level of our religious needs and our appreciation for each other’s spiritual gifts” will become vital areas of church life.²

In summary, while in the institutional view there is an emphasis on the task of clergy who represent a religious organization, the emphasis in the organic view is on the Christian community made up of lay people.³ There are also other differences in emphasis. Traditionally, the main interest of a church centers around right beliefs and

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¹Ibid., 36-44.

²Rice, 206.

³Ogden explains how the terms laity and clergy, as used today, reflect an institutional mind-set and corrupt biblical language. The division between clergy as leading cast and laity as those who are ministered to has had catastrophic consequences. Ogden, 65-69.
proper behavior. The main interest of a church functioning as an organism is to belong to a Christian community.¹

The Missionary Nature of the Church

The second issue, often misunderstood, deals with the nature and purpose of the church. What place does missionary outreach have in local church? What is the relationship between the church and mission?

Mission is the important task of the church (Matt 29:18-20). Nevertheless, mission has often been only a secondary issue. While the great theologians of Christendom paid most of their attention to various doctrines, “missions have often been regarded as a by-product.”²

As the church was sent by God, the primary purpose of the church has always been missionary.³ The church was created by God through Christ to bring others to God’s community of love. The church exists for others.⁴ Only recently has such understanding

¹Rice points out that “if we start with believing or behaving, it is often hard to get belonging into the picture.” However, “if we start with belonging, then believing and behaving naturally fall into place. . . . Belonging naturally involves believing and behaving.” Rice, 119.


of mission been revived. As a result, research in theology of both Old and New Testaments has shown that the church is missionary in its very nature.¹ In his survey of mission in the Bible, Burnett notes: “Church exists by mission as a fire does by burning. Mission is not merely the application of theology taught in a classroom. Mission lies at the core of theology, and within the very character and action of God himself.”²

Holistic mission to lost people, therefore, justifies the existence of church.³ Mission is more than evangelism, more than social responsibility. In view of Jesus’ great commission in Matt 28:18-20, proclaiming the gospel is an essential part of missions, but the ultimate objective is that of making disciples.⁴

The Western European Working Group of the World Council of Churches agreed that “God’s primary relationship is to the world, and it is the world and not the Church that is the focus of God’s plan. . . . The Church lives through God’s dealing with the world.”⁵ The understanding of American theologians supports this argument as well: “We


²Burnett, The Healing of the Nations, 12. Burnett goes so far as to state that “mission is mother of theology”; see also Martin Kähler, Schriften Zur Christologie und Mission (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, [1908] 1971), 190; Bosch, Transforming Mission, 16; Guder and Barrett, Missional Church, 7. The original phrase was coined by Emil Brunner. The exact wording is “The church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning.” The Word and the World (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1931), 108.


⁴Burnett, The Healing of the Nations, 137.

have come to see," states Guder, "that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation."1

Characteristics of a Missionary Church

The fact that God intended His church to be missionary becomes even clearer as we look at the characteristics of the "sent" church as described in the Bible. That the church started its existence by being sent by Christ Himself (John 20:21) carries several important implications:

1. The church has been sent to the whole world (Matt 24:14; 28:19; 29:19; Acts 1:8). A missionary church is involved in the affairs of the world.2 Although the church often attempted to withdraw from the world, it was meant to be part of the public community.3 However, there is a need for balance between the church's faithfulness to Scripture and its involvement with the world into which the church has been sent. A missionary church is "a living body, alive all the time, functioning as a demonstration community and modeling the kingdom of God in all of its relationships and interactions, including those with the larger, public community."4

16-17.

1Guder and Barrett, 4.
2Bosch, 168-69.
3Leffel, 90.
4Ibid.
2. A missionary church, that is, a church sent to the whole world, implies growth, expansion, a church “continually in motion.”¹ God’s church never settles. A missionary church cannot exist but in a movement.² The church is “emerging again and again” in every circumstance, in every new context, “for the sake of new acts of love, . . . in the dust of the roads and the workshops, wherever the gospel has penetrated the realm of human relations.”³

3. A missionary church sent to the whole world also implies a church that crosses boundaries, whether cultural, ethnical, social, economical, political, or religious. A church that crosses boundaries is not monolithic.⁴ On the contrary, as the body of Christ, it is the most diverse, harmonious unit on earth. Although from time to time tensions appear between unity and diversity, it is God’s intention to bring oneness in the church from the diversity of people in it. A missionary church is a community united in diversity (1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27; Eph 2:11-14).⁵

4. A missionary church is an incarnational church. Being sent into different cultures in the way that Jesus was sent to the Jewish community (John 1:14), the church finds its particular expression in various cultures, contexts, and circumstances. The incarnational church is universal and at the same time particular to each culture. As Jesus

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¹Broż, 142.
²Leffel, 74-75.
³Broż, 142.
⁴Leffel, 81.
⁵Burnett, 157; Bosch, 172.
was aware of and sensitive to the culture He lived in, so the church sent by Him lives within its culture.

God does not favor one people or nation above others (Rev 14:6; 15:4). He cares and reaches out to all nations regardless of circumstances. He reaches out to Czech people despite their resistance. His arms are wide open to the Czech atheists in the same way as they are to any other unreached tribe in the world.

Structures of a Missionary Church

Saying that a missionary church is a "spontaneous social movement" may lead one to the conclusion that movements are thoroughly spontaneous and need no structure. On the other hand, well-established structures of existing churches not only penetrate all aspects of church life but become an inevitable part of religious identity to such a degree that any attempt of alteration may cause harsh conflicts.

Burnett asserts that the church “must have distinct sociological structures in its local expression” in order to exist. On the other hand, Dybdahl argues that structures “can be helpful to the church,” but “they are not essential to the continued existence of the church as the body of Christ.” It seems that Dybdahl does not intend to counter Burnett’s claim as much as he wants to emphasize that structures are subordinate to the

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1 Leffel, 66.

2 Such as replacing an old church hymnal which was used for decades with a new one. Many church members in my country were very angry because of that.

3 Burnett, 154.

4 Dybdahl, 10.
missionary purposes of the church. Dybdahl and Burnett agree that structures and methods are expendable, and changing.¹ Is such a conclusion biblically justifiable?

The history of God's people recorded in the Bible allows us to see that the way God instructed and led His people to organize was not unchangeable, once for all. God's sociological structures in the history of His people were flexible as they related to the context of God's missionary intentions.

For example, in the Old Testament one does not see "missionaries who cross frontiers to pass on their message [with the exception of Jonah], but one does find the attraction of individuals to the nation of Israel itself."² God's purpose with Israel was missionary. God wanted other nations to be drawn to Him by His presence among His people in Israel (Ps 67:1, 2).³ The way God's people were organized reflected God's intention throughout the history of Israel, whether Israelites were the nomads traveling to Canaan, or settled in the kingdom of Israel, or living in exile. Concrete examples of how this plan worked are the queen who traveled from distant Sheba to Jerusalem to honor God (1 Kgs 3:7), and Ruth who left her native land and followed her mother-in-law to Israel (Ruth 1:22).

The New Testament provides clearer evidence of the flexibility of sociological structures for the sake of missions. When Jesus started His ministry on earth, the

¹Ibid.; Burnett, 154.

²Burnett, 52.

³Ibid. Blauw calls this missionary approach "centripetal." Blauw, 34. Burnett explains that "the centripetal represents a drawing to the centre in the same way as a magnet draws iron filing to itself." Burnett, 53.
sociological structures of God's people were worn out and His missionary purposes were distorted (Matt 23:14; Mark 1:22). Jesus brought a missionary renewal which was followed by structural changes as well. He explained that new wine must be put in new wineskins (Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:38). As a result of this shift, a crowd followed Him (Matt 20:29). People were amazed at His powerful teaching (Mark 1:22; Luke 4:32) and praised God (Mark 2:12).

Jesus developed structures for implementing God's mission in harmony with His strict commitment to fulfilling God's will (John 4:34). He sent people out as active missionaries (Mark 5:19). By training His disciples to be fishers of men (Matt 4:19; Mark 1:17), He provided them with skills needed for the future missionary movement which He established by His famous statement called Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20).

The history of the early church, as described in the book of Acts, exemplifies the development of sociological structures for the sake of mission. The organizational structure of the early church allowed God to add "to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). A clear example of how God used various structures and methods to save lost people outside the Jewish community is the work of the apostle Paul and his development of rather innovative missionary strategies (1 Cor 9:19-23).\(^1\)

\(^1\)Blauw calls this centrifugal mission. Blauw, 34. Burnett explains centrifugal mission as "flinging out into an active missionary task." Burnett, 53.

God used various ways to win people in different contexts. While the nature and purpose of the church do not change, the structures and methods used may change. If the ways of churching become an end rather than the means for fulfilling the church’s mission, the consequences may become devastating—God’s purposes defeated, God’s character distorted.1

The question of appropriateness of structures and methods becomes particularly relevant in a context where society has gone through drastic changes and transitions as has the Czech Republic. The following section searches for answers to this question.

Towards a Plausible Model of Churching

The church as a community of God’s people is missionary by default. Guder states that “either we are defined by mission, or we reduce the scope of the gospel and the mandate of the church.”2 In light of this, revitalization of mission in the Czech Republic is important. However, to do this in a country where the church has been present for more than a thousand years presents a challenge.

In this section, the introduction of the sociological concept of plausibility is followed by a review of current trends in plausibility study. Before I conclude with the challenge of developing biblically-sound plausibility, I review the search of four Czech scholars for plausible Christianity within the Czech context.

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1A good example is the situation in the Czech Republic as analyzed in the following two chapters.

2Guder and Barrett, 6.
The Concept of Plausibility

The fact that humans naturally organize themselves in different ways at different times is supported by sociological research. Peter Berger and others repeatedly state that there is a dialectic relationship between person and society. Society is a product of people and people are a product of society.¹

This is true even in the relationship between church and society. The way a church community is organized (I use the term churching) matters in the context of the society. In 1999 sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman brought the term “plausibility” into the academic discussion of how sociological structures of the church or other social units are legitimized by people. Berger and Luckmann define plausibility on two levels. The horizontal level “refers to the . . . recognition of an overall sense” of sociological structures in the whole society and interpersonal relations within. The vertical level refers to the fact that sociological structures make sense “within the life span of single individuals.” The reality of the whole is plausible within the subjective world of individuals.² On one hand, plausibility refers to something which is subjective, on the other hand, it provides a frame for understanding reality which tends to lead towards greater objectivity.


²Lužný, 86.
Plausibility indicates a healthy dialectical relationship between people and society (or society and church). Plausible churching is important because it provides credibility to the message of the gospel. Plausible churching means that the unchurched can easily make sense of and relate to what churched people believe. The unknown (here, the gospel) becomes attractive. Whereas biblical teaching about the church clarifies what the church should be and why, research in sociology provides insights into how the church can become what it should be.

The Plausibility of the Christian Church

While every vital movement has risen out of some level of plausibility, plausibility does not necessarily make a movement missionary and/or biblical. However, both the Bible and historical records of the Christian church provide us with evidence that God uses plausible structures to revitalize and renew His church.

Throughout the history of the Christian church, God’s missionary movements strove for plausibility. Stark’s sociological study of the rise of Christianity\(^1\) provides an indirect example of this. Although Stark does not deal with plausibility as such, he finds numerous commonalities between recent religious movements or cults which are known to be plausible and early Christianity. Because he breaks through many myths about the development of the early church, held by contemporary believers, his findings are significant for this research.

According to Stark's research, as Leffel notes, the early Christian movement “naturally occurred within networks of social relationships, not through widespread public preaching and sudden mass conversions.”\(^1\) Stark supports his point further by pointing out that the early Christian movement grew, not only among poor and economically deprived people, but among the middle and upper class as well.\(^2\) Women played a vital part in the church’s outreach by using their natural ability to extend social networks.\(^3\) Also, in many cities beyond Israel, Christianity was able to find fresh social networks among Jews.\(^4\)

Built through social networks, the Christian movement found its way in society, facing natural disasters, economic and moral corruption, as “a revitalization movement that arose in response to the misery, chaos, fear, and brutality of life in the urban Greco-Roman world.”\(^5\) Christianity grew as a “powerful social force” because it was plausible, that is, it resonated with the times, as Leffel’s statement indicates: “By penetrating webs of personal relationships with a living gospel, by affirming life, by offering hope, and by transforming social networks into communities of equality and acceptance, the Christian faith created a new urban life in the face of persistent pagan failure.”\(^6\)

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\(^1\)Leffel, 76.
\(^2\)Stark, 29-47.
\(^3\)Ibid., 95-128.
\(^4\)Ibid., 49-72.
\(^5\)Ibid., 161.
\(^6\)Leffel, 80.
Current Trends of Plausibility

In today’s society we find religious movements which are plausible but have very little in common with God’s missions. These are a challenge for biblical Christians. An even greater challenge is, however, that many contemporary Christian churches claim biblical beliefs, but their life does not fully reflect God’s purposes for church, i.e., they have lost plausibility.

The symbolic reality of traditional church religiosity has little in common with modern industrial society.¹ In the 1930s Masaryk articulated this problem in his sociological study *Modern Man and Religion*, saying that “the old religion of the people is dying out and modern man is trying to find a substitute for it.”²

More than a generation later, Hromádka, one of the most prolific theologians of the twentieth century in Central Europe, noted that “all modern men are conditioned by an atheistic atmosphere and the evolution of science and technology is a permanent assault on the traditional structure of the Church and everything we call religion.”³ In his *Letters from Prison*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed similar thoughts: “Even those, who


honestly describe themselves as ‘religious’ do not in the least act up to it, and so they presumably mean something quite different by ‘religious’.”

In light of the outburst of religiosity in the 1990s, it is clear that religion did not die as some scholars had anticipated. However, challenges for biblical Christianity still remain. For example, in the de-monopolized and plurativized religious market of modern society, the monopolizing claims of church are leaving the church pews empty. Another previously unthinkable phenomenon of modern society is that religion was privatized and therefore became a matter of choice of each individual.

As a result, religious networks with no stable organization, no canonized dogmas, no systematic recruitment of members, no disciplinary apparatus, are spreading rapidly. Sociologists point out that privatized syncretistic movements, such as New Age or New Occultism, have a good chance of becoming acceptable new social forms of religion.

One of the major reasons for such developments is plausible structures. Although contemporary religious movements are unbiblical, they are plausible. And the preference of a majority of people is not so much truth, but rather plausibility. Berger explains this phenomenon.

Human beings, due to their intrinsically and inexorably social nature, require social support for whatever they believe about the world. “Plausibility structure” refers to the particular social context in which a given belief or value is plausible. Take an individual out of these social contexts and his

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2Lužný, 89.

3Ibid., 81.
beliefs will seem improbable. It follows that beliefs will be more plausible if confirmed with greater unanimity by the believer’s community. When virtually everyone supports a particular belief, this belief, no matter what it is, will attain the status of taken-for-granted truth in the individuals’ mind. . . . Modernization has been giving such plausibility structures a very hard time. Put it simply, modernity has created a situation in which certitude is hard to achieve.¹

Although the truth does not change, plausible structures change. As a Christian believer, I ask Bonhoeffer’s question again, but in my own context: “What is religionless [unchurched] Christianity? . . . How do we speak . . . in a ‘secular’ way about ‘God’? In what way are we . . . Christians, in what way are we the ekklesia . . . ? What is the place of worship and prayer in a religionless [non-churched] situation?”² Is it possible to revitalize society by means of a Christian movement? Is it possible for the Christian church to have more than “residual and incidental” influence on society that is to have an impact on the “quality of everyday life experience?”³

I believe it is. Although a pluralized market of faith is not acceptable for traditional religious systems, it needs to be faced. In Berger’s view, “the breakdown of taken-for-granted structures of life and thought opens up previously unthinkable possibilities, including the possibility of religious faith.”⁴ He claims that “our pluralistic situation, uncannily similar to that of late Helenistic and Roman times, gives us a rather

²Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, 153-54.
³Wilson, Religion in Sociological Perspective, 179.
⁴Berger, A Far Glory, 127.
interesting opportunity to become ‘contemporaneous’ with the early church.”

The legacy of that great missionary endeavor remains today. The challenge is to maintain the plausibility of God’s mission as “the social continuum of incarnation” and “the social flowering of the Word into an ever changing present.” For that reason we need to understand better the historical and societal causes of the marginalization of the church’s religiosity. We also need to understand the culture, values, and needs of non-churched people. Then we can look for more plausible models of churching which could possibly replace “traditional church religiosity.”

Czech Scholars in Search of Plausible Churching

In order to better understand the quest for plausibility of the Christian mission, it is appropriate to view how others have attempted to deal with this subject. I limit my review to scholars, theologians, and sociologists who have proposed their concepts in the twentieth century with a Czech context in mind. None of these four scholars talked about plausibility as such; however, the trend of their work clearly indicates an attempt to make Christianity plausible to unchurched Czechs.

\[1\] Ibid.


Religion of Jesus Model

Tomáš Masaryk (1850-1937), a professor of sociology and the first president of Czechoslovakia, was well aware of the rapid spread of secularization. In his desire to reverse this trend, he considered a great missionary effort to get indifferent and indolent people “at least to think about religion.” He believed that there was a need for missionaries for the intelligentsia.1

For Masaryk, Jesus’ religion, with its emphasis on love towards a kind God and love for one’s neighbor and even for one’s enemy, “is the substance of religion.”2

How discreet are Jesus’ theological prescriptions, and his references to the transcendental! God is father to him, to Him he is in an intimate personal relation, but he does not speak of this relation much, he lives it, and he does not lay down any system of theology. Jesus was a living example; he did not preach love merely with words, but he continually put it into practice, he associated with the poor, and lowly, he sought out the sinners, and those morally outcast, he healed the sick, filled the hungry, he warned the rich. Such a living faith spreads more by example than with words, like a fire, like an infection. Jesus gave no proof of his religion, speaking always as one that had authority; he entered into no theological disputes, but he confuted the Scribes and Pharisees by pointing to the falseness of their religiousness and morality. He showed that real religion, real religiousness permeates the whole of life, even the daily one, the ordinary one, and it permeates it always, at every moment. ... Religion can be experienced not only in church, but also in the factory, in the field, in the cowshed, and in the drawing-room, in sadness, and in joy. That is Jesus’ example.3

Masaryk’s concept of plausible churching was articulated in the conviction that “religiousness crowns and sanctifies love. Religion without humanity cannot be true;


2Ibid.

3Ibid., 95-96.
humanity without religiousness cannot be complete.\textsuperscript{11} True religion was a matter of loving relationships. The role of Jesus in this model was crucial in that He “was the first clearly and by his own example to define religiousness not only as a relation towards God, but also to one’s neighbour.”\textsuperscript{2}

Although Mararyk’s model of Christian religion is nearly a century old, I find it very appealing. The relevance of Masaryk’s ideas is reinforced by the fact that his ideas were formed in the context of the newly established free Czechoslovak Republic. However, in order to avoid hasty conclusions, the relevance of this model can be fully evaluated only in the light of the analysis of contextual and institutional factors (chapters 3 and 4).

Model of “Civilian Proclamation”

A few decades later, Jan Milič Lochman, in his book \textit{Church in a Marxist Society} (1970), spelled out conclusions of an “intensive inquiry into a more credible and effective way of service for our church.” Lochman wrote at a time when the communist regime was being scrutinized and socialism with a human face was being developed (second half of the 1960s). Under the influence of the Czech Protestant reformation, this model was searching for a relevant application of an ethical-social component, with the church’s function in a socialist society in mind.\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 99.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 101.

\textsuperscript{3}Lochman, \textit{Church in a Marxist Society: A Czechoslovak View}, 70.
Lochman summarized the program of "civilian proclamation" in three main points: (1) proving the freedom of the gospel—reducing traditional "uniforms" (rules of life); (2) serving in the movement from the church toward the world—the way of an eccentric congregation; and (3) witnessing in interhuman relations—an unconditional humanism.\(^1\)

The sociological basis for implementing such a program could not depend solely on the old traditional forms of church activities of congregations (such as Sabbath worship, Bible school, youth groups, and other activities in the church). Institutionalism and traditionalism in the churches were considered "a serious obstacle to all missionary activity and a sound development of free Christian existence."\(^2\) There was a need for the church to be present not only in the expected places, but also in the unexpected. For the organized church, this was difficult to achieve. And so it came down to the unexpected presence of laymen, "the real bearers of the apostolic witness in our socialist society."\(^3\)

Although this model was proposed with the socialistic regime and its limitations in mind, one can still find elements that seem to surpass the societal transitions, particularly in the last decade. Lochman's emphasis is still relevant for the existing church. Again, deeper analysis of both the society and the church in chapter 3 and 4 can help to determine to what degree are Lochman's words still true.

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\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Ibid., 86-87.

\(^3\)Ibid., 88-89.
Faith-Without-Religion Model

This concept of faith without religion was developed by Otakar Funda (born in 1943) in the 1980s and published in his book *Víra bez náboženství* (faith without religion) in 1994. It assumed that established statements of faith are unacceptable for the contemporary person. Funda wrote:

The classical contents of Christian faith do not agree with the experience and perception of the contemporary person and for that reason lost the ability to integrate him. In the life of a modern person a vacuum was created which the classical contents of Christian faith cannot fill again.

And yet, perhaps there might be values and dimensions in Christian tradition that could perhaps contribute to the fullness and integrity of human life.

And thus, for Funda, the situation and experience of the modern person became a norm of plausibility as he attempted to provide "non-tendentious" information about the Christian faith. In his philosophical and rather academic concept, Funda approximated the message of the gospel to the rational and sober thinking of a secular person by re-theologizing and reinterpreting Christian faith in a religionless manner. In doing so, he was guided and influenced by German Protestant theologians of the twentieth century, such as Bultmann, Bonhoeffer, Tillich, Ebeling, and Braun. He limited faith to a mere

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1Otakar A. Funda, *Víra bez náboženství* (Faith without religion) (Prague: Prvokruh, 1994), 129.
2Ibid., 130.
3Ibid.
4Ibid., 8.
5Ibid.
anthropological dimension as he showed how to be a Christian without having to believe in miracles and supernatural phenomena.¹

Not only is Funda's courageous and presumptuous proposition hard for Bible believers to accept, but the relevance of his approach for the Czech person in the post-communistic period remains dubious as the analysis of the religiosity of Czech people in the following chapters will show.

Renewal of the Cyril-Methodius Tradition Model

Pavel Ambros (born in 1955), in his book Kam směňuje česká katolická církev? (Where is the Czech Catholic Church going? 1999), unfolds a missionary model of "new evangelization" in the context of the Czech Republic, reflecting the ecclesiological shift of the Second Vatican Council. This Catholic model claims to have its roots in the mission of Cyril and Methodius in the ninth century. Emphasizing an Eastern concept of spirituality, Ambros proposed making Christ alive by proclaiming the gospel in understandable language.²

Furthermore, the aim of proclaiming the gospel is a conversion of both the church and "pagans" to the Lord, and the creation of churches inculturated into the local culture. The key term of this process is a human experience of actuating divine life, through which the social dimension of the Spirit finds common expression in human relations. In

¹Ibid.

²Pavel Ambros, Kam směňuje česká katolická církev? (Where is the Czech Catholic church going?) (Prague: Česká provincie SJ, 1999), 172.
the implementation of “new evangelization” in the Czech context, a new way of catechizing is anticipated.¹

On one hand, the impact of the Second Vatican Council on Ambros’s rethinking of Catholic evangelization is evident. On the other hand, the question arises about how such a model can be implemented amid a very negative societal view of the church, as the next chapter illuminates.

Although none of these models has produced a significant missionary movement yet, these propositions are helpful examples of the search to respond to the Czech mindset. They help to show that the search for plausibility of churching may come from the simple following of Jesus (Masaryk’s model); that the search for plausibility must lead to church renewal (Lochman’s model). Further, the search for plausibility can be misleading, as Funda’s attempt to change the message of Scripture in his “Faith without Religion” model shows. Finally, the search for plausibility should not make us blind to the past and our cultural heritage, as Ambros’s study suggests.

Challenge of Biblical Plausibility

I argued that although people did not always respond positively, God’s movements in the history of humankind were plausible. However, not all religious plausibility today is biblical. One example of an unbiblical model of plausibility is that of

¹Ibid., 177-96.
Funda. Although Funda made the biblical stories fresh and understandable,¹ his concern for demythologizing the gospel is rather misleading.

In his book, he took the church dogmas as a reason why the biblical message is not acceptable as it is, and then went on to rewrite the gospel stories. The new gospel was written in modern language and style, but without dogmas or miracles.² Such a gospel may appeal to the secular person, yet, it can hardly put a secular person in touch with the “real” gospel and God’s power. Such an attempt has, to my understanding, removed the “power of God for salvation of everyone who believes.” (Rom 1:16) God’s saving foolishness (1 Cor 1:18-25) was made unworthy.³

The quest of a missionary movement for biblical plausibility is guided by “a shared conviction that the Scriptures are the normative and authoritative witness to God’s mission and its unfolding in human history.”⁴ The missionary purpose is not to rewrite theology, as some scholars of the twentieth century did, but to translate the message into

¹For particular stories, see Funda, Víra bez náboženství, 227-44; Idem, Podle bible nejmenším (Based on the Bible to the little ones) (Prague: Prvokruh, 1992).

²Funda, Víra bez náboženství, 227-44


⁴Guder and Barrett, 10.
a given culture. Again, the need for deeper understanding of both church and societal contexts arises. Before we proceed to the analytical chapters, let us look at the theory of the revitalization movements which indicates possible change.

**Contemporary Theory of Revitalization Movements**

Major missionary textbooks and mission strategies came out of the missionary experience in various parts of the unreached world, mostly in Africa and Asia. Missionaries learned languages, adopted local cultures, translated the Bible, and planted churches in contexts totally different from the Western world.

Meanwhile, however, the "Christian" and Western part of the world, which had formerly sent missionaries, increasingly became a mission field. While books were published in the 1990s about missionary work “at home,” particularly in North America, there is still a considerable lack of tools for missionary work with post-Christian countries and people groups.

A concrete example of such a situation is the Czech Republic, as it is described in chapter 3. The presence of Christianity was established eleven centuries ago. Although parts of the Bible in the Czech language circulated from the birth of the Christian mission to the Czechs, the whole Bible was translated and published only 450 years ago. Today,

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the Czech Bible is considered an indispensable part of the Czech culture. It has been instrumental in the development of the Czech language and its survival during times when the Czech culture was under threat of extinction.¹

To utilize missionary tools for reaching the majority of Czech people who claim to be irreligious is a challenge. People have a vague awareness of Christianity, but their understanding is tainted by myths and biases. Although most of them do not know the gospel, due to the post-Christian influence they are not interested in knowing it.²

Against this background, the theory of revitalization developed by Anthony F. C. Wallace³ offers possibilities for churching the unchurched Czechs. Although the premises of this theory may not be religious or biblical, the theory helps to understand the dynamics of religious movements which occurred during biblical times and during the rise of Christianity. This theory can contribute to the theological and sociological understanding of a missionary movement.

The Scheme of a Revitalization Movement

Wallace defines a revitalization movement as a "deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture." ⁴ By revitalization

¹Common knowledge taught in the Czech elementary schools.

²I know this from my experience of selling Christian books in the early 1990s. Although many people at that time claimed to be Catholic, they did not have the Bible and they were not even interested in it.

³Wallace, "Revitalization Movements."

⁴Ibid., 265.
movement Wallace means a process common to various movements, such as "nativistic," "reform," "social," "messianic," "charismatic," "cargo cult," and "religious revival." Revitalization movements are "not unusual phenomena, but are recurrent features in human history. Probably few men have lived who have not been involved in an instance of the revitalization process." Wallace indicates that Christianity itself originated in a revitalization movement as did Protestant reform movements such as John Wesley's and early Methodism.

Based on bibliographical research and available historical documents, Wallace constructed this theory (first published in 1956) as a methodological approach to analyze and compare various movements. In recent years, several scholars have used his theory as a framework for analyzing their data. So far, this theory has been utilized in analyzing movements which have already occurred.

Used in the religious realm, the meaning is slightly different. Paul Hiebert points out that "revitalization movements are conversion movements in which there are deliberate organized efforts by members of a society to construct a more satisfactory

\[1\text{Ibid., 264.}
\[2\text{Ibid., 267.}
\[3\text{Ibid., 264.}

world view."¹ The desire for change comes from dissatisfaction with the existing cultural or worldview system. This dissatisfaction leads involved people, often prophets or charismatic leaders who bring a special revelation, to start a movement, “which may rise suddenly and totally absorb its adherents, giving them a whole new set of beliefs and lifestyle.”²

Wallace rejects the evolutionary view of culture held by many theorists according to which culture change is “essentially [a] slow, chain-like, self-contained procession” which “continues for years, generations, centuries, millennia.”³ The revitalization process is unique in that it permits social and cultural change within one generation.⁴

Another important characteristic of the revitalization movement is that culture change happens through an organic process, as compared to the classical processes of culture change (evolution, drift, diffusion, historical change, acculturation), which are considered “superorganic inevitabilities.” According to this theory, human society is regarded as “a definite kind of organism”⁵ in which all parts are significant and

¹Paul Hiebert, *Phenomenology and Institutions of Folk Religions*, Syllabus and Lecture Outlines for Classroom Use, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, 1982, 111.

²Ibid.


⁴Ibid., 267.

⁵Ibid.
homeostatic, that is, they interact together. Society functions optimally when all or some of its parts coordinate “to preserve its own integrity.”

Any conflict or disequilibrium within the body produces stress, which Wallace defines as “a condition in which some part, or the whole, of the social organism is threatened with more or less serious damage.” Furthermore, “stress on one level is stress on all levels.” The human experience shows that stress is part of life. Yet, when the stress becomes “intolerable,” one must choose either to accept it and suffer, or make an attempt to reduce the stress. Revitalization movements bring rapid change because they are seen as a process to lower stress.

In order to act in ways which will reduce stress, every person in society must maintain a certain mental image of the society and its culture. Such a perception or view of the society Wallace calls “the mazeway.” Society in all its parts is organized by individuals’ own experience, which in turn shapes their view of society. “No two individuals,” notes Hiebert, “share the same mazeway, not even within the same society or segment of society. Nevertheless, there must be some general agreement between

\[1\text{Ibid., 265-66.}\]
\[2\text{Ibid.}\]
\[3\text{Ibid.}\]
\[4\text{The concept of mazeway to a great degree resonates with the concept of worldview as used by anthropologists. Both mazeway and worldview are subtle perceptions which lead to apparent views and attitudes and which make person act in a certain way.}\]
people, some common world view for them to operate within the same society.\textsuperscript{1} The well-being of a society, that is, the consistency of behavior defining the culture, is dependent upon the thinking of the individuals comprising it.\textsuperscript{2} Revitalization, then, springs from change of thinking, or more precisely, mazeway reformulation of an individual which brings a reduction of stress. A revitalization movement occurs if a group of individuals collaborates in such an effort.\textsuperscript{3}

**The Structures of a Revitalization Movement**

The theory notes that revitalization movements consist of processual and functional structures. The processual structure outlines the chronological phases which culminate in the actual revitalization movement. Such a structure of a revitalization process points to the cultural disintegration, and reveals the causes for change and the responses to it.\textsuperscript{4} The functional structure outlines the main stages needed for the period of revitalization to be successful. Let us take a look first at the chronological phases and then at the functional stages of revitalization.

**I. Steady State**

The society is in a steady period, with few changes or none at all. People live with

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1}Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology*, 391.
  \item \textsuperscript{2}Wooten, 38.
  \item \textsuperscript{3}Wallace, “Revitalization Movements,” 267.
  \item \textsuperscript{4}McLaughlin, 17.
\end{itemize}
more or less satisfying ways of meeting their needs. "Some severe but still tolerable stress may remain general in the population."  

II. The Period of Increased Individual Stress

In this stage, the sociocultural system is disrupted; disequilibrium occurs. The society and its culture may go through considerable change, but the stress of individuals is increasingly intolerable and the efficiency of certain stress-reduction techniques decreases. There is an anxiety in leaving the security of old and familiar ways of life. The system does not accommodate the satisfaction of needs; there may be problems such as economic distress, military defeat, or political subordination. "Initial consideration of a substitute way is likely, however, to increase stress because . . . it poses threat of mazeway disintegration."  

III. The Period of Cultural Distortion

If the experience of stress continues, the need-satisfaction techniques fail, and there is no satisfactory cultural solution, stress continues to rise. The culture is internally distorted, but people experience anxiety over the prospect of changing behavior. There is often increased dysfunctional behavior as a way to reduce the impact of forces such as alcoholism, depression, violence, or fraud. However, stress is not reduced and there is a continuous decline in social organization. Some people try limited mazeway changes in their personal lives, but overall, the inadequacy of existing ways of acting to reduce stress

\[\text{Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," 268.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 269.}\]
becomes more and more evident. People's apathy towards change leads them to withdraw from the society.¹ Eventually they become “disillusioned with their mazeway and lose sense of meaning in life.”²

IV. The Period of Revitalization

If this process of deterioration continues, the society is apt to disintegrate as a system. It may die out or be absorbed by another more stable society. It is hard for the society to return to a steady state without initiating the revitalization process.

“Revitalization, often religious in nature, brings a new set of beliefs and new ways of coping with life in a more satisfactory way, thus restoring meaning to existence and renewal to the culture.”³

Revitalization comes from the successful completion of several functions:

1. Mazeway reformulation

The revitalization movement is initiated by the experience of a dream or vision, which creates an extraordinary impact on a person, who then accepts a role of a leader or visionary prophet. Such a vision contains a wish for a more satisfying parental figure. There is also a strong moral content and a desire for stable and satisfying human and supernatural relations. A religious mazeway also envisions a clear apocalyptic picture. Although in such a vision the existing way of life is recognized as dead, the new

¹Ibid., 269-70.
²Hiebert, Cultural Anthropology, 393.
³Ibid.
mazeway may contain restructured elements and subsystems which attained currency at
some point in the society or may even be in use at that point.¹

2. Communication

Charged with such a vision or insight, the charismatic leader takes on the
prophetic role and communicates in various ways the new gospel. "The doctrinal and
behavioral injunctions which he or she preaches carry two fundamental motifs: that the
converts will come under the care and protection of certain supernatural beings; and that
they and their society will benefit materially from an identification with some definable
new cultural system."² Thus, a new explanation to life and its possibilities is provided.³

3. Organization

Along the vision casting of the leader, the following of disciples, apprentices, and
those interested is organized. With the prophet, there are significant changes in lifestyle,
and his or her personality is transformed. The converts, who often undergo a revitalizing
personality transformation, become disciples. There are also those who only follow. The
charisma of the leader is not derived from his or her status in an existing authority
structure; it is often associated with supernatural forces.⁴

¹Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," 270.
²Ibid., 373.
³Hiebert, Cultural Anthropology, 393.
4. Adaptation

A revitalization movement is often met with resistance, which is often determined and resourceful. The movement therefore needs to apply various strategies of adaptation, such as doctrinal modification or political and diplomatic maneuver. The original vision is molded and shaped by the special interest groups and/or by the changes in cultural context.¹

5. Cultural transformation

As internal social conformity is obtained by the “controlling portion” of the population, a noticeable social revitalization occurs. “Social relationships are renewed and group action [is] enthusiastically pursued.”²

6. Routinization

Such a revitalization leads to a more active and purposeful life. “If the new activities help to reduce stress and restore meaning to the society, they soon become institutionalized within its structure.”³

V. The New Steady State

Once the new cultural system proves itself viable, the routinized movement leads to a steady state.

¹Ibid., 273-74.
²Hiebert, Cultural Anthropology, 393.
³Ibid.
The Relevance of the Revitalization Movement

Wallace’s model of a revitalization movement is relevant to and compatible with this study for several reasons. First, his model is interdisciplinary and thus allows a more holistic perspective and solution.\(^1\) Second, Wallace’s view of society as an organism is more relevant to the biblical view of community and thus allows for development of a strategy consistent with the Bible. Third, Wallace’s interpretation of various movements varies from other studies in the sense that he views movements as a natural human response to changed conditions and processes of regaining equilibrium.\(^2\) His positive outlook on revitalization movements may differ from the views of many religious leaders who defend traditional churching of organized religion at any cost, but it provides a new horizon for churching in view of the changing societal context.

Wallace’s theory has not been used for futuring, only for the analysis of existing movements. The use of the revitalization movement theory in this study is rather innovative. Assuming that Wallace’s claim of the predictability of elements of various movements is valid, I intend to integrate these elements into the strategical proposal for outreach.

According to the theory proposed by Wallace, if the stress within a cultural system, which in our case is the dissatisfaction of people in the post-communist society (including the dissatisfaction of irreligious Czech people with organized religion)  

\(^1\)The theory of revitalization movements deals primarily with religion but the perspective is that of the social sciences. Revitalization movements have been studied in the context of sociology, anthropology, and psychology. McLaughlin, 9.

\(^2\)Ibid., 10.
becomes intolerable to certain individuals, then a revitalization movement will come. To what degree this model might apply to the Czech context should become clearer in light of the analysis provided in the following two chapters. An analysis of society (chapter 3) and church (chapter 4) will not only help to assess the possibility of a new movement, it may also identify the key elements of the new mazeway.

This chapter has laid down theoretical foundations for an active missionary movement which is biblically sound and, yet, plausible in the context of a given society. In view of the framework suggested, the proposal for a missionary movement would be incomplete without analyzing the specifics of the context of the Czech Republic. These are treated in the next two chapters.
CHAPTER III

TRADITIONS AND TRANSITIONS IN CZECH POSTCOMMUNIST SOCIETY: UNDERSTANDING THE CZECH SOCIETAL CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter is to survey, analyze, and evaluate the societal context from the perspective of someone who desires to understand the "irreligious" Czech people's frame of reference, the patterns that influence their life, and the reality that governs their perception.¹ This must be done in order to be able to minister to their spiritual needs and meaningfully communicate to them God's loving acceptance. Whereas chapter 4 deals with church matters and institutional factors, the focus of this chapter is primarily on societal, contextual factors involving the Czech people.

Of importance to this study is the character of the Czech nation—its beliefs, values, and worldview. Based on these, the chapter will proceed from the more obvious and visible to less obvious and hidden elements. Because of the nature of this topic, the chapter does not claim to be complete. It cannot be because, as Jaroslav Krejčí comments, the "knowledge of national character is never completed."² National

¹Kraft, Christianity in Culture, 47-48.

character, Krejčí notes, consists of passing traits. My study attempts to provide glimpses of reality to assist any Christian who wants to apply the missionary methods of Jesus Christ, who Himself worked with people where they were.

Before presenting my findings on the current religiosity of the Czech people, I briefly survey Czech history in search of factors that have contributed to the present attitudes of the Czech people towards the church and religion. In the second part of the chapter, I describe the Czech people, their values, as well as their strengths and challenges. Finally, in the third section of the chapter, I attempt to systematize the most vivid elements of the Czech worldview which seems to underlie feelings and attitudes about church and Christianity.

Because these matters may be rather sensitive and complex for the Czech people, I have not relied on one single research method. In addition to bibliographical research I draw from my own quantitative research. I attempt to proceed carefully, checking and comparing ideas with the findings of other researchers, thus avoiding quick conclusions.

The Czech View of Religion

Historically the Czechs have been a religious people. The Czech lands were exposed to Christianity as early as the ninth century by Cyril and Constantin from the East. Later, missionaries came from the West and, as a result of their activities, the whole country was converted to Roman Catholicism. A few centuries later, this country was

\[1\text{Ibid.}, 31.\]
filled with religious fervor and reformation movements. However, today the country is considered one of the most atheistic countries in the world, as noted in chapter 1.

To better understand the Czech view of religion, a brief survey of Czech history (both remote and recent) is provided, followed by an analysis of the current state of the Czech people’s religious views.

Legacy of Czech History

People who claim to be irreligious today in the Czech Republic are still well aware that the country used to be very religious. Patočka claims that “Bohemia was the most Christian of all lands.” The legacy of those times (the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in particular) is still alive. R. W. Seton-Watson points out that when “the Church had been growing rapidly in wealth and power” and “corruption spread through the Bohemian clergy,” this country gave birth to the most passionate spirituality among lay people, both in Bohemia and Moravia. For their religious conviction, full of depth

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1 See first part of chapter 4.


and radical urgency, Czechs became a peculiar people in the eyes of Christians, especially those in Western countries.¹

In the eyes of the world which was then mostly Catholic, Bohemia became known as “the home of heresy.”² Europe, craving the pleasures that the renaissance and humanism conveyed, could hardly support the radicalism of Bohemia, which “gave herself up and fully sacrificed herself to absolute, morally spiritual conception of Christianity, ‘asceticism in the world’.”³

As the opposers of the reformation sought to bring resolution, they needed a representative who would stand for the nation of the heretics. They found that in one of the leading reforming religious preachers, John Hus, who chose to defend his faith at any cost. He died in 1415. Thus he became a hero, recognized as such even today by Czechs.

Although the feelings of the Czechs were hurt and hearts were broken, they chose to fight for their understanding of the gospel. Under the military leadership of John Žižka, Hussitism spread throughout the whole country. Faith in God permeated people’s everyday life. Bohemia was Christian, yet there was a tension.

Early in the seventeenth century, the Czechs were defeated by a Catholic army in a famous battle known as the Battle on White Mountain (1620) and their religious conviction was gradually uprooted and replaced. Bibles and other books were taken


²Seton-Watson, 56.

³Patočka, 36.
away; religious leaders were removed, first from the cities and then from the country. Catholic monks were brought into the country to “convert” Czech heretics to faith. They were willing to use any means to succeed (including bribing). Bradley points out that “the Czechs . . . were to be ideologically destroyed and reconverted to the religion of the victors.”

While the Czechs originally stood up against the corrupted power of the Church and wanted correction, now the country’s religious freedom was forcefully taken away. A violent counter-reformation forced the Czech believers to flee the country, to pretend to embrace the Catholic faith, or to give up their faith completely. The Czech nobility and royalty lost their power, and citizens forfeited “all rights and privileges. . . . The towns and cities of the Czech kingdom [were] depopulated and germanized.”

Since Bohemia was by its geographical location a good strategic seat of war, after being conquered, the land served during the 30 Years War precisely for that purpose, as “the battle ground” of foreign powers. Her free will taken away, Bohemia became “an entirely passive instrument,” laid out to an outrage of the “chief actors.” As a result, the

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1Johann Amos Comenius, Adam Samuel Hartman, and John Walker, *The History of the Bohemian Persecution, From the Beginning of Their Conversion to Christianity in the Year 894. to the Year 1632. Ferdinand the 2. of Austria, Reigning. In Which the Unheard of Secrets of Policy, Consells, Arts, and Dreadfull Judgements Are Exhibited* (London: John Walker, 1650), 319.


3Ibid., 92, 95-96.

4Seton-Watson, 120-22. It is beyond the scope of the dissertation to go into detail regarding the situation of the seventeenth century. Seton-Watson elaborates on the
Czech nation agonized with spiritual, mental, social, cultural wounds for the next 150 years.

From the end of the eighteenth century, the Czech nation experienced a national renaissance. The process of Germanization “was finally stopped, and began to be reversed.”1 The Czech language, literature, arts, and culture revived. Although religion was still important, subtle religious apathy and indifference began to emerge. According to Krejčí, it is most obvious in contrast to surrounding nations: “It is only among the Czechs that a poet, journalist, as early as the 1840s could deride the sacred issue of religious wars without loss to his own popularity, when he rhymed: ‘For what were the Hussite brawls? Whether to eat God’s body with or without the sauce.’”2

On the surface, Czechs were Catholics. Being part of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, where Roman Catholicism was the established faith, it was the only way to avoid difficulties. Thus, the renewed national consciousness was quite different from that of earlier centuries, as liberal secularism was slowly imbedding its roots and the fragments of a once-strong national sense of radical obedience to the Scriptures were pushed away.

The evidence of this process grew after World War I, when Czechs gained their independence. Although 95 percent of all Czechs were still members of the Catholic history of Czechs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in chapters 8 (“The Catastrophe”) and 9 (“The Period of Total Eclipse, 1648-1790”) of his book.

1Bradley, 111.

Church, a large section of the population was "showing an undisguised anti-church attitude."\textsuperscript{1} The newly established independence and freedom led the Czechs gradually to prefer the "no confession" status (see figure 2).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig2.png}
\caption{Comparison of religiosity in Czech Republic.}
\end{figure}

As Czechoslovakia was the tenth most developed country in the world between the World Wars, the Czech people were enjoying the fruits of a flourishing Western-minded capitalism. Their secularized worldview was under the influence of Western European political allies such as France and Great Britain, and was also shaped by heavy industrialization and urbanization. Had this course of history continued, their view of the

\textsuperscript{1}Krejčí, "Religion," 109.
church might have softened. Perhaps Christianity might have eventually been connected with the blessing of freedom and prosperity, as happened in the United States.

However, another major blow came, this time from the Munich betrayal in 1938. The Munich agreement, among the British, French, Italian, and German powers, meant that the Western allies of the Czechs (Britain and France) gave Hitler permission to invade Czechoslovakia, evacuate Sudetenland, and take over the country.

In his memoirs, Zdeněk Bednář, a theologian who was forced into exile after World War II, recalls how the “Czechoslovak nation was asked to make an unreasonable sacrifice for the peace of the world.” Not only was it immoral to make such a request, but its outcome was exactly the opposite of world peace.

It was obvious where Hitler was heading, but the unexpected behavior of the allies from the West, who professed the Christian faith, took the Czechs by surprise and led to disappointment. Munich appears to have been the final impulse to say good-bye to the Christian West at the first opportunity. That chance came with the so-called liberation

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by the Soviet army: "Only the Soviets can be ultimately trusted" was heard not only in the streets but also in the universities.¹

It would appear that throughout their history the Czechs did not have good fortune in political affairs, and that religion was somehow historically interconnected with politics. Thus, the path was prepared for the Czechs to enter a new historical stage, embracing Marxism-Leninism, which did not sound so ungodly or immoral, except that it excluded God and Christianity. The Czechs apparently were ready for that experience when the majority voted for the Communist party in 1948.

The Legacy of Czech Communism

The Czechs may not have understood that communism in practice was something different from that in theory. Although some joined the party out of genuine commitment and were willing to make sacrifices to establish a better world, very soon they witnessed how the power structures became corrupt and a totalitarian regime was formed.

By 1948 the communists took over the country and "controlled all aspects of its life."² To secure power, they kindled a wave of political cleansing in which—only from 1945 through 1954—several hundred death sentences were passed and carried out. It was as if the history of the Czech nation was repeating itself. Perhaps the only difference between this outrage and the one early in the seventeenth century was that this time no

¹Bednář, 39.

one was officially allowed to leave the country. "Even quite a few members of the communist party did not escape a similar treatment." Many people saved their lives by illegal immigration.

Marxist-Leninists tried to force their ideals on the population by means of the police and violence. Those who had different ideas were discredited in the eyes of the public as enemies of the nation. Many people were victimized and sacrificed in the name of communist ideology. When the humanistic feeling in the second half of the 1960s led the Czechs to reform their society and to try to establish a socialism with a human face, their desire was rewarded by the "violent intervention" of Soviet forces, which was termed "normalization" by the Soviet leadership. By normality was meant a totalitarian "dictatorship of the proletariat," as developed under the rulership of Stalin.

Aware of the advancement of secularization in the country, the communists yielded to the temptation to accelerate this process even more. With it came "an especially hard-line persecution of the Church."

For communism, religion was an excess of antiquity that was successfully utilized by the feudal and bourgeois classes. Religious preconceptions and beliefs were

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1 Krejčí and Machonín, 45.
3 Krejčí and Machonín, 192.
considered incompatible with the sensational successes of science and the limitless possibilities of human knowledge; they were rapidly routed at this time.\textsuperscript{1} Thus, the remnants of religious obscurantism slowed down the development of free modern scientific and religion-less society. Therefore, it was left that,

even though religious freedom is respected and believers actively participate in our life, the party cannot be indifferent towards existence of religious excess and cannot rely on automatic process of their withering away, which after all is required by social advancement of socialism.\textsuperscript{2}

The process of extinction of the religious worldview was furthered in many ways. Although religion was “tolerated,” anti-religious beliefs were communicated over and over, almost everywhere in the public realm, in places such as schools, public media, civic meetings, and party conferences.

In order to win the Czech people, communists attempted to contextualize their teachings. One way to do that was by reinterpreting Czech history. The Hussite revolutionary movement, for example, was praised by the communists for the reform of the feudal system.\textsuperscript{3} The significance of John Hus was not in his beliefs or ideas but in the fact that he prepared and motivated the masses for revolution.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}J. Laurová et al., \textit{Náboženství, církve, klerikalismus a naše dějiny} (Religion, churches, clericalism, and our history) (Prague: Nakladatelství Politické Literatury, 1962), 5.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 7.

\textsuperscript{3}“It was not just some anti-church struggle. . . . It was first of all a struggle for reform, perhaps the destruction of a feudal social order, whose most typical representation was that manifested by the Catholic Church.” Ibid., 17-18.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 19-20.
Johann Amos Comenius (1592-1670; in the Czech language, Jan Amos Komenský), the last bishop of the Unity of Brethren and famous for his reform of schooling and education, was praised by communists as the “direct descendant of the best Hussite traditions”. His views of education were directly linked to revolutionary Marxist ideas. At the same time, Komenský’s life-long passion for God and his church, Unity of Brethren, was excused as an inevitable excess of the Middle Ages, in conflict with his own profound view of modernity.

Another way communists contextualized their ideology (perhaps not intentionally) in order to meet the needs of the naturally religious Czech people was through constructing a pseudo-religious system. Not only did they establish regular meetings where they worshiped their saints, they did have their own rituals and feasts, and they were spreading the good news about a soon-coming communist paradise. They also had their own canonic literature, commandments, and all-embracing doctrines.

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2Ibid., 9. As Pavlík’s introduction to Komenský’s book exemplifies, once Komenský’s pedagogical books were published during the period of communism, the reader was advised in the foreword not to connect the author’s great pedagogical wisdom with his religious beliefs. It was explained that the power of religion in those times did not allow thinkers to develop new ideas without wrapping them up in and explaining them by religious concepts. In the view of communism, Komenský and many other great Czech scientists—being religious—were just children of their times. One can draw this conclusion based on reading their comments like this one in the introduction to Komenský’s book.

3Krejčí, “Religion,” 117, 122, 123.
Communists replaced God with nature, and the spirit with matter. Man-god usurped the place of the God-man. Evolution was substituted for creation.¹

And so, history repeated itself. As in the Counter Reformation where many had been forced to convert superficially to Catholicism, now many were members of the communist party and attended meetings because it was required, but they did not believe Marxist-Leninist tenets. Although the communists wanted to control people’s minds and penetrate them with their ideology, they did not have access to the religious beliefs dwelling in people’s hearts. However, the party did manage to control people’s visible allegiances, especially their allegiance to the church. Eventually, they were satisfied with people’s loyalty and support just for appearance’s sake.

Communists started their time in the Czech Republic by continuing the Czech reformation which, in their view, had “helped to break the spiritual and political dictatorship of the Church . . . [and] ignited the movement of people’s masses.”² Adhering to the legacy of Czech radicalism, they took their “mission” quite militantly (in contrast to their Eastern European neighbors), with religious fervor and devotion. Gradually, their scientific anti-religion turned out to be religionlike. In the end, the communists not only managed to develop a totalitarian social system but became defendants of a destructive political dictatorship. Their religion of “Homo Sovieticus”³

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²Pavlik, 6.

³Halik, “Post-Communism,” 37.
ended much worse than the religion of the church that they were criticizing and fighting against.

**Current State of Czech Religiosity**

One would expect that in response to such anti-religious propaganda as the communists had enforced, the people would be naturally drawn to churches and to religion. As the results of the 1991 census show in figure 2, shortly after the fall of communism people were interested in religion. However, research documents as early as the mid-1990s show the Czech people in a different mood, that is, against organized religion.\(^1\) As a matter of fact, among the Czechs, religious freedom seemed to be appreciated the least of all social freedoms; this differed from other Central European countries.\(^2\)

The results of the 2001 census brought new discussion on the topic. The figures had changed considerably from the previous census. The “no faith” group grew 20 percent over ten years (see figure 2) while the number of those claiming to be believers decreased by 12 percent. Commenting on the results of the census, Eva Borůvková titled her article in a major newspaper: “God Exists, But He Does Not Have a Place to Park.”\(^3\)

The geographical distribution of religious people is not even. In Northern Bohemia (the least religious part of the country), the official report of the percentage of

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\(^1\)Ferge, 261-77; Heitlinger and Trnka, 173.

\(^2\)Ferge, 267.

\(^3\)Eva Borůvková, “Bůh nemá kde v Česku zaparkovat,”(God does not have a place to park in the Czech) 28 July 2001; available from http://zpravy.idnes.cz/; Internet.
religious people is as low as 15 percent, whereas in a significant part of Moravia, the "official" religiosity reaches 50 percent of the population.\footnote{1}

Over the last 10 years, the mainline churches lost vast numbers of congregants. Both the Catholic Church and evangelical Churches lost 33 percent of their members, while the Czechoslovakian Hussite Church suffered a loss of 46 percent. However, smaller churches grew by 161 percent (see table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census</th>
<th>R. Catholic</th>
<th>Evangelicals</th>
<th>Hussites</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03/03/1991</td>
<td>4,021,400</td>
<td>204,000</td>
<td>178,000</td>
<td>120,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/01/2001</td>
<td>2,709,900</td>
<td>137,100</td>
<td>96,400</td>
<td>314,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Jan Balík said: “The outcomes of the census did not surprise me. It was obvious that after the November euphoria [fall of communism, 1989] when sympathy for the church was simply a protest against communism, everything would eventually return to normal.”\footnote{2} Believers are a minority, particularly among people between 30 and 50 years of age.


age, who grew up, were influenced by, and were educated in communism. Balik notes that this is "a peculiar group of people we will not find anywhere else in Europe."¹

According to an article written in 2000, principals of schools who think the children should learn something about the Bible in class "are under pressure by the parents who remain repulsed by religion."² For example, parents in Jablonec nad Nisou wrote a petition against religious education classes in a private Catholic school.³ In another place, English language classes were offered by the British wife of a Czech pastor. Parents sent their children to the class because it was free and the teacher was a native English speaker. However, as soon as they discovered that the content of the classes had something to do with the Bible and religion, they immediately withdrew their children from the class. When approached later by the pastor, they said that the reason for the withdrawal was that they did not want their kids' "minds to be fooled by God."⁴

Figures from the 2001 census suggest that 58.3 percent of population are not religious and 31.7 percent are religious. Perhaps these figures convey an erroneous picture. One can say that 58.3 percent of population, at this moment, for one reason or other, prefer not to be associated with organized religion, regardless of whether or not they are religious. Those who reported having faith are not necessarily active believers or

¹Ibid.
²Johanna Grohová, "Bibli citují všichni, málokdo ji však zná," (Many people cite the Bible, only a few know it) MF Dnes, January 6, 2000; available from zpravy.idnes.cz, Internet.
even religious, but they associate themselves with organized religion. Along these lines, recent sociological research shows that 73 percent of the respondents did not attend church at all or had been to church just a few times in their life. Another 15 percent of the respondents said they go to church occasionally, not more than once or a few times a year. Only 12 percent report active involvement with Catholic or Protestant churches.¹

Tomáš Halík, a sociologist and a Catholic priest, notes that if one asks people in the Czech Republic, “Do you believe in God?” the answer is “Yes, but . . .” or “No, but. . . .” It appears that the Czech people are increasingly undecided. According to Halík, the indecisiveness comes from both sides: “The appearance of a standard type of believer is decreasing; however, there is a decline of convicted atheists. In the future, whether we like it or not, the ‘believer with reservations’ type will no doubt prevail.”²

Church, Religion, or Faith: What Difference Does It Make?

Jan Šolc points out that in order to better understand the problem of Czech religiosity, one needs to differentiate among three words: church, religion, and faith.³

¹Dana Hamplová, Náboženství a nadpřirozeno ve společnosti: Mezinárodní srovnání na základě empirického výzkumu ISSP (International Social Survey Programme), (Religion and supernatural in the society: the international comparison based on empiric research of ISSP) Sociological Papers, vol. SP 00:3 (Prague: Sociologický ústav AV ČR, 2000), 42-43.


³PhDr. Jan Šolc, retired advisor of Václav Havel, the president of Czech Republic, interview by author, Liberec, 17 July 2001.
In October 2000, when I asked people on the street about their attitude toward the church, the most common answer was: “I don’t have anything against the church but I don’t want to have anything to do with it.” Some young people answered: “Maybe when I get older,” or “Maybe, when I get sick.”

However, the in-depth interviews provided a slightly different picture. Ten out of twelve unchurched people expressed negative and somewhat negative attitudes towards the church, with “church” being most often associated with the Catholic Church. Of the three followers of alternative religions (Mormon, Hare Krisna, esoteric movement) interviewed, two claimed to have had a negative experience with Protestant churches prior to converting to their present religion; the third person lacked meaningful contact with churched people while spiritually searching.

The following few paragraphs summarize what I heard from unchurched people about the church. Of the three terms (church, religion, faith), “church—is the worst problem.” Representing the negative feelings of the Czechs about church, one interviewed person said, “People doubt the church not Christianity [i.e., Christ].” For that matter, “people approach faith apprehensively.”

People do not want to get close to Christianity (i.e., church) because they do not

1Ibid.


Christianity, as presented in the Western world today, has disappointed them. Here are the reasons:

1. Christians believe something but they do not act accordingly. Some of them think, “If you go to church that is enough.” There is basically no difference between Christians and non-Christians. Virtuous character has nothing to do with church affiliation. People feel that the church has nothing to offer; practical religiosity is missing.

2. The church surrounds faith with elements that do not belong there. It is connected with politics (Christian Party). Churches spend too much money without helping people. The church’s mission is not to turn religion into a business.

3. Churches use faith to control and manipulate people. “I cannot believe the hierarchy they have. You don’t need a hierarchy for your faith.”

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2 Respondent 22, unchurched unbeliever, interview by author, 1 August 2001.
3 Ibid.
The attitude of leading politicians does not help to change people’s perspective either. There is a tense relationship between clerics and the government. People can read in the newspaper statements such as this one about the leading party: “Social Democrats still act as if they were taking revenge on the Catholics for burning Jan Hus and asking them to replace the books that were burned by Jesuit Koniáš.” The former prime minister Klaus revealed not long ago his view of church by saying that he did not see much difference between a church and an association of gardeners.¹

The media seem to confirm and sustain people’s feeling about churches. For example, when the Pope apologized in 1999 for the sins of the church (namely for burning Jan Hus in the fifteenth century), a news reporter commented as follows:

To be sincere, with all appreciation of Wojtyla’s act, I am not freed from being cautious against the Catholic Church. It is a non-democratic organization in its ancient essence that does not commit any open evil right now because external circumstances do not allow it. However, its potential remains unchanged. It is a rifle hanging on the wall that does not kill because it is not loaded. Tomorrow the situation may look different... Non-democratic organisms are incurable of their potential to do evil in harmony with their conception of good.²

When people hear about a vicar abusing young boys, they do not trust the words of the preacher. When people hear about Catholic use of indulgences, they do not trust the church as an institution. When people read in the newspaper about a vicar making profit by allowing vendors to use the property of the church and sell goods in front of the

¹Martin Komárek, “Paragrafy proti tmářům,” (Paragraphs against obscurants) MF Dnes (Daily news), 3 February 1999, page 1. Received from iDNES e-mail servis, 3 February 1999.

²“Český politický cirkus: papež se omluvil za hříchy církve,” (The Czech political circus: the pope apologized for the sins of the church) MF Dnes (Daily news), 18 December 1999, page 1. Received from iDNES e-mail servis, 18 December 1999.
church door, they do not want to go to church. When people read comments about the
Czech Cardinal blessing one shopping mall and not another, they do not trust church representatives.¹

Although this picture of the church may seem an exaggeration or overstatement, such an understanding is the “normal,” common understanding of Czechs, particularly in urban areas. It is something one sees in the eyes of people when they say: “I have nothing against the church, but I don’t want to have anything to do with it.” It is something one can literally breathe in the air.

On the other hand, people are not against the church being involved in down-to-earth activities outside the church building. For example, people appreciate ADRA’s (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) humanitarian help to victims of the war in Kosovo, an earthquake in Turkey, or a flood in the Czech Republic. They admire those who help redeem women from slavery in Sudan through a Christian foundation or a family that takes care of elderly people not because of money but because of faith in God. They have respect for Christian elementary schools for the handicapped. They honor Christians who died and left a legacy of a life filled with sacrificial service to others.²

Religion

The second word is religion. This term does not “sound as bad” as church, yet, it is associated with something restrictive, binding, and limiting. As Šolc explains, “this


²Findings from my ethnographic research–newspaper analysis.
concept tries to pull us in an existing structure or creed in which you can receive but you have no chance to actively contribute."1

On one hand, religions are viewed as acceptable because they teach people to behave well, that is, not to steal, not to lie, not to commit adultery. On the other hand, religions are possible sources of intolerance. To become fully aware of that, one needs only to follow the news in the world. The media coverage of various wars among Christians and Muslims nurtures people's fears and stereotypes. "Religious people are nice, but there is always someone who manipulates... People act bad despite good intentions... If they fight holy wars and think that only their religion is right, I do not like it."2

The general feeling about sects and cults is similar. There are new sects in the Czech Republic, but probably not as many as in the United States or Japan.3 My interviews with people indicated that people do not trust sects. "How do you know if it is good or bad?"4 People are afraid of fanatics.5 Fanatics, I was told, read the Bible to use it against people.6

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1Solec, interview, July 17, 2001.


My survey among Czech atheists showed that 39.9 percent of them believe that dealing with the human situation through religion is a waste of time and resources, and almost one fourth (23.4 percent) are not sure about that. However, 63.6 percent of the atheists surveyed consider world religions to be valuable for their efforts to deal with man’s most important questions, although they may not agree with particular beliefs or practices.

Faith

How do Czech people view faith? “Every Czech will say, ‘I have a faith,’” says Šolc. Truly, the concept of faith is not remote to most Czech people. Many of them will agree that “there is something above,” although they are not sure exactly what it is. “Most Czech people are ‘somethingists.’ Everybody believes in something. Czech people will not call it God, they believe in something supernatural.”1 “Many Czechs believe but do not go to church.”2 Those interviewed agreed more or less with this statement.

Two so-called atheists, who had been interviewed in the summer of 2001, were shown the results of the survey “Attitude toward God”3 a few months after the interview. In their email response they stated: “Your survey supports the idea we discussed in August, that for a significant part of atheists, God is not a foreign idea, only the way faith

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1 Respondent 18, 9 July 2001.
3 I collected 348 questionnaires throughout the school year 2000-2001 and analyzed the data in October 2001. I am indebted to the leaders of ADRA Czech Republic who sponsored this survey.
in him is presented by the current concept of religion.” Overall, the survey showed, atheists are far from disagreeing with the “I believe in God” statement.

As I was interviewing unchurched people, I did not want to leave them with general statements only. I was interested to hear more about their own “faith.” The following are the statements of those who were willing to share. A short description that labels the respondents precedes a summary of their opinions.

Atheist Protestant: “Never believe anybody. . . . I can live with things that are somehow definable, tangible. Religion is not tangible: God, faith, Bible—you can do great magic with them. At the end you do not have anything unambiguous.”

Atheist Materialist: “I do not have to be religious to avoid committing adultery, and killing. . . . I am a materialist. I am not against people having faith, but I prefer a more technological approach. . . . I believe what is believable. . . . If there were evidence discovered, I would start to believe, because I would see.”

Atheist Catholic: “Each of us has some faith. . . . I believe that my dad [dead] sees me and protects me. . . . I have my own beliefs, I do not harm anybody, do not lie to anybody, and that is enough I think. . . . Even if I do not pray, I have faith that does not allow me to do bad things.”

Atheist Idealist: “Faith is important, but I do not believe faith is right only in connection with church. . . . Faith is a very personal matter and if a person truly believes, he tries to act accordingly, and that is what makes it worthwhile. . . . Faith in God is not unacceptable.”
Atheist Christian: “I do not believe in God, but I believe in somebody who governs me although I can choose. . . . I do not have this continuous faith, but I do trust that Someone watches over me. . . . I experienced gradual conversion to God.”

Atheist Christian: “Christ is ‘sold’ [preached] not only in church. . . . I believe God exists, there is no discussion about that. . . . I am convinced. . . . I do not question that, but how do you live these things? . . . I have been influenced by a Christian upbringing. I have character traits (honesty, dignity, etc.) that have religious origins. I have never been 100 percent atheist.”

From all these “faith statements,” the only anti-faith attitude was that of an “Atheist Protestant.” Shortly after the fall of communism, he converted from atheism to Christianity as a young adult and became a member of one of the Protestant churches. I call him an Atheist Protestant because, when I interviewed him, he was no longer a church-goer, but he was still a member of a church. I wanted to explore what led him to swing to the anti-faith position after he attended church for several years, but I had no opportunity to do so.

The second statement is that of a materialist in his twenties. He had difficulty in grasping the concept of faith but was not against it. He did not believe in magic but reported that he reads horoscopes, because it was “nice to read something insightful.” The remaining statements are pro-faith, all of which agree with the statement of one interviewee, that the “majority of people create their own spirituality.”1 They may not

count their faith as religion because it is "home-made faith." One unchurched believer stated: "Many people present themselves as non-believing, yet they behave such a way that we [believers] can follow their example."\(^2\)

The Czech Way of Life

This section looks at who the Czech people are, and what their values, relational patterns, and coping mechanisms are. It is important to understand the Czech way of life before their worldview is examined, and the hidden causes of this attitude towards the church and organized religion are articulated.

The Czechs are inhabitants of the Czech Republic.\(^3\) They are the "descendants of agrarian tribes who migrated to the region from the east around the sixth century B.C."\(^4\) The word Czech (Čech) is derived from a legend of a man named "Čech," who brought his Slavic tribe to the territory of the Czech Republic.

The Czechs are ethnically Slavs, but they are less Slavic than other Slavs.\(^5\) Some argue that by their nature the Czechs are much closer to the Celt or Irish, with whom they

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1Respondent 23, follower of alternative religion, interview by author, 6 August 2001.


3The Czech Republic has existed since the peaceful 1993 separation from Slovakia. Many foreigners mistakenly still think of the country as Czechoslovakia.


5Slavs include peoples such as Poles, Slovaks, Russians, Croats, Serbs, and Bulgarians.
may be mixed.\textsuperscript{1} The centuries-long influence of their western German neighbors should not be overlooked either.\textsuperscript{2}

Located in the heart of Europe, the Czech Republic has tasted the flavor of both East and West. It is well established that the Czech Republic is historically Western, but politically Eastern. Religiously, the Czech lands have been exposed to various influences, both from East (Orthodoxy) and West (Roman Catholicism).

Embracing Bohemians, Moravians, and partially the Silesians, the Czech Republic is a very small and considerably homogeneous nation.\textsuperscript{3} Bohemia (\textit{Čechy}) forms the western part of the country, Moravia (\textit{Morava}) the eastern part, and Silesia (\textit{Slezsko}) the northeastern part. There are only slight cultural variations, with Moravia being more religious and clinging more strongly to folk traditions, but there is no particular difference in matters of deeper values or worldview as the findings of my survey show.

Their unique location in the center of Europe provides Czechs with a sense of being a special people and having a special mission. They are intuitively driven to be centered and well balanced. Sayings like “\textit{Vše ho moc škodi}” (Too much of anything is harmful); “\textit{Čeho je moc, toho je přiliší}” (Too much of anything is excessive); “\textit{Vše ho s mirou}” (Everything in moderation) reflect that fact.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1}Frýbort, 18,40; see also Nollen, 15.


\textsuperscript{3}Nollen, 32.

The Czechs constitute a “self-conscious nation, proud of its achievements and its identity.”¹ Not only are the Czechs well cultured and appreciative of their culture, they are very curious of other cultures. If they have the chance, Czechs love to visit other countries of the world. Obviously, this was not an option under communism.

Most Czechs are well-educated.² The average Czech appreciates knowledge, from religion and education, to science and the fine arts. Throughout the country, there are memorials showing the rich history of art, which is admired and appreciated by the Czech people. Music, art, and literature have nurtured their hearts since the Middle Ages.³ Even today, music, with which Czechs are well acquainted, belongs to everyday life. In the last few years, the reading of books has been revived. Even people with a low income buy books.⁴

Material Matters

Traditionally, the Czech people have held culture and knowledge in higher esteem than material possessions. If asked today, they would still confirm that. However, the

¹Nollen, 85.

²According to 1999 statistics, 99 percent of the population ages 4-26 are in school, and 14 percent of the overall population are currently studying at or above the college level. Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání, “České školství v číslech,” 31 December 1998, available from http://www.uiv.cz/statistika/stat_99/index98_99.html; Internet.

³Olsen, 62.

⁴This information was given to me by street booksellers.
influence of communist materialism bore its fruits. The opportunities and challenges of postcommunism have inevitably led to material concerns. Recent studies affirm that money tends to be more of an issue than before. Those who do not have money, want it; those who have money, want more.1 Czechs in general work hard, primarily because work is more than anything else perceived as a means to material reward.2 The possession of material goods has gradually become one of the primary criteria for social status. “The more luxury items you have, the higher your status.”3

Envy of someone else having more or being more successful is also part of the Czech way of thinking.4 At the same time, Czech materialism has been characterized by a notion that all should have the same share. Whoever goes beyond others, risks being disliked, envied, and criticized.5

Recent research on material well-being reports that 25 percent of the households in the Czech Republic consider themselves seriously deprived (not having enough

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2Nollen, 46.

3Olsen, 87.

4Frýbort, 14; Kuras, 16. The first Czechoslovakian president, T.G. Masaryk, criticized the Czech people for being morbidly envious. Krejčí, O Česťví a Evropanství, 58.

5Holy, 90. Someone who gained wealth over a short time, or even a very successful person, creates a suspicion that there is something wrong, or at least, that something is not normal. As Nollen says about Czechs, “Everything which is not quite within the realm of ‘normality’ is difficult to grasp, and therefore creates a ‘problem’.” Nollen, 44.
finances to fulfill their needs and wishes); 69 percent of households position themselves as middle class.\(^1\) Regardless of their situation, Czech people like to complain.\(^2\) Actually, they are very innovative in finding reasons to complain. They have a proverb saying "nechval dne před večerem" (don't praise the day before the evening).

**Politics**

The Czechs have a unique relationship to politics. Although they may not want to talk about politics publicly,\(^3\) they have a lot to say about the topic. In reality, they tend to make politicians responsible for almost anything bad that happens in their life. One respondent related to me his feelings: "Everywhere around me I see enemies sent by the State [i.e., the people on the top, the politicians] to suck out my money and all my strength and energy for life." Because of the shortcomings of politicians—including corruption, bribery, and misuse of information—there is a strong feeling among the Czechs that successful politicians cannot be good people. Benjamin Kuras, a Czech dissident, in his recently published book, describes the Czech relationship to politicians with typical Czech sarcasm:

Czechs do not exert adequate effort to replace their immoral governments with ones that might be more moral because they believe that the alternative would be at least as bad and probably worse. The logic is that no morally clean politician can ever be adequate, for in order to gain adequate political experience and skills, he would have had to pursue a successful career under an immoral regime, and

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\(^1\) Fiedlanderová and Tuček, 211.

\(^2\) Nollen, 44.

\(^3\) Ibid., 85.
could therefore not be morally clean if he had found it appropriate to do so.\(^1\)

Criticism of government is a tradition. Historically, the Czech people have lived in frequent conflict with their government. More than once the nation has been at the edge of extinction. Under the rule of foreign powers, such as the Austrian monarchy for several hundreds years, the Czech nation developed oppositionism and nonconformism.\(^2\) The Czechs have an inborn tendency to resent any institution that would control and dominate them.

Amazingly, the political failures and frustrations with life are compensated by sports such as ice hockey, soccer, and tennis. The victory over Russia at the winter Olympic games in February 1998 was perceived as a compensation for the political takeover of the communists in the February of 1948. Such a victory was celebrated in the homes, on the streets, and almost everywhere. The public atmosphere changed, people were happy, greeting each other on the streets. Ice hockey brings the Czech people back to their feet despite life and relational hardships. They are very proud of their national team, they adore the national coach, and particularly those players who have become dominant players in the American National Hockey League (Hašek, Jágr, etc.). It seems almost as if ice hockey substitutes for religious rituals.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Kuras, 20.

\(^2\)Solc, August 9, 2001.

\(^3\)On the popular TV channel NOVA there is a public discussion called “Furnace,” where public figures appear and people in the audience ask any question they like. It has been remarkable to observe the dynamics of the heated and sometimes noisy interviews with politicians as compared to the calm and reverent atmosphere when the coach of the national ice hockey team was interviewed. He led the team to Olympic gold in Nagano,
Social Life

The Czech people love to socialize. A good example of socializing is going to the pub in the evening to make merry with comrades. Some go to the pub just to talk with people. "Drinking is a social event." Especially in villages or smaller communities, the pub is a good place to meet many people and talk things out. In the cities this occurs more "in private, after a bond of friendship and trust has been established."

Another way to socialize occurs when friends go for weekend nature trips. Often, a few families meet by a bonfire in the countryside, having a party with beer, meat, and music. At such gatherings, strangers may not be welcome. A sense of community and friendship is molded by mistrust of and reserve with any stranger and, therefore, by need for privacy and trust.

In public, a Czech person seems to be unfriendly, cold and reserved, as if he wanted more than anything else to have nothing to do with you. The Czech person is not

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1 More information about the social health of Czech people is provided by the Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic, available from http://www.uzis.cz; Internet.

2 Nollen, 38.


4 Nollen, 36.

5 The dynamic of friendship is further elaborated under "Czech worldview," in the section "The Czech Dual World."
given to “emotional displays, and interaction with strangers.”¹ He does not seek to reach out in his neighborhood to know other people. Nollen gives advice to newcomers to the Czech Republic: “Don’t expect, upon moving into your new home, to be welcomed by your neighbours, or even to be greeted in a friendly way the first few times they see you. In fact, don’t expect to get to know your neighbours at all.”²

Yet, Czech people are quite friendly, although in their own way. As much as they are shy and quiet at first, they become “very kind and friendly people,”³ when trust is built. The easiest way to form relationships is “within offices, schools, or friends of friends.” On the other hand, meeting people at random on streets is “much more intimidating.”⁴ On the average, however, Czechs need “a lot of time before they will trust someone.”⁵

The dynamics of friendship may vary slightly between rural and urban environment. Small towns and villages are “more friendly and open.”⁶ One does not have a problem in talking with one’s neighbors or having a drink with a friend. However, the relationships are usually maintained without deeper bonds, such as visiting each other, 

¹Nollen, 34.
²Ibid., 35.
⁴Nollen, 84.
⁵Olsen, 118.
⁶Nollen, 34. This may also be true for Bohemian and Moravian societies. It’s common knowledge that Moravians are more open and religious in the traditional sense than Bohemians.
helping each other with children, or having a vacation together.

Friendships in urban areas may look different. One respondent, who grew up in the Moravian countryside but moved to a city in North Bohemia, shares her experience: “It took me a while to build relationships. It took time to get acquainted with people, but our contacts grew into lasting and deeper friendships. I have a feeling that people here are afraid to establish connections, but once they decide to reach out to someone, it is for life. When people open up, they do it thoroughly.”¹ Czechs usually have many acquaintances but only a few “real” friends. “Real” for them means a relationship in which people “will do almost anything for one another.”²

The Czech Priorities in Life

The life of Czech people is remarkable by its predictability.³ For many, life is a ritual consisting of working, eating, sleeping, and staying at home watching television. The exception may be going to pub, gardening, or going to the cottage over the weekend. If asked about the meaning of life, quite a few might answer that life has no meaning.⁴ However, my survey indicates that Czechs enjoy and appreciate life to a considerable

¹Respondent 10, churched believer, interview by author, 5 April 2001.
²Olsen, 94. Describing such a relationships, Olsen uses the term “multiplex relationships.” Ibid., 93. This information was confirmed by an interview with Dr. Stephen Olsen, American missionary, interview by author, 16 July 2001.
³Nollen, 46.
⁴According to Šolc, 53.8 percent of those surveyed in the city of Liberec answered that life had no meaning. Šolc, interview, 17 July 2001.
degree. Their priorities in life are centered around “family, well-being, and an appreciation of the simple things in life.”

Health

The number one priority among Czechs is to be healthy. Czechs often wish each other good health. That does not necessarily mean that people take good care of their health. Men under fifty years of age do not take care of their health well. With increasing age they pay more attention to their health. The situation for women is better, although the age categories make a difference as well. “Despite the fact that health is valued so highly, a significant part of the population’s actions are in open conflict with this value. The most obvious evidence is in consumption of nicotine, alcohol, and now also drugs.”

1The survey of religiosity conducted throughout the country during 2000-2001 with the help of Czech ADRA also had a section asking about different aspects of people’s purpose in life. The score reflecting happiness was amazingly high.

2Nollen, 40.

3Fiedlanderová and Tuček, 171; Petr Sak, Proměny české mládeže: Česká mládež v pohledu sociologického výzkumu (Transformations of the Czech youth: Czech youth in view of sociological research) (Prague: Petrklič, 2000), 69; see also Olsen, 106. For more on Czech health issues, see http://www.uzis.cz/; Internet.

4Fiedlanderová and Tuček, 187.

5Sak, 69. Recent studies show that 33 percent of males and 25 percent of females smoke, Fiedlanderová and Tuček, 200; Universita Karlova, Vize rozvoje České Republiky do roku 2015 (A vision of development of the Czech Republic until the year 2015) (Prague: Gutenberg, 2001), 134; 58.2 percent of males and 18.8 of females drink alcohol; and 15 percent of males (15-34 years of age) and 9 percent of females (15-34 years of age) tried drugs in 1999. Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic, 1999, available from http://www.uzis.cz/; Internet.
The traditional Czech diet, "rich in fatty meats and starch," does not add to health either. However, there is a growing interest by many people in the potential of a healthful lifestyle, including nutrition, regular exercise, sports, and nature trips.²

Peace

The second highest value of the Czech people is to live in peace with no war or violence.³ Czechs used to be militant, but that tendency faded away centuries ago. Since then, they are known to avoid violence almost at any cost. "The fight for power (and sometimes even truth) is not worth a human life. It is better to tolerate an unjust situation and have peace than die."⁴ Czech proverbs such as Hlavou ze dneproraziš (You won’t break the wall by your head), Nehas, co tě nepálí (Don’t quench what does not burn you), and Moudřejší ustoupí (Wiser will give in) describe this value quite well.

That does not necessarily mean that Czechs are peacemakers. There is also a saying that "the less Czechs fight, the more likely they quarrel."⁵ The Czechs hate

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¹Nollen, 91.
²Universita Karlova, 134.
³Sociolog Sak explains that "peace for human society is the same as health for an individual. Health represents the human dimension of an individual; peace represents the social dimension of an individual." Sak, 69. This value has been clearly demonstrated by Czechs in recent events, such as the non-violent breakdown of the communist regime, called the “Velvet Revolution,” in 1989, and the nonviolent separation of Czechs and Slovaks in 1993.
⁴Olsen, 117-18.
⁵Frýbort, 16.
betrayal more than anything else.¹ They have experienced it more than once on a national scale (Munich betrayal, 1938; Soviet occupation, 1968). In such instances, their non-violent behavior was filled with hatred.² Nevertheless, the Czechs have a humanitarian spirit and compassion for the suffering. Even their national heroes are martyrs: St. Wenceslaw, Jan Hus, Jan Palach. My observation is that the Czechs tend to express solidarity with people who go through unusual difficulties, such as floods or earthquakes.

Death is not welcome; the image of death is unpleasant.³ Yet, the survey conducted by the author supports the observation of Nollen that, for Czechs, death is a “natural part of life, or simply an end to life.”⁴ Many Czechs bury their deceased with the hope that “mother nature” will take care of them.

The Czech Way to Happiness

Another prominent value is happiness in life. Czechs have ways to make themselves happy. They are known for having a failure-proof, “subtle and dry” sense of

¹Olsen, 112.

²Milton Mayer speaks of the follow-up of the Soviet invasion in 1968: “All the available evidence—documentary and testimonial—indicates that nearly all of the Czechs had violence in their hearts—and still have it. . . . Abstinence from physical violence has nothing to do with principled nonviolence.” Milton Stanford Mayer, The Art of the Impossible: A Study of the Czech Resistance (Santa Barbara, California: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1969), 34.


⁴Nollen, 52.
humor, sometimes filled with sarcasm, that keeps their heads up and prepares them for the worst.\textsuperscript{1} Two factors that contribute to happiness are comfort and a good family.

**Comfort**

Due to their kinesthetic nature, Czechs are happy when things feel good to them,\textsuperscript{2} when they are enjoying comfort.

The Czechs love their comfort. So much so that their comfort considerations usually overrule such hollow concepts as ideology, idealism, heroism, honour, galantry—and sometimes even less hollow ones like duty, loyalty, honesty, ethics, reliability. Which does not make them a dishonest, unethical, or unreliable people, without any sense of duty an loyalty. They can be very loyal, committed, and even deeply devoted to their comfort. Anyone demanding their loyalty would first have to guarantee them their comfort.\textsuperscript{3}

Truly, the Czech people like comfort. The frequent expression \textit{vpohodě} means: “I am okay, my life is under control, I have peace, I am satisfied, I am at ease.” The expression often describes “a state of affairs which involves no need to take risks or face challenges, be disturbed by new or unfamiliar things, have to deal with dangers or shortages.”\textsuperscript{4}

Part of “comfort” is the avoidance of problems and/or responsibility.\textsuperscript{5} When unwanted discomfort comes, beer takes care of it. “Beer (\textit{pivo}) is the pride, joy, and ritual

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 46; Olsen, 120.

\textsuperscript{2}Kuras, 36.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., 22.

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., 24. See also Nollen, 40.

\textsuperscript{5}Kuras, 33; Olsen, 117.
passion of the Czech people."⁹ When a Czech gets upset, he goes to a pub. On one hand, 
the law of the jungle rules in a pub; on the other hand, the pub is a place for settling 
things down, a place of safety, a place to relax. Nobody judges anybody, it is a place of 
comfort. For some, the pub gives meaning to life.²

Some people seek comfort in a pub, others find it in nature. The Czech people 
love nature. It gives them peace of mind, new energy for life. "Czechs take their country 
escapes very seriously, finding peace and relaxation in returning to the woods."³ In the 
summer, many people leave the cities and spend every weekend in their cabin in the 
country.

Family and Marriage

The top cluster of values includes having a nice family.⁴ Czechs are devoted to 
their families. They want their children to be happy. However, this desire does not 
necessarily imply good-quality relationships. The well-being of a family in the Czech 
Republic has been viewed more in terms of securing material needs than providing for 
emotional or spiritual needs. Consequently, relationships are often marked by emotional 

¹Nollen, 102. "Czechs consume far greater quantities of beer per capita than 
anyone else in the world." Ibid., 103.

²Sixteen percent of males (over 18 years) and 3 percent of females go to a pub 
daily or several times a week. Fiedlanderová and Tuček, 208.

³Nollen, 39; see also Olsen, 76.

⁴Fiedlanderová and Tuček, 171.
distance. Sometimes parents stay in an unhealthy or dysfunctional marriage just for the “sake of the children.”

For the last decade there has been a yearly average of one divorce for every two new marriages. If this trend continues, every other marriage will end in divorce. Emotional issues are not communicated well, emotional well-being in general is not given proper attention. Unhealthy behavioral patterns are carried from one generation to another. Marriage counselors in the Czech Republic are only a newly emerged phenomenon, still far from being perceived as desirable and helpful.

Emotional difficulties are often compensated by extramarital romantic relationships and by a “relatively loose approach to sexual relations,” especially for single people and youth in general. Love is an important value for young people. Until recently, a frequent reason for getting married was a pregnant girlfriend. Under the influence of Western countries, however, more effective contraceptives have contributed to fewer unwanted pregnancies.

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1 Olsen, 88-89.
2 Ibid., 91.
3 Data from Institute of Health Information and Statistics of the Czech Republic at http://www.uzis.cz; Internet. More on emotional well-being of Czechs is available at this URL.
4 This unpopularity might be due also to the high cost of counseling sessions and marriage seminars.
5 Nollen, 53.
6 Sak, 69.
7 See Olsen, 91.
This section of our study provided a brief look into the Czech culture. We became familiar with how the Czechs cope with life, what their joys and struggles are. Although the Czechs have a rich perception of reality, they are quite critical and negative in their nature. They often hide and protect their wounded heart and pondering souls.

Their top values are health, peace, love, and happiness. The Czechs appreciate comfort and material security. They love sports and nature. They also enjoy socializing, partying, and any activities that bring them pleasure. Although it may not be so obvious on the surface, they appreciate friendship. The key issue is to develop trust with them. This is a summary of how the Czech people can be approached. The next section takes us into a deeper level of the Czech worldview in order to understand better the logic of the Czech relationship with the church.

The Czech Worldview

The worldview constitutes the deepest levels of culture. Often, people are not even aware of such a dimension it and yet it permeates their existence. The worldview deals with presuppositions and hidden patterns that form a basis on which people perceive the world and organize their lives. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to deal with the Czech worldview as a whole, history provides a basic framework for components of the worldview which are to be discussed. Three aspects of the Czech experience contribute to the existing worldview and the attitude of the Czech

people towards church, religion, and faith. These elements are Czech Hussitism, Czech “vyhraněnost,” and the Czech dual world.

The Making of Czech History: The Art of the Impossible

As the Czechs enter the twenty-first century, they have renewed their efforts to review and make sense of their past. Czech history is very rich; however, it is filled with mysterious contradictions, paradoxes, and ironies. Hence the term “The art of the impossible.”

Throughout history, the Czech nation was repeatedly found “on the edge,” whether it was up or down. As much as Czechs hated fanaticism or extremes, they were not spared these difficulties, especially in decisive moments of their history. Such dynamics of Czech history have left their imprint on Czech society and culture.

History overwhelms readers with the uncommon: extreme discourses that are not easy to grasp. One may see history as “an incoherent series of lurching discontinuities,” floundering between “opposed political and cultural worlds: Catholic and Protestant,

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2 Examples of high points of the nation are the reign of Charles IV, the Hussite movement, the period of the first Republic. Low points are linked primarily to the tragic events in 1620, 1938, 1948, and 1968, which led to the loss of national autonomy and freedom.

3 One result is that although Czechs search for balance and try to avoid extremes, falling into extremes is a trait of the Czech national character. Krejčí, O Češtví a Evropanství, 70.
German and Slav, capitalist and communist, democratic and totalitarian. Yet, perhaps, there is a coherency. The pattern of Czech history is polarized. Often it follows the pendulum effect. Table 3 attempts to illustrate this pattern.

Table 3. The Paradoxical Elements Characterizing Czech History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The High Points</th>
<th>The Low Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious beginnings</td>
<td>Despairing endings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upturns</td>
<td>Downturns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exciting hopes</td>
<td>Bitter disappointments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious fervor</td>
<td>Religious antagonism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Famine</td>
<td>Shame</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>Separation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Renewal</td>
<td>Oppression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bravery</td>
<td>Cowardice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oppositionism</td>
<td>Apism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td>Inferiority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronting protest</td>
<td>Passive avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>Conformism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Totalitarianism</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I have not found another source that brings together all the elements that characterize Czech history. Putting these elements together, as they are in table 3, makes the polarizing aspects of Czech history more evident. The Czech culture is "a system of

values and concepts which are in constant tension with each other and which surface and are argued about in a multiplicity of discourses through which they are perpetually created and recreated. "

It is not my intention to adopt either a fatalistic outlook on who the Czechs are (history alone made us into who we are now, we could not change anything) or a strictly causal view of history (history was made solely by our predecessors). However, in order to understand better the Czech worldview, both perspectives have been seriously considered.

It needs to be acknowledged that, being in the heart of Europe, the Czech Republic has been unfortunate enough to have its internal conflicts serving international interests of stronger neighbors. In the dark periods, apparently there was not much that could be done to prevent the unfortunate development of events. To what extent the Czech nation is accountable for its own history, and to what extent the Czech worldview was shaped by its paradoxical destiny remain a task for serious evaluation.

The Legacy of Czech Hussitism

In Czech history, Hussitism provides an important key to the understanding of today’s thinking. Despite the richness and diversity of Czech history, John Hus and  

1Holý, 201-02.

2Sayer, 221.

3Young people today name John Hus as their number one hero, while Jesus is third. Karel Steigerwald, “Jak nám Němci oběsili Husa,” (How the Germans haltered our Hus) MF Dnes (Daily news), 7 July 1999, page 1. Received from iDNES e-mail servis, 7 July 1999.
Hussitism provide an anchor to Czech thinking. Hussitism seems to outshine other Czech schools of thinking.\textsuperscript{1} For example, Hussitism influenced in a major way the national revival in the mid-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{2} Hussitism was also praised by the communists, who in 1960 named Hus a modern Czech intellectual. Even Stalin’s branch of communism took John Hus seriously.\textsuperscript{3}

Several factors have contributed to making John Hus and his movement attractive. It is argued that the martyr John Hus was a man who matched anybody in power and was liked because his willingness to die for his beliefs touches people’s hearts. However, there is more. News editor Steigerwald dares to challenge the traditional view of Hus by saying that

John Hus was a religious reformer, whose thoughts were derived [from Wycliff], was personally brave, and, Catholics would say, wrong-headed. He applied the Holy Scripture word for word and abided by it consistently. At that time, a relativizing and God-hominizing renaissance was paving its way to Central Europe. John Hus stood up against it and wanted strict divine simplicity to continue to stand. Despite this he was paradoxically understood through the centuries as a man of progress.\textsuperscript{4}

The uniqueness of John Hus consists not so much in the originality or progressiveness of his thought as in his thoroughness and depth of thought in combination with his radical

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{1}Some of the other schools of thinking are described in the first part of chapter 4. Komensky and/or Masaryk, for example, are both admired, but their way of thinking and acting have not taken root in the Czech thinking as has the epistemology of Hus and his colleagues.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{2}Gjurič, “Xenofobie–několik subjektivních úvah,” (Xenophobia–several subjective reflections) in Česká xenofobie, (Prague: Votobia, 1998), 44.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{3}Steigerwald, “Jak nám Němci oběsili Husa.”
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid.
\end{quote}
action. In some respects, Hus was a conservative thinker, yet with very radical
conclusions and action. He and other Czech scholars of that time laid the foundation for
the way Czech people tend to think and act (or not act) today.

The Good Soldier Švejk, a literary figure viewed as the Czech national hero
(along with a real hero like John Hus), provides another example of this kind of
thinking.¹ Švejk had an explanation for everything, even for that about which he knew
nothing. On one hand, he appeared to obey each command of his superiors with radical
absoluteness; on the other hand, he pursued his own agenda in a rather sophisticated
manner. Undoubtedly, his view of reality was for him ultimate knowledge. His actions
brought him extreme success, and that made him a hero.

The Epistemology of Czech Thinking

Krejčí’s research of the Czech national character indicates that the traits of Czech
thinking follow the “Hussite” pattern. Such thinking is inquisitive, ever ready to explore,
and to sort out matters. It is straightforward, linear, sometimes, perhaps, dogmatic or
narrow-minded and thus easily exploitable by fanaticism.²

On one hand, the Czech person has the tendency to think about things with
admirable complexity, wistfulness, and thoroughness. He has the tendency to go “to the

¹Švejk was invented by Czech author Jaroslav Hašek early in the twentieth
century and his stories are published in a book: Jaroslav Hašek, Osudy dobrého vojáka

²Krejčí, O Češtví a Evropanství, 70.
bottom line of all things.”1 His world is very articulated, with many layers, colorful, with many tones, where even small details are carefully noted and considered as very important. He has an “inbuilt sense of order and classification: almost every aspect of life is placed in neat little cubes.”2 On the other hand, in his rather dogmatic and linear approach, the Czech person likes to philosophize and explain things, sometimes even things he knows nothing about.3

The Czech person is meticulous in sorting out reality. In the middle of doing that, he or she is caught up with many details, often not seeing the whole. The big picture is missing, showing trees but not the forest. President Václav Havel reminded his Czech listeners of this fact: “We have a tradition to set on contingencies, superficialities, things of local meaning. . . . Orientation in small Czech matters prevails and there is just a little sense of universal things and important coherence.”4

Olsen points out that the Czech mind is designed to detect error.5 The Czechs are also sensitive to the failures of others. Perhaps these characteristics have contributed to

1Respondent 23, follower of alternative religion, interview by author, 6 August 2001.

2Nollen, 46.

3Ibid. Even the Czech author Čapek noted that “we [Czechs] find it the easiest to form opinions about things that are none of our business.” Karel Čapek, “Národní zvyky,” (National habits) in Spisy XVIII (Prague, 1985), 476-86, quoted in Krejčí, O Češství a Evropanství, 154-55.

4Václav Bartuška, “Václav Havel: Nechci se z niceho vylhávat,” (Vaclav Havel: I do not want to lie about anything) MF Dnes (Daily news), 30 September 1999, page 1. Received from iDNES e-mail servis, 30 September 1999.

5Olsen, 294.
the number of reformers and reformation movements—of which John Hus was only one—in this small territory. This perception of the world may also have contributed to the misery experienced by the Czechs.

The Epistemology of Czech Acting

The way the Czech person thinks leads to how he or she acts upon the conclusions reached. As history has so often witnessed, a Czech is more likely to respond in a radical way, with no compromise, with strong determination, regardless of whether the response is a militant action or an action of passive resistance.¹

For example, immediately following John Hus’s death, the need for the reformation of a corrupted church became very apparent. One could question whether the radical approach taken by the Hussites was the most appropriate. Hussites appeared to act as if they had the ultimate truth. It seems they believed that pursuing their agenda would remove all evil and corruption. Some of their victories against much stronger enemies were made possible by their strong convictions. But it did not take long for their own movement to experience disunity and even corruption. Some perceive Hussitism apart from Hus merely as justified robbery, driven by hatred.²

Hussitism has made way for radical fundamentalist movements in the Czech Republic ever since. For example, the similarity between the approach of the Hussite and communist movements is noteworthy. When the communists took over in 1948, they had

¹I make this conclusion based on reviewing the major historical events in Czech history.

a very strong conviction that what they did was right. Many of them believed their reform was based on the ultimate truth (of science). Although their ideals were good, their movement collapsed, perhaps with greater corruption than the corruption of the system they were fighting against.

Thus, a Czech does not have an easy situation. On one hand, things seem to be clear and sorted out; on the other hand, he is disappointed, feeling misunderstood and no longer able to trust. Often this situation leads to a radical response, which can sometimes be too radical, a response for which the Czech does not want to take responsibility.

The Czech view of church is rather conservative. With disappointments from the past, either remote or recent, Czechs do not want to have anything to do with the church. While Czechs may recognize a higher power and may be religious, with an inclination to worship, they keep themselves distant from the church. Because the church failed, God has failed. A person with such an understanding cannot believe in the Christian God because that would create an alibi.

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1Conservatism is defined as “an approach to human affairs which mistrusts both a priori reasoning and revolution, preferring to put its trust in experience and in the gradual improvement of tried and tested arrangements.” Anthony O’Hear, “Conservatism,” in Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (New York: Routledge, 2000), 170.

2Amazingly, the shortcomings of the church in the remote past are today considered much more serious than the recent shortcomings of communism.

3Krejčí describes Czechs as a “nation worshiping in the highest degree, the most inclined to enthusiasm. . . . If he does not have revered objects of cult, he movingly searches for various substitutes.” Krejčí, O Češství a Evropanství, 60; see also Ladislav Klima, Traktáty a diktáty (Tracts and dictations) (Prague, 1922), 74.

The Czech person seems to be set up to take rather polarizing views. Individuals do not go to church because they are afraid the church might fail. A Czech does not wish to take a risk. Paradoxically, while Czechs may not wish to risk going to church because they could lose, the risk of losing heaven does not bother them. A Czech does not usually join smaller religious sects either, for fear of religious fanaticism. Paradoxically, to save themselves from religious fanaticism, Czechs will stay fanatically away from it. With a flavor of fanaticism a Czech develops an attitude of resistant suspicion, intentional ignorance, and inbuilt reserve towards church.

If the Czech person does not believe at all, he tends to lack evidence of God. It is hard to accept something that goes beyond tangible, scientifically proven knowledge, as the newspaper editor’s line of thought alludes to, portraying the birth of Jesus:

The message about the birth of God’s Son in Bethlehem 2000 years ago is supported by indirect evidences, however, in reality we will never be able to test it. . . . In the case of Jesus Christ, there is a line of most suspicious circumstances competing with faith. Foretold place, time and circumstances of birth. So-called immaculate conception, perhaps too unrealistic a fairy-tale atmosphere with the star and three magi. . . . Whether Jesus is truly the Son of Almighty, only Virgin Maria knew with certainty. . . . We can never give an opinion supported by facts. . . . [People 2000 years from now] will never be sure.

Czechs want to see and know it all and be certain before they can believe. As one respondent stated while explaining his unbelief: “I can live with things that are somehow

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1Ibid.

2This statement is based on my observations and life experiences.

3Martin Komárek, “Ježíš a pouštní liška,” (Jesus and a desert fox) MF Dnes (Daily news), 22 December 1998, page 1. Received from iDNES e-mail servis, 22 December 1998.
definable, tangible. Religion is not tangible—God, faith, the Bible—you can do a lot of magic with it. And in the end you still do not have anything unambiguous.1 Within this narrow focus, it is hard for a Czech to accept faith with loose ends, to believe without being absolutely sure.2

The Czech “vyhraněnost”

The Czech “vyhraněnost” does not have any equivalent in English. The closest translation would be “selfness,” yet this term is difficult to explain fully. The idea has developed as a result of a centuries-long struggle for the Czech identity. For most of the last four centuries, Czechs have been under the supremacy of Vienna, Berlin, or Moscow.3 The ongoing influence of Germans, however, is the strongest. The fact that the Czech nation exists with its distinct culture should not, therefore, be taken for granted.4

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1Respondent 11, 18 April 2001.

2However, once the Czech person accepts a certain teaching or ideology, he or she has the tendency (at least on the surface) to become a blind follower without critically evaluating what is believed. Upon deciding to identify with a specific religious or other group, such a person gradually adopts a “herd” mentality. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Jehovah’s Witnesses, a religion which claims to have a grasp of reality with no loose ends, providing all answers and explanations, is believed to be the fastest growing and the most prolific new religious group in the Czech Republic. Jan Lipold, “At’ chceme, nebo ne, dere se nám rok 2000 na mysli,” (Whether we want or not, year 2000 comes in our mind) MF Dnes (Daily news), 31 December 1998, page 1. Received from iDNES e-mail servis, 31 December 1998.

3Sayer, 16.

Vyhraněnost is a pattern of thinking and behaving that makes the Czechs distinguishable from others. Vyhraněnost is marked by an effort to have an existence on one’s own, to be oneself.1 To make sure the Czechs would not lose their “selfness,” they tend to define and demarcate things in their own terms. For example, freedom is defined in terms of detachment or even opposition, as the Czech struggle for freedom put the patriots often in opposition to their neighbors. Change is seen with skepticism, as it has often been associated with a loss of identity. The Czechs are resistant to change. Their vyhraněnost on the surface reflects symptoms of a deep crisis of identity. At the same time, it is a defense mechanism against all threats to take away the Czech selfness. It is notable particularly in the way Czechs view themselves and others.2

Czech Conservative Nationalism

The Czech conservative nationalism in its current state was formed especially through the national revival in the mid-nineteenth century. In the process of national development, the Czechs cultivated their dogmatized identity with all their being.

Their upheaval was, on one hand, drowned by obsequious inferiority, and on the other, colored by exclusive pride.3 In the heart of the nation there has been a frightening

1Both positive and negative sides of the Czech vyhraněnosti have been shaped and molded throughout history. Vyhraněnost allowed the Czechs in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to form the reform movement and thus be on the frontline, on the fresh and liberating edge of modernism. The same vyhraněnost led the twentieth-century Czechs to develop an atheistic, anti-clerical, and anti-church movement.

2This conclusion is made based on my analysis of historical materials.

3Olsen describes this pattern well under one of his Czech historical themes, that of Tragedy-Oppression. Olsen, 41-46. Later he links national pride and inferiority with the
suspicion that it is an unimportant and insignificant nation which exists to meet the needs of other, more significant nations. Czechs certainly feel that they were treated that way in the past. As a result, many people were brought up with a low sense of self-esteem and almost no dignity.\(^1\)

At the same time, however, the heart of the little Czech person has been filled with tremendous pride for his or her great Czech nation. For such a small nation to survive alongside other larger and stronger European nations for so long and in such a strategic geographical location, has to mean that there is more to Czech identity than just geographical location. And so, Czechs believe their nation has to "occupy a special place in the world" or at least "a central role in Europe."\(^2\)

The Czech nation has "stood for over a millennium directly between the cultural, religious, and political economic forces of eastern and western Europe."\(^3\) Their national awareness is, therefore, linked with the consideration of who they really are and what exactly they are here for. As a bridge between East and West, they do not really belong to either.\(^4\) Czechs appear to have spent more time and intellectual energy than other nations way Czechs understand themselves. Ibid., 119.

\(^1\)Šolc, interview, July 17, 2001.

\(^2\)Nollen, 34.

\(^3\)Olsen, 66.

\(^4\)Kuras, 39-40; Nollen, 34; Holý, 182. Not being sure of exactly who they are and where they belong has been apparent also in that the membership of the Czech Republic in NATO since March 12, 1999, has not been accepted by all Czechs with excitement. Czechs have been amazingly hesitant about joining the European Union. The opinion poll by STEM in June 2001 showed that 45 percent were for joining the EU, 18 percent
in dealing with issues of identity. As the topic seems still far from being exhausted, they may not have arrived at the acceptable conclusion yet.

Czechs are proud to be who they are. Even if one does not know exactly who he or she is, there is no desire to change. When, for example, Czechs inquire about other people, cultures, or religions, they do not seek that knowledge to enhance or modify their own life, but merely out of curiosity. Despite their cosmopolitan interests, Czechs have their way of doing things, which they usually do not like to change. Globalization, in practical life, is discomforting because the influence of otherness is threatening.

The Czech person is unhappy at having someone else's values imposed upon him or her. He or she resists foreign dogmas or ideologies. If someone shows disrespect or superiority towards a Czech’s views, that person becomes defensive and responds with “backfire.” In an argument, a Czech does not admit to error. Pride does not allow a

were against, and 37 percent were not decided. Compared to Poland (55 percent for); Hungary (70 percent for), or Romania (80 percent for), this attitude raises questions. Jan Gazdik and Lukáš Dolanský, “Jen každý druzý chce jít do Unie,” (Only every other person wants to join the Union) MF Dnes, 18 June 2001, available from http://zpravy.idnes.cz/; Internet.

The following books and authors are a few among many others dealing with the Czech identity: František Palacký, Dějiny národu českého (The history of the Czech nation) (Prague, 1874); Emanuel Chalupník, Narodní povaha česká (National Czech character) (Prague, 1907); Klíma, Traktáty a diktáty; Tomáš Garigue Masaryk, Světová revoluce (The world revolution) (Prague, 1925); J. L. Fischer, Glossy k české otázce (Explanations to the Czech issue) (Kdyně: Okresní sbor osvětový, 1926); Krejčí, O Češtví a Evropanství; Jiří Gruša and Mojmír Jeřábek, Česko - návod k použití (The Czech Republic—a guide for use) (Prague: Barrister & Principal, 2001).

Kuras, 17.

Nollen, 85.
Czech to accept someone else’s truth. Because Czechs do not believe in ultimate Truth anymore, they are satisfied with their own truth, which might expand over time, but which is altered only with great difficulty or under unusual circumstances.

Afraid of deviance, Czechs are not willing to easily let go of their convictions. They ask questions to lay a trap rather than sincerely considering new ideas. They like to dispute, rather than discuss things, especially in doctrinal issues. Czechs are not eager to “grasp ready off-the shelf teachings.”¹ For this reason a Czech may believe but does not seek organized religion.

**Czech Democracy**

In addition to conservative nationalism, there is another product of the Czech vyhraněnosti. As mentioned above, the Czech feeling of inadequacy has been accompanied by a national pride, and to some degree by feelings of exclusiveness. An “us and them” mentality has supported a distaste of democracy and an unhealthy self-centeredness.²

Czech democracy is characterized by a great deal of intolerance. In that matter, my findings are in contradiction to Olsen’s.³ Tolerance may be traced in Czech history;  

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¹ Frýbort, 16-17.


³ Olsen documents unity-toleration as one of the historic themes underlying the Czech worldview. Olsen, 55-58. Although I agree with the facts he presents, my research and analysis show that these are only one side of the coin. Perhaps the discrepancy may have been influenced by the fact that Olsen limited his research to a selected group of religious people. Among the branches of the Czech reformation, tolerance was lived and
however, Czech toleration today is somewhat of a disguise. In real life, the Czechs do not show much tolerance. As a matter of fact, most Czechs are xenophobic.¹

Czech xenophobic inclinations were intensified during the communist regime, when anyone who did not agree with the communists was considered a traitor to the nation.² The Czech communist regime was unique for brutally persecuting those who did not openly share communist views.

Marxist society taught the Czechs not to want to be different. They were rewarded for not being different. People were discouraged from displaying their opinions if these were different from the ones presented in public. Thus, a monolithic, monocultural view on life was instilled.

On the folk level, Czech democracy means that Czechs do not accept what they do not agree with. On an academic level, the Czech intelligentsia tends to take pride in an informed separatism.³ The Czech dislikes otherness. Under the surface, there is aversion experienced more by the wing of Lukáš’s Unity of Czech brethren, not the wing of Hussites, whose influence on the formation of the Czech nation was much stronger.

Although Czechs today want above all to live in peace, they are not tolerant. Their non-violence does not equal tolerance. Olsen argues that “the Czech people’s commitment to unity and toleration has been strategic for their survival” (58). My argument is that commitment to unity and toleration in national crisis does not inevitably translate into toleration as a part of the Czech national character. It indicates that the Czech people have had an amazing ability to unite when facing enemies, tragic events, or catastrophes. However, their unity did not usually last long, especially once the immediate urgency of a threat was gone.

²Čulík, 408.
³Nollen, 39.
and mistrust towards anything diverse. The thinking goes thus: If you are not like me, there is something wrong with you. You must be either wrong or stupid. Or if something is good for me, it must therefore be good for anybody else.

There is an unwritten code of what is normal and what is not. Conventional norms are strong. Morals, for example, are said to have nothing to do with religion; they are only a reflection of what is normal. The attitude of Czechs towards homosexuality seems to provide such an example. Although morality (derived from religion) is not an issue for many Czechs, their view of homosexuals seems to be similar to the attitude of conservative evangelicals in America. But it is more than that. Homosexuals are not tolerated in the country. If they have a choice, they may prefer to live outside the country.

A group that has lived with the Czechs, yet outside their norms for a long time, is that of the Gypsies. Despite living in Czech lands for centuries, they are different from the majority of the Czech population. There have been various attempts throughout history to assimilate them. Czechs have for long time tried to help Czech Gypsies to be like other Czechs (i.e., to be normal). However, they have had no significant success. Even with the new democracy established in the 1990s, despite the January 9, 1991,  

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1Martin Komárek, “Holocaust stále trvá,” (Holocaust still lasts) *MF Dnes* (Daily news), 9 October 1999, page 1. Received from iDNES e-mail servis, 9 October 1999; Gjuric, 44.  
2Čulík, 411.  
4Čulík, 429.
article of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which clearly secures rights of minorities, the Czech Gypsies continue to suffer discrimination, prejudice, and ostracism.¹

Christians are different too. They may not be viewed the same way as Gypsies, perhaps, because they are less different, but still, they are viewed with prejudice. One young person’s words, “Do you go to church? Are you stupid?” reveal such a stereotype against believers. The Roman Catholic bishop, Dominik Duka, thinks that anyone who openly identifies themselves as a believer may run into problems. “It is similar to being an aristocrat, Sudeten German or Vietnamese, maybe even Russian. Even small children in kindergarten are afraid of ridicule. This drives the believer into a certain isolation.”²

The lack of toleration for the faith of others “is a problem in the Czech Republic.”³

Czech unbelievers are also afraid. They do not want their children to join certain sects. They are afraid that their children will be drawn into a sphere which they cannot influence. The children might change and then they might lose them. Their career might be threatened by the children’s membership in a sect.⁴


⁴Ibid.
A Czech does not feel comfortable socializing with different people. "What will other people say?" he or she asks. The collective-corporate consciousness, that which is normal, is binding. A Czech wants to belong and finds belonging when accepted by society.

Czechs like religion that has normal rules: not to steal, not to lie, not to commit adultery. However, that does not mean they will join such a religion. To join organized religion brings the threat of societal rejection. Perhaps that is why some Czechs prefer the following option: "I am a believer, I am a Christian. I do not go to the church, do not pray. I have my own [invisible] god for my family and I believe in him." 

Czechs have no option other than disliking otherness because that is normal. Furthermore, normal is also to criticize what is not normal. Having inherited the Czech vyhnanost in his genes, a Czech goes one step beyond criticizing what is not normal. To make sure he or she does not miss that inner sense of duty, he or she criticizes just about anything. According to Olsen, "there is never a time Czechs lack for something to criticize."

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1Ibid.
4Olsen, 65. See also Grace Hammett and Anna Novotná, Bridging the Gap (Prague: Prognosis Books, 1994), 35. Such criticism obviously occurs in the media. In my newspaper analysis, 77 percent of articles were negative or problem focused and 37 percent were critical in nature, dealing with politics, economy, corruption, or tragic events.
To rise above their fears and low self-esteem, to have their life under control, Czechs show their intolerance by negative criticism. They may even go so far as to criticize "us," that is, the group to which they belong. However, this critique is about others, not about one's own self.¹ A Czech is the good person. If confronted about not going to church, the defense is: "I do not need to go to church; I am good enough. I do not steal, I do not kill."² After all, that is what expected. If I did, what would other people say?

The Czech Dual World

The third element of worldview is rooted in history as well. From all the paradoxes and dichotomies of Czech history springs the dichotomous differentiation of the world, a double reality in which the Czech person lives.³

This dual world goes back to the seventeenth century, to the event known as the battle on White Mountain (1620), where the Czechs lost their once victorious pugnacity and helplessly watched the oppressor take over their land. In the following period of

¹Kuras, 17.

²A common phrase used by unbelievers, particularly with a Catholic background.

³The phenomenon of Czech dualism has been researched and described by two current scholars, Ladislav Holý and Stephen Olsen. Holý is a distinguished anthropologist who grew up in the Czech Republic but went into exile in 1968. He has taught anthropology at the University of St. Andrews. The focus of his research was life among the Czechs during communism. Holý, The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation. Olsen is an American missionary who studied the Czech culture. His ethnographic research was part of his doctoral studies at Biola University. He focused on current social relations of Czechs. Olsen, "Czech Social Relations." He continues his ministry in the Czech Republic. The research of both scholars was done independently and published in 1996.
repression, they were not only defeated but also deprived of their dignity and freedom. By being forced into the Catholic faith, the mind of Czechs was held captive on the surface, but deep down, they withdrew into an “inner exile.”

As events similar to the battle on White Mountain recurred in Czech history, this pattern of dual spheres of life grew stronger. The last major oppression of freedom came when the communists took over the country in 1948 with the intention of building a socialist state. In harmony with its mission to manage the whole structure of social life, socialism intended to permeate all spheres of life. This oppression abused the freedom of the Czech people.

As a result of the communist takeover, the division of life into public and private spheres grew. It reached its critical point after the invasion of Soviet troops in 1968. In his societal analysis, Holý explains how much the invasion affected many facets of life, including morality, socializing, and modes of conduct. Since then, the Czech dualistic worldview and dichotomous way of life, with all its hidden features, has become a major coping mechanism and a norm of life.

Olsen’s ethnographic research and in-depth analysis of the social life of the Czechs, conducted after the fall of communism, strongly supports that the clear

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1 I do not have any reference to back up this conclusion, but this is where I find the roots of the current worldview trait of closeness and inner exile of many Czechs.

2 People were persecuted for their conviction, all private businesses were liquidated, and all land collectivized. A “new man” was trained, for whom work for society was more important than the good of his family and friends. Holý, 19-20.

3 See chapter “Nation Against State,” ibid., 16-33.
The distinction between two worlds—the worlds of insiders and outsiders—still remains. The "us and them" mentality, expressed publicly in various ways (Czechs against non-Czechs, nation against state, individual against group, person against institution, etc.), has been a clearly visible aspect of the dichotomy. The dichotomy goes even deeper. Less visible is the fact that a Czech still continues to live in two worlds, private and public. The following two subsections briefly describe the characteristics of the two worlds and the difference between them.

Public World

By public world is meant just about any place besides the Czech person's apartment or private cottage, and any person surrounding the Czech person besides his or her family and a few friends.

Particularly in the socialistic era, the public world was characterized by uniformity and egalitarianism. Yet there was a clear differentiation of power positions within the hierarchical structure of society.²

People lived in similar buildings and drove one of the few kinds of cars available. People all over the country were buying the same food products (one kind of bread, one


²Holy, 21. Whereas Holy focuses only on the communist period, Olsen notes that "the same hierarchically arranged organizational structures that existed under communism carried over into post-communist society." Olsen, 102.
kind of butter). In other areas, likewise, they had few choices. They could buy only what they had money for and what was available in the stores. There was a saying: "When you go shopping, do not ask for what you need, but ask for what they have; perhaps you may need it in the future when they will not have it any more." Under those conditions, a strong feeling of equality was nurtured.¹

The individual as such was not valued. People were valued by those in authority only as they contributed to the higher cause, the development of socialism. The person was merely an instrument for building up society. In return, society motivated the average person to prosper and achieve "equally" with others. A model person in this society was an "underachiever or at best an average performer."²

At work, people were discouraged from expressing their opinions; to argue with or object to people in higher positions was not permissible. The Czech person was taught not to say too much, not to ask too much, not to care too much, not to be bold, creative, or innovative. Czechs were at their best when they agreed with what they were supposed to agree with (tenets of socialism), did what they was asked to do, fulfilled the

¹Frybort, 14; also Olsen, 97.

²This pattern was developed even before socialism took over. Holý points out that "the Czech nation survived three hundred years of oppression not because of its heroes but because of ... common, ordinary, and unexceptional people." And that is how Czechs see themselves. That also explains why Good Soldier Švejk is so popular. Holý, 62.
requirements of the system (such as going through ideological training), followed orders
if there were some, and left all responsibility to those at the top.¹

In school, there were strict rules and not too many activities besides sitting,
listening to the teacher, and taking notes. Talking during a class period was permitted
only when the teacher was asking questions. Learning was of a theoretical nature,
understood as absorbing information presented. At all levels of schooling, even at the
college level or higher, students were expected to reproduce knowledge by memorizing
the teachers' notes or the text from the textbook. Critical evaluation of a teacher’s lecture
or a textbook was perceived as an insult and rude behavior.²

Under communism, the state was a major provider, taking “good care” of people,
through providing jobs and services such as social support, medical insurance, and
education. One must admit that there were no beggars on the streets, there was no
unemployment, and criminality was very low.

At the same time the state was in charge of the public, regulating, controlling, and
sometimes manipulating its life. I have a vivid memory from my childhood of how
sometimes the police would hide behind the sign showing the speed limit to catch people
speeding. He reported the speeding cars to another police man standing behind the closest
curve, who then stopped the cars to collect the fines.

¹Drawn from common knowledge of life during communism and from my own
working experience from 1988-1990.

²Steven Saxonberg, quoted in Čulík, 379-382.
Going to a public place was like going to an artificially maintained jungle. The public was an arena where one could get easily caught in a trap. Anybody could be a spy. People learned to function in a survival mode. The public sphere eventually became a platform to satisfy people's private needs, even at the cost of lying and/or stealing. One entered the public sphere in order to get, not to give.¹ Czechs were involved in public organizations only if they were forced to, and as much as served their purposes.

Communism fell, causing this situation to change. The state does not provide the care it did before; neither does it spy on citizens. However, the same dynamics of public life seem to continue. In public, a Czech could not trust anybody during the communist period, yet he or she cannot trust anybody today either.² There are many ways for a Czech to lose a credit card, a job, or money in the bank in a minute. One needs to be cautious. Anybody might be a thief, even in places one would expect it the least. The public world serves as a sphere where Czechs get their needs satisfied, if possible, at any cost. In the public sphere, a Czech does not feel safe. In order to survive with relative ease in the public sphere, a Czech does not risk, and he does not trust.³

¹Holý, 23-25.
²This phenomenon has been sharpened, especially during the forty years of "societal monitoring" conducted by communists and people whom they paid to do that. A "sense of insecurity and distrust was implanted in the citizens, who lived in dull fear of being observed or judged." Nollen, 34-35. Frýbort explains that the mistrust among the Czech people and fear of one another was "artificially implanted" from the outside. Frýbort, 30.
³Olsen, 99,118; Universita Karlova, 112-3.
The public arena is not the main source of happiness for the Czech person. Work is not usually the center of life fulfillment, either. Many are frustrated at work because of being underpaid. Even if Czechs like the kind of work they do, work does not make them happy. To stand out as an excellent worker would only cause problems, so says the Czech person’s experience. To avoid disappointment, one does not have high expectations. For the Czech person, time spent at work is sometimes considered wasted, or at least does not have the same value as time spent in the private world.

Going to a public place as a customer, a Czech does not expect anything different. Relations in public reflect the same dynamics. One does not seek friendliness in the public place. Public workers, such as clerks, shop assistants, or nurses, in most cases, treat others with no respect. They do not care about unknown people when they are at work. A seriously ill patient does not make the nurse more polite and kind. She is just doing her job. With the little money she gets, why should she be kind?

Public relationships are distant. In the public sphere, one does not develop deep friendships. Public friendship is considered a burden. However, to have acquaintances is beneficial and provides potential advantages, such as access to otherwise inaccessible goods, helping a child not to fail in school, providing for a promotion at work. Such

1 Vopálecký, “Očima Američana.”

2 Holý remembers that in contrast to work time, “private time had to be saved and used to the fullest, even if only for doing nothing.” Holý, 25.

3 Olsen’s research provides a deeper view of this problem. There are certain unwritten rules which bring into the new friendship obligations and commitments (“relational reciprocation”). Unless the Czech person has a reason or need, he does not seek out new friendships. For more, see Olsen, 96-97.
instrumental relationships are beneficial because they provide “a network for accessing resources.”1 Yet, such a relation is only a public relationship, in which Czechs do not fully trust enough to reveal themselves.2 One seeks to say or do things to please others in order to get the best from such a relationship and to hide anything that might cause one to lose those possible benefits. As described above, the public world has been oppressive as any jungle could be, where the individual, in order to survive, has been merged into uniformity, surrounded by many rules, and subdued by control, or perhaps manipulation, of those in power.

Private World

The private world, to which nobody from the public world has access to, has been esteemed as a retreat, which balances the disequilibrium created by the public world. “A nice flat, a holiday cottage, a car, and a reasonable standard of living”3 became in the second half of the 1980s a satisfying compensation for all the shortages of socialism. To achieve such a standard, by whatever means possible, made life worth living. Such was the material ideal of the private world.4

1Ibid., 92. Olsen calls it also a “net of simplex ties.” Ibid., 94.

2Olsen points out that there is a common practice of double-talk among Czech people, a “difference between what one thinks and what one says.” His research shows that in the public domain (i.e., among outsiders), “honest opinions and personal information were not shared openly, nor are they openly shared today.” Ibid., 95.

3Holy, 29.

4In postcommunist society the standard of living has diversified. People are exposed to a wide variety of goods, but in most cases they are limited by insufficient financial resources.
During the communism, family played an important role for Czechs. They cherished the family circle as a place of trust, safe from "societal monitoring." As a result, they developed "a strong sense of privacy, and of the closeness of the family unit."¹ This is well reflected in the way they have organized their private space. As Olsen documents, private space (in most cases an apartment) has been characterized, for the most part, by high levels of protection, careful maintenance, simplicity, and differentiation. Even the structural layout of people's dwellings reflects these characteristics.²

Still today, the life of many people is centered around family. The family still "forms the core of a multiplex relational group where individuals are tied to one another in multiple ways."³ Many parents live for their children. Often they sacrifice their personal desires "for the present and future happiness of their children." There is a "strong parent-child tie in Czech families."⁴ Even when children grow up and have their own families, parents are still there to help by taking care of grandchildren and helping financially if they can. Family relationships tend to be characterized by closeness, boundary-crossing responsibility for one another, protection, involvement, and empathy.

¹Nollen, 34.
²For an in-depth analysis of Inside-Outside Dualism in Social Space, see Olsen, 72-80.
³Ibid., 117.
⁴Ibid., 89,92.
Holý notes that home has been a place where the charity of the Czech person in everyday life started and ended.¹

Genuine and deep friendship has been a key ingredient of the Czech person’s private world. During communism, people nurtured with all their heart their old, life-time friendships, which typically were not many. Such friendships were characterized by honesty, openness, and mutual care. A smile or a display of happiness was reserved for communication among friends. Lying and deceit in such a setting were unimaginable.²

The exclusive value of friendship has been perpetuated beyond the communist era. Even today, Olsen reports, “the most important division in Czech social structure is . . . between insiders and outsiders.”³ Although there may be many casual friends and acquaintances, there are only a few insider friends. Such deep friendships bring joy in life but also make persons vulnerable. Because in the public world “vulnerability is viewed as a weakness,”⁴ betrayal of a close friendship is the worst sin one can commit. Friendship is a serious matter. It does not happen overnight. Because the Czech person strives to “achieve mutuality in relationships,”⁵ friendship presents a commitment or even

¹See Holý, 24.
³Olsen, 81.
⁴Ibid., 99.
⁵Ibid., 96.
obligation. "Insiders will do almost anything for one another, even at considerable personal sacrifice."¹

Outsiders do not have access to the private part of a Czech person's life. The private life is an earthly paradise. Within the private relationships, Czechs feel comfortable: They can joke and be happy; they have freedom to express themselves without fear of being rejected. In private, nobody controls or manipulates them. Nobody tells them what to think and believe or not. One does not have to please anybody; here he or she can seek pleasure and love. This private world is protected and hidden from the public world.

In my experience, although the two worlds carry opposing characteristics and seem to be polarized, they are not always divided by sharp boundaries. In some areas (such as social relations) there are layers, graded from one pole to another. There are various degrees of trusting people based on the depth of relationship. Also, the measure of a person's responsibility and involvement is given by the scale between the public and private worlds. An example of varying degrees of responsibility and involvement of Czech people is their involvement in church, clubs or other voluntary organizations.

The Czech worldview has placed the church in the public domain. Shortly after the fall of the communist regime, a significant part of the population was reconsidering church to satisfy their spiritual hunger. Yet, as the data showed, many people dropped the idea of church again.

¹Ibid., 94.
Understanding the Czech worldview provides a better grasp of the Czech attitude towards religion. All three worldview traits play well into the Czech surface attitude towards the church. Both their radical reformation spirit and their high intolerance towards otherness feed their anti-church perspective, as does the dualistic structuring of their life.

It appears that Czechs consider church as one attraction among others in the public world. For them, the church is linked with all the characteristics of the public world (such as uniformity, control, and manipulation). People find that unattractive. The degree to which their biases are objective is considered in the following chapter.

Conclusion

This brief survey of the Czech history, with emphasis on the development of secularization in the Czech Republic, attempted to provide a meaningful introduction to the present state of Czech religiosity. The outcomes of ethnographic research strongly support the hypothesis that Czech atheism, as officially reported by polls and the census, is actually a myth maintained by the Czechs themselves. However, the data also show that there have been growing discontent and aversion toward church and organized religion.

This aversion appears to be due in part to the epistemology of their thinking and acting. On one hand, Czechs would make the best reformers of the church, if they were given a chance. On the other hand, Czechs almost uncompromisingly avoid the church. Their bias against the church and God may be due partly to their ignorance (whether
intentional or unintentional), and is strengthened by their vyhraněnost. For many people, church is connected with one or more of the following losses: loss of freedom, loss of happiness, loss of acceptance, loss of friendship, loss of comfort, and possibly loss of peace.

In view of their history, it is not surprising that Czechs are afraid of extremes and therefore keep a distance from organized religion. Nevertheless, the Czechs have had an inbuilt disposition to take certain things radically, perhaps fanatically. For example, the Hussites fought even when it was obvious that fighting would not help. On the other hand, at other moments in Czech history, when one would expect a more defensive response (1938, 1968), the Czechs were amazingly defenseless.

The evidence of this disposition is their dualistic structure of the world, which helps them to cope with the extremes of life. This double reality protects them from and provides nurture for both their Hussitism and vyhraněnost. Thus, in public one can meet Czech people who are self-contained, reserved and cold, avoiding interaction with passers-by. And yet as friends they are very kind and warm, acting as if relationships were the only thing worth living for.

The Czechs are well-educated people surrounded with a rich culture. They are not superficial. However, their outlook on life is somewhat pessimistic. Perhaps the Czechs are uncertain of their identity. They have a tendency to resist change, to show negative criticism towards otherness, to be enviously egalitarian, to indulge in shallow happiness,
but their habits of the heart “are rounded better than the overall impression appears to be.”

Czechs may be “hard on the outside,” having experienced many disappointments. Perhaps their toughness is only a defense of their wounded feelings. Friendship in the public world is a burden; friendship in the private world is a pleasure and joy. Religion in the public is a pain; religion in the private world nurtures the soul. Perhaps the mystery about Czechs is that they are “hideous from outside, but once you get inside, they are completely different.” As a nation of musicians and poets, they have a sensitive heart and rich soul. As Frýbert says, “The peel is rotten, not the core.”

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1 Frýbert, 29.
2 Vopálecky, “Očíma Američana.”
3 Frýbert, 29.
CHAPTER IV

TRADITIONS AND TRANSITIONS IN POSTCOMMUNIST CHURCHING: UNDERSTANDING THE CZECH CHURCH CONTEXT

While in chapter 3 the focus was on society, this chapter attempts to analyze the other aspect of the problem of this study: church. The purpose of this chapter is to look closely at religion in the Czech Republic and to assess the present potential for outreach by the church.

It is impossible to understand churching (life of the church) in the Czech Republic without looking at history. Because one of the objectives of this study is to consider church expansion, the historical material in the first part of the chapter is organized by various Christian movements that occurred in the Czech context. In the second section of the chapter, I profile four major religious groups that operate in the Czech Republic. Finally, I will analyze the role of the church in society and the church’s missionary effectiveness.

The information for this chapter came from bibliographical research, interviews with church leaders, a survey of religiosity, Schwarz’s survey assessing the health of churches, interviews with followers of alternative religions, and interviews of unchurched believers.

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The Roots and Development of Christian Tradition in Czech Lands

The history of Czech churching is profoundly rich and would certainly deserve more attention than the scope of this dissertation allows. There are many aspects worthy of mention; however, the survey is limited to the characteristics of Christian movements that originated in the territory of the Czech Republic. The focus is missiological rather than theological.

Early Czech Christian Movements

This section looks at and evaluates four major Christians movements in the history of Czech people. These movements happened before the process of secularization started to take place.

Beginnings of Christianity in Czech Territory

Before the arrival of missionaries Constantine and Methodius from remote Byzantium in 863, the Czech land was saturated by pagan beliefs and customs despite the Christianizing efforts of the western neighbors. While in other countries people were converted to Christianity forcibly, with the use of violence, Bohemians and Moravians were Christianized peacefully without any force. Constantine and Methodius soon gained the favor of the Czech people. Unlike other missionaries attempting to reach the Czechs, Constantine and Methodius brought Christianity in a culturally relevant form. By 1000, the Czech lands were fully Christianized.

Both message and liturgy were presented in the folk language. Thus, the early Czech churching was characterized by putting the Word of God in the center of its faith. Consequently, Christianity contributed to the emancipation of the nation and the formation of its own culture. Perhaps that was the reason why, through the Byzantine evangelization, Christianity became deeply rooted in the soul of the Czech nation.\(^1\)

The early converts and martyrs, Ludmila and Wenceslav, have become national and historical symbols of Czech Christian sainthood, virtuous bearers of goodness, rich in merits and miracles.\(^2\) These examples of Catholic spirituality and religion have been turned over the years into subjects of cult and hagiolatry, a source of legends, myths, and folk religiosity which has been preserved until the present.\(^3\)

Reforming Movement: Hussitism

In 1363, five centuries after Constantine and Methodius appeared on the scene, Jan Millič of Kroměříž, known as the father of the Czech Reformation, started his public

\(^1\)Pitter, 15; see also Ambros, 9. In those times, it was a radical approach. This missionary technique, putting Scripture and preaching in the people’s language, played a key role in the dynamic Christian movements in the Czech lands. Although effective, it was not liked by the neighboring German Christian leaders and as soon as the Moravian Empire lost its autonomy and was joined to the west, Slavic liturgy was replaced by Latin.

\(^2\)See Kantor, *The Origins of Christianity in Bohemia*.

\(^3\)The hagiolatry that originated in the Catholic faith is still alive, practiced among many unchurched people. On the variety and richness of Czech hagiolatry, see Ludmila Tarčalová, *Kult a živy: sborník příspěvků z konference karpatologické komise pro lidové obyčeje MKKK konané ve Vsetíne v roce 1999*, (Cults and elements) Studie slováckého muzea, no. 4 (Uherské Hradiště: Slovácké muzeum, 1999).
ministry. His reformatory work resulted from his previous work among clergy, which he found, to his own surprise, to be corrupt as was the worldly elite.

His reform proposal was quite radical and included both individuals and society. He envisioned villages where Christians would live according to the example of early Christians, having all in common, and thus setting an example to the rest of society.

After visiting Rome he realized that he could not expect reformation of church and society to come from above. So he preached to the people of the country.

Although the well-educated Milič knew Latin, the Czech people heard him in their own language. As he preached all over the country, he was planting the seeds for the later Hussite revolution. He also demonstrated his preaching by practical acts of kindness, such as organizing “a sort of hostel” for fallen women.

His vision came true after his death in 1374, at least for a short time, through the Hussite movement in the first half of the fifteenth century. At that time Hussites were known for having villages where they had all in common and gave a good example to the rest of the society. This movement started through the work of Jan (John) Hus. Although John Hus (1369-1415) was not a “man of extraordinary passion or upheavals,” not a “revolutionary” or even a “reformer,” his work and life had a tremendous impact on the

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1Pitter, 19.
2Ibid., 20.
3Ibid., 24.
4Seton-Watson, 34.
Czech nation. As a scholar, whose academic career climaxed with his appointment as rector of Charles University in 1403, John Hus contributed immensely to the development of the Czech language and literature of that time. As a preacher and speaker, appointed to the Bethlehem Chapel in 1402, John Hus became a religious and national leader who inspired and ignited religious fervor among the Czech people.

Although his career directed him towards the intelligentsia, his heart did not allow him to miss out on preaching to the common people. He “had the outrageous idea of letting his congregants read the Bible in their own language.” Under his instrumentality “the Chapel at once became a centre of outspoken thought and teaching, and ere long the focusing point of the reforming party.” Faith in God permeated people’s everyday life. Even “Pope Pius II had to admit that the Hussite women knew the Scriptures better than Italian bishops.”

Following the martyrdom of John Hus, the Hussite movement spread throughout the whole country. It was not a unanimous movement and from its inception there were varying degrees of commitment to it. However, the Hussites agreed on four basic points,

1Seton-Watson, 53.
2Kuras, 27.
3Seton-Watson, 43. In one of his most profound documents, entitled “To the Bohemian Nation,” he wrote from prison in Constance: “I entreat and exhort you to love God, to spread abroad His Word, and to hear and observe it more willingly. I entreat you to hold fast the truth of God, which I have written and preached to you from the Holy Scriptures and the utterances of the Saints. I entreat you also, if any have heard in my preaching or private conversations that which is opposed to God’s truth . . . not to hold to it.” Ibid., 53-54.
the “Four Articles,” promulgated in 1419. These were the Magna Charta of the Czech Reformation:

1. Free proclamation of God’s Word
2. Free distribution of the Body and Blood of Christ under the two kinds, bread and wine, to all true Christians
3. Reformation of the clergy, depriving them of their illegal power and requiring them to live an obedient life according to the Scriptures
4. Reformation of the public sphere, by punishing and prohibiting mortal sins and restraining public sinners in all positions.

The Hussite movement was a serious and radical attempt to reform the church and the whole society. In the center of this movement was the Word with its impact on life. Not only did the Hussites want the gospel to be proclaimed, they wanted the implications of the gospel to be seen in the lives of those who proclaimed it. Christianity brought with it, first of all, an obligation to live a moral and godly life.

A Separatist Movement: The Old Unity of Brethren

Simultaneously with the Hussite movement in the fifteenth century, another movement split off from the Hussites. The forerunner of that movement, known as the


old Unity of Brethren, was Petr Chelčický (ca. 1390 - ca. 1460). Although he was a poorly educated farmer, Chelčický became a skilled scholar and author. His theological thinking started where John Hus left off and developed a unique theology.

First of all, Chelčický was critical of the Hussite religious wars. In his view faith in Christ was incompatible with any kind of violence. Faith could not be forced by the state nor defended by the arms of the people. It should be lived through loving kindness with each other. For him the model of Christian community was the early Christian Church.

Chelčický proposed a radical concept of separation of church and state. For him the church was to be something like a voluntary association. As an ecclesiastical separatist, he went so far as to deny that the church could be “the religious dimension of the public arrangement.” Chelčický objected to “military service, civil offices, public oaths, adjudication of disputes in secular courts and some commercial vocations.”

Otherworldiness, based on a radical obedience to New Testament precepts, was one of his major emphases.

He also criticized “contemporary social inequalities and the theories by which

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3Brock, 66.
class divisions were justified."¹ The threefold division of the Christian world—nobility, clergy, and commonalty—was "the antithesis of a Christian social order."² The two powerful architects of evil who represented the church and worldly powers were the Pope and Caesar.

Founded at the end of the year 1457, the Unity of Brethren basically followed Chelčický's teachings. A group of believers moved away from civilization and founded a loving community from which a mysterious power spread throughout the country. The brethren had three groups of people with three various levels of commitment: priests and teachers, who renounced all worldly wealth and were expected to live exemplary lives according to the example of Christ and the apostles;³ ordinary brothers and sisters who were working either with handicrafts or in agriculture; and finally the minority of the penitent who were not yet admitted into full membership of the Unity.⁴

In all aspects of their life they intended to follow Scripture exclusively, especially the Sermon on the Mountain. No theological disputes were allowed, in order to avoid the earlier conflicts of the Hussites. A Christian life was for them more important than teachings. They adopted a simple worship style, using the Hussite Czech hymnal.⁵ Ten years after their foundation, they “formally broke both with Rome and the official

¹Ibid., 62.
²Ibid., 63.
³Ibid., 87.
⁴Ibid., 80.
⁵Pitter, 19.
Utraquist church. In their humble zeal they were afraid to call themselves a church; for that reason they took the name Unity of Brethren. Despite persecution, they grew both in membership and number of congregations.

Revitalizing Movement: The New Unity of Brethren

The later generations of the Unity of Brethren (around 1500), known also as the Moravian church, gradually abandoned the radical political and social doctrines characteristic of the Old Brethren. Of course, this did not happen without a schism in the church, but under the bold leadership of Lukáš, the leader of the Unity, members adjusted to the new doctrinal approach.

By that time, the disciplines of withdrawal were revised and the “sharply drawn line between Christian holiness and secular sinfulness” was found “too ambiguous to locate with absolute certainty.” During the first half of the sixteenth century, the brethren realized that a simple either/or approach to the world was not possible. Eventually, they “turned to the world, not to oppose it, but to convert it.” Their openness brought into

1Brock, 63.

2Rudolf Řičan, The History of the Unity of Brethren, trans. C. Daniel Crews (Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: Moravian Church in America, 1992), 90. As an “unauthorized sect” they experienced growing persecution, which reached its climax with the arrival of the Jesuits in the middle of the sixteenth century. Bradley, 70.

3Brock, 70.

4Ibid., 206.

5Wagner, 155.

6Ibid., 156.
their circle new people—noble and poor, Germans, Slavs, and Poles.¹

The uniqueness of the Moravian Brethren was that their center was more the building of the body of Christ than an independent system of dogmas. Their emphasis was on discipleship to Christ, in living an orderly Christian life, in developing the fellowship of Christian community. For that reason, they were interested in the world around them. They considered themselves to be part of the world, in the sense of genuine care and witness, being the 'salt of the world'.²

They were flexible and open. When the Brethren were not allowed to hold public gatherings, they held devotions in homes. “As the pressure would relax, they would begin inconspicuously to hold joint services with a small number of participants.”³ An important part of their ministry was the education of children and adults. The more educated brethren translated the Old and New Testaments and printed the renowned translation, *Bible kralicka*, in six volumes in 1594.

The Unity of Brethren reached its climax during the life and ministry of their last bishop, Jan Amos Komenský (1592-1671). He was devoted to the betterment of human life and spent his life developing and writing theological and pedagogical books. He had a very friendly relationship with other Protestant movements, worked with them and desired to break down the barriers put up by dogmatic disagreements. He also strove for

¹Pitter, 64.


³Řičan, *The History of the Unity of Brethren*, 94.
inclusion of the national life with the religious and church life. His dream was to bring all Czech Protestants into one church, one body of Christ.¹

Christianity succeeded in the Czech lands through the incarnation of the gospel into the language understood by the common people and thus became deeply rooted in the soul of the future Czech nation. The ongoing emphasis was on the Word of God and experiencing the gospel through a transformed life. All four movements contributed in a way to the contemporary state of the Czech mind. The early Christian tradition brought by Constantine and Methodius is still reflected in folk legends, myths, and rituals. The Hus’s dogmatic radicalism, Chelčický’s separatism, and Komenský’s humanism have become indivisible ingredients of the Czech worldview described in the previous chapter.

Twentieth-Century Czech Christian Movements

This section does not contain an exhaustive record of all movements that occurred in the Czech lands. However, in describing three movements, I attempt to capture the dynamics of the Czech religious development in the twentieth century.

A Political Movement: Neo-Reformation

Despite the edict of Toleration (1781), which was intended to eliminate

oppression of religious groups, the Czech church was never completely free from oppression. ¹ Perhaps the emotions generated from that reality may have brought the Czech people to their new movement.

After 1918, when the country was set free, a National movement, “Away from Rome,” led to the foundation of an independent national church that reassumed the Hussite tradition. Between the two world wars, more than two million Catholics withdrew from their church to join the Czechoslovak Church. Others joined the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, while some remained without any church affiliation, due to a post-war wave of secularization.² In general, this religious movement was “a feeble echo of the genuine reformation.”³ For some it was more a political act than a pursuit of religious beliefs.

An Illegal Movement: Seventh-day Adventism

With their emphasis on the Lordship of Christ, Seventh-day Adventists had, from their beginning, much in common with the Czech reformation.⁴ Early in the twentieth century this church began in the Czech lands and grew among the common and poor

¹Lochman, Church in a Marxist Society, 34.


³Ibid., 110.

⁴Seventh-day Adventism is a spiritual descendant of the Unity of Brethren. Their missionary work led to the spiritual renewal of John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church. John Wesley and Albert C. Outler, John Wesley: [a Representative Collection of His Writings] (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 12-13. Wesley in turn spiritually nurtured and educated some of the future founders of Adventism, such as Ellen Gould Harmon who was formerly a Methodist.
people of the country. Its most spectacular growth, however, was experienced during the years the church was outlawed by the Communist regime. While the activities of the church were stopped for several years in the 1950s, the church grew from 5,521 members in 1950 to 7,505 in 1959.1

From 1952 through 1956, all SDA churches and church institutions were closed; administrators and pastors had to look for civil jobs. The believers gathered informally, in family circles. The spirit of God's family was nurtured. Often, the experiences of witnessing to others and suffering under the interrogation of the secret police were shared. There was a strong sense of resilience and also the conviction of the need to witness to others. The home gatherings had usually seven to fifteen people. But in some cases even fifty people met in one small apartment. These groups were administered by appointed lay leaders.2

An Underground Movement:
The Hidden Church

Under Communism (1945-1989) several Catholic groups worked unrecognized by the public. They attempted to avoid oppression and the rather demoralizing pressure of the communists to "cooperate." One of the most significant groups was developed under the strong and visionary leadership of Felix Marii Davidek (1921-1988).

Such a movement was marked by the informal fellowship of believers within

2Miloslav Šustek, retired pastor of Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by author, Prague, 25 March 2001.
Christian families, study groups, and apartment seminars. Religious activities were latent and inconspicuous. For example, meetings were usually at night and students were instructed not to come in groups to avoid any suspicion. Their religious life was conducted in privacy and secret.

This movement grew. The emphasis and characteristics of such a movement attracted some religious people. By the last few years before the fall of communism, the scope of unofficial religious life reached magnificent breadth. Despite the tremendous mission accomplished, there were also conflicting effects which are still at work today.

Tensions developed between the underground church and the official one. The official church was not needed by those underground and, due to allegations of working with the government, lacked credibility to these believers. The tension was perpetuated beyond the active work of the underground church. The most disputable aspect of this movement, at least for the higher ranks of the church hierarchy, has been the validity and reliability of the appointments of priests and bishops.

It is estimated that at least 250 priests and sixteen bishops were ordained uncanonically during the communist rule. Secret appointments of priests were made of women and of forty-three married men. In 1992 the Vatican released guidelines for

\[\text{1Ondřej Liška, Cirkev v podzemí a společenství Koinotes (Church in underground and the Koinotes community) (Prague: Sursum, 1999), 132-33.}\]

\[\text{2Ibid., 147.}\]

\[\text{3Ibid., 133.}\]

incorporating the unofficial church into the official church. Of the 250 underground priests who spent their lives in sacrificial ministry, in 1995 only fifty had their status confirmed. Many of the remaining priests reacted "bitterly to the church's reluctance to recognise their ministry." \(^1\)

The three movements described in this section capture the mood of the twentieth century. Whereas the movements described in the previous section were formative of the Czech worldview, the movements described in this section appear to respond to the Czech worldview. The political movement reflected also the advancement of secularization in Czech lands, which had been in effect for at least two centuries. The political movement and, to some extent, the underground movement show clear signs of resignation in the face of institutional and oppressive religion.

Both the illegal and the underground movement echo the dualism of the Czech worldview (see chapter 3) and point out how the Czechs are inclined towards practicing privatized religion. In these two movements one can also see fragments of Chelčický's concept of separating and removing the church from society. Although there are no facts and numbers available about Christian movements happening now in the Czech Republic, it is reasonable to assume that invisible movements exist. How much they are growing and how pervasive they are, only the future will show.

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The Church at the Crossroads

Here the official Protestant and Catholic churches in the post-second world war are considered. It shows what impact the communist regime had on the churches and reviews how the church leaders dealt with church issues in the postcommunist era and how they view the mission of the church today.

The Roads to the Present

As indicated earlier, with the arrival of the communist dictatorship in 1948, new times of oppression arrived for the churches. Church properties were confiscated, and religious workers were interrogated, pressured to cooperate with government, and in some instances, put on trial. The involvement of the church in public life was minimized. “All churches were put under government supervision.” All they could “do in practice was to hold services.” Even then, church attendance was often monitored. While people who attended churches were deprived of certain privileges, those who abandoned their churches and joined the Communist party were granted “undeserved privileges.”

Under such circumstances, the mission of the church was to a degree paralyzed. The body of church was made idle. Religious workers were able to nurture the members of their flocks; they were able to follow up with those individuals who were interested in

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1Sayer, 241.
2Krejčí and Machonín, 45.
3Halík, “Church and Society in Czechoslovakia, 56.
4Ibid., 212, 214.
Bible study one-on-one, but not much more than that. Over the years the churches became marginalized and turned into ghettos. As Christians became a minority, the gap between church and society widened.¹

**New Freedom, New Hope**

Although the "Velvet Revolution" took many church leaders and churches by surprise,² the spiritual character of the event was not surprising. The second half of the 1980s was marked by increasing interest in religion and a hunger for spiritual values resulting from a "deep crisis of meaning" which continued even after the revolution.³ With the fall of communism the church clearly "obtained a new chance, a new credibility."⁴

With the longing for an open, free, just, and prosperous society, a new vision for

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²The lack of preparation was remarkable in the area of leadership. As prominent Catholic priest and sociologist Halík commented in 1996, people “who expected inspiring personalities at key positions in the Church were disappointed by a procession of tired bureaucrats who lacked the magnanimity, vision and creativity necessary to prepare the Church for the coming decade.” Halík, “Post-Communism and Its Discontents,” 39.


the church was drawn. There was a clear call for the churches to become authentic
witnesses to the gospel, asserting their own vision of living a good life in public and of a
moral discourse, and thus contributing to the renewal of society.¹ In response to the
changing context of society, the church needed to redefine its mission.² The church was
to be more Christ-centered, ready to take responsibility for Christ's mission, and to be
more like a community than a hierarchy.³

The church leaders had great hopes that "the scars of the past would heal, that the
wall between Church and nation would crumble, that the sacrifices of believers in times
of persecution would . . . bear fruit."⁴ It was soon realized, however, that the life and
survival of the church were not made easier just because there was a new freedom.⁵ The
freedom in 1989 was different, much more complex than freedom before the communist
regime. Prophetic voices warned that if the newly won freedom was "not handled
correctly," large groups of believers would be alienated.⁶ Tischner's cry, "We urgently

¹Miroslav Volf, "When the Unclean Spirit Leaves: The Tasks of the Eastern
European Churches after the 1989 Revolution," Occasional Papers on Religion in
Eastern Europe 11 (1991): 24; Jakub S. Trojan, "The New Situation in Europe after the
Fall of State Socialism (Czechoslovakia)," Reformed World 42 (September 1992): 109.
²Šustar, 21.
³Stefan Wilkanowicz, "The Problems and Tasks Confronting the Church in
Central and Eastern Europe Today," Religion in Communist Lands 19 (Summer 1991):
35-36.
⁵Oto Mádr, "The Struggle of the Czech Church: What We Can Learn from a
⁶Michael J. Lavelle, "The Cost of Freedom: Conversations in Czechoslovakia,
America, 16 May 1992, 437.
need a renewed consciousness of grace,"¹ represented the greatest need.

Religious leaders pointed out the need for the churches to overcome "the burdensome heritage of the past four decades."² In 1999 Cardinal Vlk admitted that this task is not finished yet. "The negative legacy of Communist indoctrination has serious consequences lasting for generations."³ The way is "full of difficulties and seems to be longer and more laborious than was hoped for immediately after November 1989."⁴

The Current View of the Church’s Mission

Twelve years after the communist collapse, the early excitement of the churches is over. In light of the history of church and the present struggles the church faces in an alien society, one naturally asks the question: How do the pastors and church leaders of various denominations view their mission today? How do they understand the role of the church in society? The following few paragraphs describe the situation as expressed by six pastors interviewed for this research in 2001.

The pastors did not deny that the position of churches is presently much worse than half a decade ago. Yet, in viewing the future possibilities, they had different


⁴ Ibid., 47.
understandings. Each of the following paragraphs presents the view of one of six church leaders from different Protestant and Catholic church traditions.

The first church leader reported: "We avoid working with the masses. We work with individuals. We work with people who come to us." He believes that individuals who are interested in religion will find their way to church. God will bring them and when He does so, the church will accept them in love. The church, however, should not use any allurement or try to motivate people to come to church because that is manipulation. The church has two major tasks: (1) to witness to the gospel, and (2) to promote righteousness by turning away from injustice and dishonesty.¹

The second church leader spent considerable time after the communist breakdown working with children. He felt that people in the Czech society started to be interested in religion only after fifty years of age. He considered lay evangelism very important. "The church needs more missionaries." By that he meant working with individuals, connecting with people. He did not expect mass conversions. As a matter of fact, he feared that the church would become more and more a minority as members died. "The chance is, however, that people within the church will know each other, they will become closer to each other. The church may be the salt—to show the outside world that when a person is religious, his life embraces a deeper meaning toward other people and values." Thus the church may be viewed as more than a political alternative or mere lifestyle.²

The third church leader did not believe the church should serve the needs of the people outside the church. The main reason for this was to not manipulate anybody into religion. The church's mission is to offer Bible studies to those who are interested. However, "we are obliged to offer to people not only sermons, but social help as well, to show them that God is not changing, and has the same power even today. . . . We need to live a Christian life that creates trustworthiness."1

Another church leader's vision was "to return God's Word to this country. We do not have any other option." However, he recognized that the unchurched are very resentful. "The best we can do is to be a good example." And as opportunity allows, the materialistic society in the Czech Republic needs to learn about God, their Creator.2

The fifth church leader had a strong vision for reaching people with no religious background for Christ. In his understanding the major obstacle was "a problem of mentality." To overcome this problem, the essential thing was to be culturally relevant, and to be open to build meaningful relationships with people. "We need to focus on people's needs," he said. In his view, after the economic crisis in 1996, people have been receptive again, but they are disappointed. They do not have any security. One should not assume that they will search for God. However, "the church can play a positive role in helping them."3

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ABSTRACT

A THEORETICAL PROPOSAL FOR REACHING IRRELIGIOUS CZECH PEOPLE THROUGH A MISSION REVITALIZATION MOVEMENT

by

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The last church leader interviewed admitted that during communism, Christian witnessing was very limited and occurred only inside the church ghettos. The revolution in 1989 brought change, but churches still tend to continue doing the same things they were doing before. According to his conviction, the church’s mission in the Czech context is more than evangelism, that is, the verbal proclamation of the gospel. Christians need to mingle with non-Christians, be one with them, speak their language, and introduce them to Christ. The church needs to be more flexible to fulfill its God-given mission.¹

The history of Czech churching helps one to understand how the Czech people were won for Christ. Initially they were attracted by the nonforceful missionary approach of Cyril and Methodius and by culturally relevant forms of presenting the gospel. Later in history one notices that the main focus was on truth in the Scripture rather than mission to the lost. With the exception of Moravian brethren (see above), the Czech church was not a missionary church.

The history also helps us to understand where the current views of church leaders come from. As there were various streams of theological thinking held by religious people in the past, so are the current views of pastors who adhere to different traditions. A significant proportion of church leaders from mainline denominations hold a rather passive view of mission. While the majority see their role in leading people to Christ, in helping them to bridge the spiritual gap, only a few recognize the need to bridge the

cultural gap, which does not allow unbelieving people to look for answers to their spirituality in a church environment.

Many pastors of local churches are still influenced by Chelčický's distaste for and separation from the world. The need to maintain pure gospel is much stronger than the need to follow God's missionary heart. As a result, pastors seem to lack sufficient knowledge, not only of the unchurched people, but also of the issues that keep people outside churches.

Before analyzing issues related to the missionary effectiveness of Czech churches, it is appropriate to consider the profiles of four main religious groupings in the Czech Republic. Although in this chapter the focus is more on institutional factors, it is helpful to understand the church institutions in the context of the Czech religiosity. Thus, the next section further clarifies the myth of Czech irreligiousness, and shows the deeper values of the major Czech religious groupings.

Profiles of Major Religious Groups

The data collected on the religiosity of the Czech people revealed a meaningful distinctions between four religious groupings: Atheists, Catholics, Protestants, and followers of other religions. In this section I am summarizing the relevant data from both the survey measuring religiosity and the survey measuring the quality of life in local churches. Based on this profile, differences and possible value conflicts among various religious groups can be estimated.
By folk religion I mean simply the religion of those who call themselves atheist. I attempt to briefly describe the religious values and manners of the Czech Atheists, who constitute the largest group in the Czech republic, and who have increased from 39.9 percent in 1991 to 58.3 percent of the population in 2001. Although this group claims to have no affiliation with religion, many of them do not deny that they believe. It is clear that folk religion not only survived forty years of strong anti-religious propaganda but also finds its various expressions in the newfound freedom.

People tend to believe what they hear and what seems for them to be “normal,” i.e., acceptable. In general, Czechs have a tendency to believe various myths that may sometimes mislead them and cause misunderstandings and failures, both as a nation and as individuals. Fairy tales are popular among the Czechs. “Their popularity among both adults and children is attested by the comparatively large number of modern Czech films, television shows, and books that are based upon fairy tale themes.” Stories from such books are read to children before they go to sleep; many fairy tale movies are watched on television over and over every Christmas season by people of all ages. Even the understanding of their history is based on legends, some of which are “purely fairy tales.

1Respondent 23, 6 August 2001; Respondent 6, 27 February 2001.

2 Šolc, interview, August 9, 2001; Frýbort, 37.

3 Olsen, 51.
Moreover, a significant number of Atheists are not god-less. On the contrary, faith in the supernatural is maintained in the Czech Republic despite the attenuated significance of traditional churches. Hamplová explains: “The distance from traditional churches and Christianity does not mean that Czechs would deprecate the existence of the supernatural as a whole. Only approximately one person in one hundred surveyed definitely denied, not only that God exists but also specific demonstrations of the supernatural in life.”

My own findings were similar. Only two people of the 191 Atheists in my survey measuring attitudes towards God answered negatively all questions about God and a higher power.³ Atheists expressed uncertainty or no opinion about God in 34.6 percent of their answers; 27.7 of all their answers about God were positive. Of those who considered themselves Atheists, 38.4 percent disagreed with the statement that the idea of a personal God is an outworn concept, while 42.6 percent agreed that the term “God” is a symbol helpful in the human quest for the good life.

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¹Nollen, 29.
²Hamplová, 43.
³My survey was conducted in 2000-2001.
In two previous surveys, having assurance in God appears at the bottom of life values\(^1\) and religious life is at the bottom of leisure activities.\(^2\) However, my survey indicated that 36.7 percent of the Atheist respondents disagree that religion is a waste of time and does not help to solve human problems, and 63.6 percent agreed that religion is a valid way of dealing with the most important issues of life. Although Atheists are 14.2 percent more afraid of death than the average members of other religious groups, 33.3 percent of Atheists believe in life after death; 43.2 percent of them use religious means to cope with death; and 50.5 percent of Atheists more or less agree that by death their personal existence does not end. In any case, the Czechs are not Atheists who would deny anything that supercedes common sensual knowledge. Although they stay away from church, many of them have a religious conscience.\(^3\)

On the other hand, the influence of the previous regime’s atheistic propaganda is perceptible among Atheists as well. Atheists are 15.1 percent more pessimistic about religion than members of the other religious groups. Atheists are 12 percent more convinced than other religious groups that suffering and injustice have decreased over time; their faith in people improving the human condition is 5 percent stronger than that of other religious groups. Yet, their sense of having life under control is 4.5 percent lower than all other religious groups. Also, they are 16 percent more frustrated with bad experiences in life and more bitter about unfair injustice. Atheists are 3.5 percent less

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\(^1\)Fiedlanderová and Tuček, 172.

\(^2\)Sak, 134-35.

\(^3\)Frýbort, 16.
happy than those who associate with religious groups. Atheists have a 7 percent lower sense of living a purposeful life than other religious groups.

The 1998 research of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) pointed to two general spiritual streams in Czech society: Christianity and occultism.¹ 66 percent of those surveyed thought that some fortune-tellers are able to predict the future; 45 percent believed in the efficiency of amulets; and 45 percent believed in horoscopes.² To visit a healer or "diagnostician" and pay to get counsel or medical advice is not an uncommon practice.³

Occult religiosity is widely spread among young people, as the vast amount of horoscope magazines sold indicates. According to Sak’s findings, young people prefer sensual experiences and human life over the traditional spiritual life. Sensual experiences are more attractive than the transcendent dimension of life.⁴

Roman Catholics

The second grouping, Roman Catholicism, is the largest organized religion in the Czech Republic. It is argued by Catholic thinkers that despite the identification of the Czech nation with a Protestant heritage more than with Catholicism, Catholicism has significantly contributed to Czech national development. The positive role of Catholicism during the formation of the Czech nation in the nineteenth century should not be

¹Hamplová, 44.
²Ibid., 43.
⁴Sak, 75-77.
overlooked despite the shortcomings of church leaders, say Luxmoore and Babiuch. They explain that “while the church’s leaders were supporting the Habsburg imperial order, priests and laymen were rebuilding the national culture and struggling for rights and freedoms.” Also, the influence of Catholicism throughout the centuries has enriched the Czech culture through folk songs, folk art, proverbs, architecture, legends, and fairy-tales.

The claim that Catholicism has contributed to the nation’s development is somewhat reflected in the findings of my research on religiosity. The religiosity of Catholics is in some aspects closer to that of Atheists than to that of Protestants. The worldview of Catholics is 11 percent more religious than the worldview of Atheists and 11 percent less religious than the worldview of Protestants. Catholics are 8 percent more optimistic about religion than Atheists, but 13.5 percent less optimistic than Protestants and 18 percent less optimistic than followers of other religions. In the survey measuring attitudes towards God, Catholics conveyed no opinion or uncertainty about God in 26.2 percent of their answers. On the other hand, 18.4 percent of their answers lacked a positive attitude towards God or a supernatural power.

It is impossible to say precisely to what degree the worldview of Atheists in the


Czech Republic has been influenced by Catholic religiosity or to what degree Catholics were influenced by the advanced secularization of the Czech Republic and/or by Communist propaganda. The research shows that Catholics and Atheists have a somewhat similar view of suffering, injustice, and the improvement of the human condition. Both Catholics and Atheists are around 15 percent less open than the other two religious groups to discuss the purpose of life. However, Catholics have a 7.7 percent higher score than Atheists for living a purposeful life and an 8.2 percent higher score than Atheists for having life under control. These statements are true both for Catholics who attend church regularly and the 90 percent of Catholic Czechs who do not actively attend church.¹

A survey of active members in one suburban Roman Catholic congregation suggests that Catholics are 12 percent more social and open to outsiders than Protestants. There is a 10 percent higher awareness of seekers in this Catholic congregation than in Protestant congregations. The score for experiencing love is 15 percent higher and the score for assimilation of newcomers is 12 percent higher. Another strong quality is inspiring worship; members of Catholic congregations feel 12.5 percent more inspired by worship than do members of Protestant congregations.

On the other hand, this particular Catholic congregation faced challenges in two areas. The first was empowering leadership and functional structures. The lay people in this Catholic congregation had 33 percent less leadership oversight than lay people in

¹It is estimated that only 400,000 Catholics go to church on a regular basis. Respondent 8, Catholic church leader, interview by author, 19 March 2001.
Protestant churches. The Catholic laity had 7.5 percent less mentoring and equipping than Protestant laity. The second challenge was in the area of experiencing spiritual disciplines. The members of this Catholic congregation practiced 22.5 percent fewer personal spiritual disciplines and 6 percent less corporate spiritual disciplines than members of Protestant congregations. This challenged spirituality decreased their missionary focus about 9 percent compared to Protestant churches.

Protestant Groups

Because I adhere to the Protestant heritage and the theological assumptions of this study are derived from a Protestant understanding, this religious group received special attention. Although Czech Protestantism played an important role in the history of the Czechs and even though, in Masaryk’s view, the Czech reformation had a positive and uplifting influence on the birth of the Czech nation, only about 4 percent of the present Czech population associate with Protestants.

The Evangelical Church and the Czechoslovak Church represent the largest segment of this religious group. Yet, a significant portion of their membership is not actively involved. One obvious reason for this lack of involvement is that many of those who joined these churches between the two world wars did so for political reasons rather than religious beliefs.

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1Krejčí, O Češtví a Evropanství, 99.
The remainder of the Protestant group is made up of small denominations, with a membership of less than 10,000 people. One can conclude that Protestants in the Czech Republic comprise a fragment of society and are divided in even smaller fragments.

**The Religiosity of Protestants**

Although these groups exist on their own and have their own belief systems, they have something in common—they are more or less molded by the heritage of the Czech Reformation. Thus it is important to mention several commonalities of the Czech Protestant heritage and how these are portrayed in the present values of Protestants.

First, the Czech Protestant heritage has centered on obedience to God's Word as opposed to human doctrines and teachings.\(^1\) Throughout the history of Czech Protestants, living a religious life outweighed living a civic life. Although Czech Protestants were open to work with other Christian movements, they were careful to protect their religious worldview by living pious lives and not merging with the "pagan" worldview of society.\(^2\)

Even today, the worldview of Protestants is 20 percent more religious than the Atheist’s worldview. Protestants are 21.5 percent more confident in religion than Atheists, and 13.5 percent more confident than Catholics.

Second, suffering was considered an integral part of the Christian experience, involving, for some, actual martyrdom. This element was strengthened by active


\(^2\)Ibid.
eschatological expectations.\textsuperscript{1} Along that line, my findings deal with death. Protestants are less afraid of death than other religious groups (for example, 14.6 less afraid of death than Catholics). Also, Protestants use religious means for coping with death more than other groups. In addition, they take death 20 percent less as part of the "mother nature" process than the other three groups; and use family 11.5 percent less than Catholics and Atheists as a means to cope with death.

Another distinctive feature of Protestant respondents, which might have resulted from their eschatological expectations and their separation from society, is how they relate to human conditions. Although Protestants are 10 percent more concerned about life issues than Atheists, they are 13.5 percent more pessimistic about suffering and injustice in the world than Catholics and 16 percent more pessimistic than Atheists. Protestants have 20 percent less optimism about decreasing suffering and injustice than Catholics, 25 percent less optimism than Atheists, and 16 percent less optimism than followers of other religions. Protestants are 14 percent more skeptical towards changing life conditions than other groups. Their skepticism towards solving human problems includes political means as well. Protestants are somewhat less happy than other groups.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{2}For centuries, Czech Protestant religiosity has been known to have more grief than joy. Krejčí, \textit{O Češtví a Evropanství}, 50.
The Quality of Life in Protestant Congregations

In an attempt to understand better the psycho-social dynamics of church life in congregations of smaller Protestant denominations in the Czech Republic, in 2001 I applied the “Natural Church Development Survey” of Christian Schwarz to eight denominations, with responses from 157 pastors and 3,820 members.1

After a period of extensive analysis, two groups of churches emerged. One group can be identified as traditional Protestant congregations and the other as “neo-apostolic” congregations.2 The main differences between the two can be summarized under four headings:

1. Leadership. Neo-apostolic congregations have a 15 percent higher score in initiating change; 18 percent higher score in creativity and managing change; and 11 percent higher score in organizational structures and systems. For example, development

1For the content of the survey, see appendix C. The survey was conducted with permission of the author, director of Natural Church Development International, and in cooperation with the Natural Church Development National Partner in the Czech Republic, Jiri Drejnar, president of International Bible Society in the Czech Republic.

2The distinction between Protestants and “neo-apostolics” has been made by David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, who explain that neo-apostolics have rejected historic denominationalism: “Many church members in the parent body experience dissatisfaction or disagreement on matters concerning three areas—authority, lifestyle, and gifts of the Spirit.” By separating from their traditional denominations, these new groups embraced “new authority, new structures, new names, new beliefs, new solutions, and new forms of church life. . . . These churches are among the fastest growing in the world.” David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, “Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 2001,” International Bulletin of Missionary Research 2001 25 (January 2001): 24. In my study, 128 pastors and 2,928 lay persons were from Protestant congregations; 29 pastors and 892 persons were from neo-apostolic congregations.
of leaders within small groups happens 14 percent more often among neo-apostolics than among other Protestants. Although the score measuring orthodoxy was 10 percent higher for neo-apostolic pastors than for pastors of other Protestant congregations, the score measuring orthodoxy of lay people was 25 percent lower for neo-apostolic than for traditional Protestant congregations.

2. Connecting with God. One way to connect with God is through spiritual gifts. Matching, significance of use, and effectiveness of use of spiritual gifts was 7 percent higher for neo-apostolic congregations. Another way to connect with God is through worship. Members of neo-apostolic congregations reported higher scores for experiencing inspiring worship (4 percent higher for feelings of being inspired, 5 percent higher for God-centered and celebrative music). Although there is no significant difference between the two groups in exercising personal spiritual disciplines, the neo-apostolic have an 8 percent higher score for exercising corporate spiritual disciplines and 5 percent higher score for contagious faith.

3. Connecting to each other in church. Neo-apostolics connect to each other primarily through small group ministries. In a small group, the atmosphere of transparency, sharing, and trust is 17 percent higher than among other Protestant groups. The neo-apostolic small group is 21 percent more spiritually oriented, and meets 21 percent more the member’s felt needs. Members of neo-apostolic small groups are 14 percent more active than their Protestant counterparts. The atmosphere among neo-apostolics is 8 percent more filled with joy and trust. The score for independent relationships is 9 percent higher among neo-apostolics, and their ability to intentionally
solve interpersonal conflicts is 7 percent higher than among Protestants. The score for happiness is 9 percent higher than that of other Protestants.

4. Outreach. Although neo-apostolics are 6 percent lower on personal evangelism and 16 percent lower on social ministries, they are 6 percent stronger on corporate evangelistic strategies and their collaboration with other denominations is 21 higher than that reported by Protestant congregations. Neo-apostolics are 5 percent more sensitive to seekers and more focused on secular people.

A comparison of these two Protestant subgroups offers an interesting conclusion. The traditional Protestant denominations are resisting change despite their changing context, even at the cost of degenerating health and quality of church life. In light of the Czech Protestant heritage, whose main aim was to preserve the truth of the Scripture, their resistance to change is not surprising. However, the effect it has on their existence is alarming and begs for rethinking their identity. On the other hand, the neo-apostolics have taken advantage of a fresh church renewal. The limited degree to which they are able to build bridges to society and reach out to the unchurched, however, leaves us with the question as to how consistently they have remembered the missionary purpose of the church as discussed in chapter 2.

Other Religious Groups

In my survey of the religiosity of Czech people, followers of other religions

1Schwarz calls outreach a quality of need-oriented evangelism. Schwarz, 34.
represented 9 percent of the sample. This group consisted of "marginal Christians," followers of Eastern religions, and followers of the New Age movement. Although a significant number of this group were converts from atheism, in the survey of values, the worldview of this religious group was somewhat similar to that of Protestants, rather than Catholics and/or Atheists.

Followers of other religions have a 20 percent more religious worldview than Atheists. They are 15 percent more open to discuss purpose in life and more concerned about decreasing suffering and injustice among people than either Catholics or Atheists.

In some ways, however, the followers of other religions differ from Protestants. Unlike Protestants, followers of other religions are 18 percent more optimistic about religion as a means to solve human problems than are Catholics. They are 16 percent more optimistic than Protestants about decreasing suffering and injustice and believe 13.5 percent more in the possibility of changing life conditions. Also, followers of other religions use mystic beliefs as a mean to cope with death 15 percent more than Catholics and 18 percent more than Atheists.

Although there are no official numbers for some of these alternative religious movements, it is believed that this category has been expanding in Czech society.

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1Barrett and Johnson use the term "marginal Christians" for any Christian group characterized by anti-Trinitarian or non-Trinitarian Christology and claiming to have a second source of divine revelation in addition to the Bible. Included are Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Scientists. Barrett and Johnson, 24.

2Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and various religious movements.

3On various new religious movements in the Czech Republic, see Zdeněk Vojtíšek, Netradiční náboženství u nás (Alternative religions among us).
especially in the last few years.\textsuperscript{1} To find out why irreligious Czechs are drawn into these groups and how these groups grow, I interviewed three people who were formerly atheists and converted to an alternative religion.

A Follower of Mormonism

Forced by her grandmother to attend church as a child, she did not like to go to church or say prayers. She said: "I always had faith in God and I never doubted that Jesus Christ died for us," but she was not interested in any church. Of Christians, she said:

"They always intruded on me, something which I did not like." She never appreciated being forced to believe something. Then she met American missionaries in the hallway in front of her apartment: "They introduced themselves, and told me openly what they were doing. I told them: ‘If you are not going to convince me that I am doing something wrong, come in; otherwise leave right away.’ They respected me and my opinions. They never said: ‘This is wrong, you should this or that.’" She received a testimony about the Bible and the fact that the Bible and the book of Mormon do not contradict each other. Then she recalls: "The missionaries gave me freedom, they built my faith on what I knew already."

\footnote{A survey conducted by the British and International Bible Society in the Czech Republic states that 27 percent of Czech population believe in some way in reincarnation. Tomáš Novotný and Zdeněk Vojtíšek, \textit{Základní orientace v nových náboženských směrech}, (A basic orientation in new religious movements) Přednášky, studie a texty: společnosti pro studium sekt a nových náboženských směrů (Prague: Dingir, 1995), 39. People in the Czech Republic are increasingly interested in issues such as the law of karma or reincarnation, but did not consider themselves religious (in census 2001). For them, belief is a matter of psychology and spirituality, not a part of organized religion. Theirs is a "homemade faith." Respondent 23, follower of alternative religion, interview by author, 6 August 2001.}
Yet, it was not that simple. The missionary who influenced her the most, she hated at first. As she recalls, he and his apprentice “let me decide what I thought about the things they told me. Some of the truths made me uncomfortable. I had to struggle to accept them. . . I argued with them [missionaries] and hated them but then I accepted it. . . They always asked me if they could come again, but they never forced themselves on me.” There was a period of time she stopped meeting with them. But then she reconsidered and invited them back.

The fact that she was not being forced was a “crucial” factor which led her to accept the teachings of Mormonism. “They were patient with me, everything was built on prayer.” The missionaries who taught her left the country, yet she still has an “excellent relationship” with them. Although her husband did not convert with her, she adopted the strict Mormon lifestyle. Along with her children, she is actively involved in the movement. Although she has no assurance of salvation, she strives to be saved, and to be among the elected saints.

**A Follower of Hare Krsna**

Her mother and grandmother were Catholics, yet she grew up as an Atheist. She had many questions and, especially during her university studies, she searched for answers. Later, she started going every day to the Catholic church to pray. She committed her life to Christ. One day she met girls in front of the church who were offering books of Hare Krsna. She recalls: “At first, I did not want the books, but there was something magic about them.” So instead of going to church to pray, she bought some books from the girls and became a friend to one of them. Later she asked her new
friend to take her to “some lectures about Vedantic culture.” She recalls: “A saint lectured. . . . He was answering precisely the questions I had all my life. The books were answering precisely the questions I had.”

Her “conversion” was not straightforward. It was a process. A year after she befriended the girl and started to read Vedic books, she went through a crisis and “wanted to leave the whole teaching.” But then after about half a year she connected again with that girl and other people from that movement. She “converted,” along with her husband. Both are actively involved in the movement, living a strict lifestyle, including sexual abstinence in marriage.

After her “conversion,” there has been a strong bond between her and the lady who sold her the books at first. She recalls, formerly “I was a very closed person. There was no way I would reach out to someone. She [the lady who sold her the first books] was the first person I started to open up to!” Currently, she meets her spiritual mentor every weekend. They attend regular study of Vedantic Science where they sing, listen to the lectures,1 and taste special foods. In her free time, she sells books to others.

A Follower of an Esoteric Movement

He grew up in an Atheist family. At eighteen years of age he converted to Christianity and attended several churches. Today, he and his wife are believers, yet they do not go to any church, perhaps because they went through negative experiences with churches, especially in one congregation where they experienced some form of

1There are different lectures for “advanced” and for the public.
fanaticism, "machination, psychic [pressure], taking advantage of people," as he recalls. As a result, he and his wife looked into alternatives to the formal church.

Even though he explored other teachings, including Hinduism, Buddhism, magic, and astrology, he still believes that "Christianity is the best." However, he and his wife believe that committing to one denomination is "harmful." He explains, "I found Christ, and that is the main thing."

He does not have a need to be a member anywhere. "In the beginning I participated in church, but now I do not need to do that. I do not miss [church] fellowship. I do have a circle of people I meet with, with whom I have the same line of thinking. It is a small fellowship." The members of this group are all friends. They meet on a voluntary basis, based on their needs, usually once in two weeks. "As people, we are very close to one another. It is a special moment for me to meet with them. We are close, understand each other, share with each other."

Again, his "conversion" was not an event, but a process. His initial contact with this esoteric movement was made through a coworker. "In the beginning, I did not trust the principles of karma and reincarnation; these terms were suspicious to me. But gradually, I identified with these terms."

In the process of his "conversion," he "did not feel the least pressure to join something." In his description of the movement he strongly emphasized that the movement is not an organization. "Books are printed, but it is up to each of us what to do with them. This movement is . . . organized from above. . . . Our organization is spiritual."
Once a year those who are part of this movement go on a voluntary pilgrimage. Such a meeting “is spiritually oriented. I identify with it.” There is a person with spiritual authority in that movement. It is “a great experience to meet and talk with him. . . . He draws people naturally. He is a humble man. He works for the well-being of all people. . . . Christ is my ideal, but this person is ideal for me too.”

Today he does not see any problem connecting these principles with Christianity. He is part of a special system through which each person can continue on his path individually, going through a process of purification from negative things. There are special rituals to be done every day. He anticipates a spiritual growth through which he will receive spiritual gifts. The goal is perfection.

Conclusion

These three represent a growing number of people. Although I analyze the dynamics of their conversion in chapter 5, I want to briefly conclude by listing common characteristics. All three were spiritually hungry. They joined various sects and/or cults based on their dissatisfaction with the official presenters of religion in a church. In all three cases, the “conversion” was not a single event but a process which included a crisis of beliefs. In all cases, the new movement did not intellectually appeal to them at first. In all three cases, relational bonding with someone who became a spiritual mentor played a key role. Although there was minimal force from the recruiters, the new converts underwent major lifestyle changes, often integrating strict life standards. For all of them, spirituality permeates all aspects of life.
The profiles of the four religious groups in the Czech Republic contribute to a better understanding of Czech religiosity. Although the official polls place the country among the most atheistic, in reality the Czechs are religious people. Even those who call themselves Atheists, and do not want to have anything to do with church, have their own religion. New religious movements are growing while existing churches stagnate or decline. A growing number are alternative religions. Understanding Czech religiosity permits new insights into possible avenues for missionary work among atheists.

The following section takes a deeper look at institutional factors related to the decline of churched religiosity. While chapter 3 describes the Czech worldview, the following section considers how the church itself contributes to the societal image of church.

The Challenges and Possibilities of Czech Churching

Over the last ten years, the Catholic and Protestant groups in general (with small exceptions) have been stagnating. The Czech Statistical Office reports that the Catholic Church has lost 32.6 percent of its members over the last ten years. The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren has lost 32.8 percent during the same time.¹ On the other hand, the followers of alternative and often private and invisible religious groups are growing. It is hard to demonstrate this growth for lack of official records, however, the census

shows that this category, “Small Protestant churches, Marginal Christian Churches, and various non-Christian religious movements,” has grown by 161.4 percent.¹

The most surprising result of the 2001 census was the increase of those with “No confession.” While the group of all “believers” together lost 28.0 percent, “non-believers” increased by 45.9 percent.²

In view of these developments we must ask what the status of the church in society actually is. This question is answered first by taking a macro-perspective, describing and analyzing the most obvious church issues that drew the attention of the media, and second by zooming into a micro-perspective, evaluating the missionary work of local churches and Christians in today’s Czech society.

Losses and Gains of the Church’s Credibility

The collapse of communism created great momentum for the church. “In modern Czech history perhaps the church never enjoyed such great sympathy as it did at the time

¹Ibid. My estimate is that a large portion of this number comes from new semi-Christian or non-Christian religious movements. The net increase of the “Other” religious group for the last ten years was 194,203. The fastest growing and also largest Christian group, Jehovah’s Witnesses, had only 16,058 members in 1999 and according to Martinek has “recently declined.” Branislav Martinek, Naboženská společnost a stát: historie Svědků Jehovových v Československu, (Religious community and state: the history of Jehovah’s witnesses in Czechoslovakia) Přednášky, studie a texty: společnosti pro studium sekt a nových náboženských směrů (Prague: Dingir, 2000), 56. My interviews show that the Jehovah’s Witnesses are the most criticized religious group. Czech people are offended by the way Jehovah’s Witnesses evangelize. It is also believed that they create a bad reputation for “the good churches.” Respondent 18, 9 July 2001; Respondent 14, 15 May 2001; Respondent 5, 15 February 2001.

of the Velvet Revolution." However, society's focus on moral renewal, inspired by the church, did not last long. The focus rapidly shifted towards political and economical concerns. Unfortunately, the church was drawn along, "unable to hold its ranks together, . . . [as] its words were not followed by sufficiently tangible and credible actions." The church's involvement in politics, the restitution of church possessions, ecumenical relations among the churches, and the way the church relates to the community are some of the important issues that emerged in the postcommunist context, and which are considered to some depth in this section.

**Involvement in Politics**

There is no doubt about the need for the members of the Christian Church to be involved in politics, especially in forming the laws and moral standards of a new society. The Protestant expert in Eastern European missions, Peter Kuzmič emphasizes that Christians "have to be socially and politically conscious." However, in the context of

1 Vlk, 44.


3 Kuzmič, 9. Kuzmič himself was involved in politics during uneasy times in the conflicts of the former Yugoslavia and became a prominent Christian figure in dealing with national conflicts. He is convinced that Christians should be positively involved in politics and should not divide religion and politics. Isolation of the church from public life could be counterproductive. Trojan critically pointed out that “to speak merely of internal personal conversion to a faith living in intimacy with Jesus Christ—as is currently the case with many charismatic missionaries—without also speaking about the implications of this faith for the political realm is ineffective.” Jakub S. Trojan, “Democracy in Czechoslovakia and Its Spiritual Foundations,” *Religion in Eastern Europe* 14 (October 1994): 278.
Czech history, this has not been an easy task.¹ In order to sustain credibility, the Church needed to adopt a new identity, that of a “serving church” and not a “ruling church.”²

As Christian parties created a coalition and became involved in the postcommunist government, they were not spared difficulties. A major problem was that Christian politics focused on a party “known to have collaborated with the secret service during Communism.”³ Beginning in 1991 Halík pointed out that problems associated with Christian parties “contributed to a certain discrediting of Christians in society.”⁴ Four years later he enunciated: “The examination of the political presence of Catholics several years after November 1989 is not favorable.”⁵

The past of the Christian political party, heavily publicized through the media, reignited Hussite-like anti-clerical emotions. There were also other reasons. Halík explains that the “dynamics and popularity of Catholics in the first months after the turnover raised fears among liberals and leftists that this would transfer to the political sphere.”⁶ These fears became reality as the church was not able to maintain a nonpartisan

¹Protestant theologian Trojan explains that the connection of “the throne” with “the altar,” between the Catholic Church and the foreign political dynasty of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, “created a climate of public mistrust of the Roman Catholic Church” in Czech society. Trojan, “Democracy,” 287.

²Vlk, 48.


⁴Halík, “Church and Society in Czechoslovakia,” 55.

⁵Tomas Halík, Víra a kultura: pokoncilní vyvoj českého katolicismu v reflexi časopisu Studie (Prague: Zvon, 1995), 152.

⁶Ibid.
position, and thus prevent the impression that one of the political parties was "its own exclusive favorite, if not its direct political representative." The main reason why the church lost its favorable position with people was its involvement in politics.

**Restitution of Church Possessions**

Within the political context another issue, raised shortly after the fall of communism, caused bitter disputes. The government had withdrawn "the state funding which had been available for church activities in the communist period," and the Catholic Church sought in return a restitution of "225,000 land and lake hectares out of 552,000 listed as confiscated in state records, as well as 3380 buildings." The argument was that the church was deprived of the state support "without restoring the churches' means of livelihood."

With the church bitterly demanding the return of its possessions, fears of repeating history, in which a wealthy and powerful church acted against the people, reemerged. The church's claims to its possessions were the last drop causing the cup to overflow and Czech anti-clericalism to blossom.

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1Ibid.
5Jandourek, 51.
Ecumenical Relations

With the church under scrutiny, tensions among churches added to the loss of credibility. As religion "remains a very sensitive issue" in the Czech Republic, denominationalism had negative effects. The existence of various denominations itself raised questions about the credibility of churches. Moreover, different churches were perceived as a source of conflicts: "First solve conflicts among yourselves and then tell us what the truth is and what we ought to do," is a common statement of the unchurched in defense of their position.

Traditionally, there has been a tension between Catholics and Protestants. The words of the evangelical theologian Trojan suggest the unease: "Many Roman Catholics argue that their church's doctrine and spirituality should fill the immense spiritual, cultural, and social vacuum created by the previous system's demise. Yet Roman Catholicism cannot fill this void easily." These words suggest a lack of mutual acceptance and a need for more cooperation. The Catholic priest Halik retrospectively affirmed this need when he stated that the initially assumed role of the churches to bring about a moral renewal of society "carried the requirement that the Church cooperate . . . with . . . other denominations.”

Some cooperation was realized. Roman Catholic and Evangelical churches worked together to "resolve disputes over the rights of up to 3.5 million former Sudeten

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1 Respondent 17, Christian church leader, interview by author, 29 June 2001; see also Tischner, 331-338.

2 Trojan, "Democracy," 278.

3 Halik, "Post-Communism," 38.
Germans expelled from Czechoslovakia in 1945.¹ However, the wounds opened again when Jan Sarkander (1576-1620), "whom many Protestants regard as a symbol of the forced recatholicisation of the Czechs during the seventeenth century,"² was canonized in 1995.

An attempt to reduce the tension was made in July 1996, when Cardinal Vlk, a Catholic leader, attended an ecumenical ceremony in honor of John Hus.³ Nevertheless, discussion of the rehabilitation of John Hus continues, despite the pope’s regret over Hus’s cruel death, expressed early in 2000.⁴

Mutual relationships among denominations are problematic despite the strong ecumenical spirit in Czech churching.⁵ The growing Czech ecumenical movement is a response to the fact that Christianity in the Czech lands has been shattered into many

⁵The most obvious evidence of such a claim is the development of the Czech confession in 1575, which is considered as an example of remarkable ecumenism. Jaroslav Pánek, Comenius: Teacher of Nations (Košice: Východoslovenské vydavatelství, 1991), 13; Olsen, 56.
small traditions.\textsuperscript{1} Perhaps this fragmentation came as a result of the Czech reformation whose emphasis was to detect error and to distinguish truth from fallacy.\textsuperscript{2}

Denominationalism in the United States is completely different from denominationalism in the Czech Republic, where “denominations mistrust each other. Denominations are perceived in our country as an attempt to fight for the truth.”\textsuperscript{3} The lack of open dialogue and complementary relationships decreases the credibility of the churches among the unchurched as well.\textsuperscript{4}

**Bridges to the Community**

The previous three issues have been troublesome for the position of the church in society and will take a long time to resolve. However, it would be wrong to say that the churches have completely failed the new opportunities. Theological education to prepare new clergy has been strengthened, renewed, and broadened. Christian institutions try to meet societal needs such as health, publishing, social and charitable ministries, and radio broadcasting. Although the church “remains on the periphery of society,”\textsuperscript{5} there are areas in which the church can build bridges and return to society.

\textsuperscript{1}Vojtšek, 9.

\textsuperscript{2}Vladimír Kofenský, retired pastor of Seventh-day Adventist Church, interview by author, Berrien Springs, 9 October 2000.

\textsuperscript{3}Respondent 17, 29 June 2001.

\textsuperscript{4}Cardinal Vlk openly admits: “We do not manage to engage with and have a dialogue with those of other opinions. . . . We have no practice in dialogue.” Vlk, 48.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 47.
Out of all public activities of churches, social and charitable ministries stand out as potential bridges. According to Halík, this is “perhaps the only beneficial activity” that society expects from the church.¹ These ministries are insufficient in the Czech Republic. Although some criticize social activism, the overall interest of the public in this area is great, and possible involvement of Christian nongovernmental organizations is welcomed. The existing work in this area is based mostly on cooperation of those “belonging to the Christian community.”²

The public is receptive to the church’s involvement in social and charitable ministries. The change towards a more positive view of the church is in place, says Mrs. Balcarová, because “the churches in the Czech Republic have done a lot of good in the last 11 years.”³ By that she refers specifically to prison ministries carried out by the churches. While prison ministries are not as appreciated by the public as is help for needy children or other charitable activities, they present a unique example of ecumenical cooperation. It has certainly been a good starting point for greater cooperation among various churches. As a matter of fact, cooperation of Czech churches in prison ministries is considered a rarity in Europe. All registered churches, large and small, are involved, with the same rights and obligations. The representatives of the churches are trying to

¹Halík, Vira a kultura, 153.

²Renáta Balcarová, President of Prison Chaplains for the Czech Republic, email interview by author, 26 April 2002.

³Ibid. Ministry to the society through ADRA Czech Republic and the involvement of the SDA Church in prison ministries through Prison Chaplains has helped the SDA Church in particular to be recognized as a Christian church, both by the government and by other Christian churches.
eliminate possible tensions among volunteers from various denominations. As a result, the government has appealed to the churches to expand their social ministries into other areas as well.¹

Missionary Effectiveness of Local Churches

The interviews with pastors from different denominations described in the first part of this chapter showed that, with some exceptions, a passive view of the missionary role of the church prevails. In their view, verbal proclamation of the gospel is the only biblical outreach. Some church leaders also believe that any outreach activity outside the church building inevitably leads to manipulating people. In this understanding, people have to figure out on their own if they are interested in religion, and then find their way to a church.

On the other hand, a minority of pastors hold a more progressive view of missions, according to which effective missions require a holistic approach. Addressing the missionary work in postcommunist countries, Kuzmić states that “proclamation alone won’t do it. It can be even counterproductive. Without genuine concern for the needy, [Jesus Christ is misunderstood]. People do not have only ears to hear the message and souls to be saved, but they have also eyes to see.”² This approach takes seriously Jesus’ method of outreach—going to the unreached, mingling with them, being one of them in order to show God to them.

¹Ibid.
²Kuzmić, 4.
In chapter 2, two missionary concepts were considered: centripetal and centrifugal. It appears that the traditional view of mission reflects the centripetal concept of mission (come and see) and the progressive view of mission represents the centrifugal concept of mission (go and reach). These two approaches are not mutually exclusive, but complement each other. However, there is a need for balance. In the Czech context, many believers understand mission as centripetal only. They do not realize that with the Czech mind-set, the centripetal missionary approach is not only insufficient but also counterproductive, as the following section shows.

A Transformed Church Community

The Czech Evangelical community is accustomed to a passive view of mission. One would expect that if the churches held a centripetal view of mission, drawing lost people to their midst would be characterized as strength. In the beginnings of the Moravian Church, for example, spiritually hungry people sought the Christian fellowship of the Moravian brethren. Spiritual seekers were identified “as those who stayed to ask questions following the public proclamation of the gospel.” Even today, there is an unspoken expectation among churched believers that God will bring to the church those who are to believe in Him. However, a majority of people do not want to go to church, in part because of the reasons given below.

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1Richard Trca, Missionary in the Czech Republic, interview by author, Prague, 11 July 2001.

2Stephen Oliver Nicholas, “Rediscovering the Moravian Way of Evangelism” (Ph.D. diss., Lancaster Theological Seminary, 1990), 9-10.
Embracing newcomers

When during the postcommunist wave of receptivity, unchurched people came to church, the churched people were glad. However, a group of strangers was something they were not used to and soon the strangers became a threat to them. The unchurched needed a place of acceptance, a place to belong. Instead, the church often became an institution generating intolerance and servitude, “characterized more by summary refusals than by positive proposals.”\(^1\) The churched were not ready to understand the church as a missionary entity, as a community sent for others.

One unchurched interviewee pointed out that many churches have a “vacuum cleaner” syndrome. If someone new comes to church, one or more times, the script often goes like this: “Either you become as we are, or you go away from us.”\(^2\) If the seeker who already has an “inner relationship to God” goes to church, and churched people start to point out what is wrong, what he or she should not do, what to change, he/she “feels excluded and might lose [that] relationship with God.”\(^3\)

Intolerance and a judgmental attitude on the part of churched people present a major barrier for unbelievers.\(^4\) I heard repeatedly from the unchurched that they did not appreciate the pressure they encountered in church, as they were pushed to do or believe

\(^1\) Jolanta Babiuch, “Church and Society in Post-Communist Eastern Europe,” *The World Today* 50, no. 11 (November 1994), 211.


\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Intolerance in churches may reflect the intolerance of society that is part of the Czech worldview.
something before they were ready or willing. They also did not appreciate being judged for their acts without being listened to and cared for. One respondent invited her friend to go to church. She “stayed far in the back fearing that she would not have freedom to decide for herself.”

Educating beginners

Unchurched people need a community of spiritually mature people who can mentor them and model a better way of life. One recent convert to Christianity recalled his experience with the church environment. Church was different, “much much better than the secular world.” When he came to the church, people were like “saints.” The church community helped him to gain true knowledge of his own self-worth and of his own identity. This attitude won his trust.

However, he did not appreciate being manipulated into church fellowship. A few years after his baptism, through more thorough Bible study on his own and rethinking church practices, he came to the conclusion that he was led to accept some tenets of the church as biblical, although his own study convinced him that they were not. Today, he cannot agree with all that his church presents as biblical teaching. Although he remains in the church, he believes some official interpretations of that particular church are tendentious. He regrets that “things, which should be a matter of personal decision of believers, are put forth directly” as universal biblical principles, and consent to them is

2Respondent 24, churched believer, interview by author, 6 April 2002.
required for acceptance into church fellowship.\textsuperscript{1} He believes that if he had been a candidate for baptism and church membership with his current views, most probably he would not have been accepted.

Perhaps under the influence of communism, some churches invest most of their energy in meticulous indoctrination of potential members and in scrutiny of their beliefs before allowing them to belong to the church community. When a person joins a church, his or her mind is invaded by a system of thinking and opinions that are held sacred. Often the new believers are trained to have uniform beliefs and answers for various religious questions, and gradually their interaction with others in matters of religion becomes boring and impoverishing. Thus, Czech churching may at times resemble the atmosphere of the public domain, evoking the aversion and distaste of unchurched people.

Organizing new believers

Another aspect that calls for the attention of those new to the church is church organization. Despite the new freedom and democracy the church now enjoys, churches still carry the structural elements peculiar to the communist regime. Church organization is hierarchical. Pastors are in a position of control. "In a church service, pastors wear a suit and tie, are elevated above the congregation, and typically control and perform every aspect of the service. . . . They are the only ones who can serve communion and

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid.
baptize."\(^1\) Decisions are made centrally, within a small group of people and then "passed down the hierarchy to subordinates."\(^2\)

Thus, "true" believers may be afraid of making independent decisions and taking responsibility.\(^3\) They are maneuvered by the church leaders who, in turn, do everything themselves in order to satisfy the hierarchy above them. A church governed by a hierarchical organization raises doubts with unchurched people. As one unchurched exclaimed, "To have faith, you do not need a hierarchy at all."\(^4\) Such an organizational structure is often associated with the misuse of power and money. Not only do the unchurched not understand church, they do not trust it either.

Because Czechs are sensitive to manipulation and control, the hierarchical church model does not attract them.\(^5\) Also, under a hierarchical organization, the church lacks flexibility and the structural freedom needed for effective outreach. For the church to be open to unchurched seekers, its leadership must be flexible. If the form of outreach is secondary, as noted in chapter 2, there is a need for more structural freedom.\(^6\)

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\(^1\) Olsen, 104.

\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Vlk, 46.


\(^5\) Ibid.

Relating to new converts

Because of societal intolerance, a Czech joining religious group may become alienated from family and friends. The new convert loses friendships that provided basic social and emotional support. Such a loss is serious for Czechs because, according to research published in 1993, 41 percent of them draw their inner peace and well-being from family, and 25 percent of them get this support from friends.¹

If an unbeliever comes to church, his or her perception of God is shaped not only by what is heard in the church, but also by what is seen and experienced. It may not be surprising, therefore, that a significant number of new converts decided to leave the church in the last decade because they were not able to connect with people in the church and did not make any friends.² Many new believers lost their friends by joining a church, but did not find adequate replacement of their support system.³

Research among 21 church drop-outs in the Czecho-Slovakian Union Conference of SDA showed that people were attracted to the church by someone’s personal interest in them, by friendship, and also by the atmosphere of the church. Their primary motivation for attending church was to fulfill their need for fellowship.⁴ One of the

¹The research indicates that the percentage for friendship support is much higher than in other Eastern European countries: Czech Republic, 25 percent; Slovakia, 20 percent; Ukraine, 10 percent; Latvia, 8 percent; Poland, 6 percent; Hungary, 5 percent. Roger Russell Research, Religious & Social Attitudes & the Book Market: Central & Eastern Europe, 1991-93: Thematic Tabulation & General Summary, Strategic Framework Studies (Swindon, England: Roger Russell Research, 1993), 59.


³Respondent 24, 6 April 2002.

⁴Mikulas Pavlik <mpavlik@adventorion.sk>, 17 May 2001; received by e-mail.
persons I interviewed, who joined the church nine years ago, openly stated that if he had not found friends when he joined the church, he most probably would not have stayed. His new friends were people baptized at the same time and who, as the interviewee says, “belonged to my category. They have been my friends since then.”

Relational outreach remains a challenge for churched people. “Many relationships, even within . . . church, harbor bitterness and remain emotionally distant.” Perhaps loving relationships are not perceived as important. Perhaps this is an influence of the Czech social dualism (chapter 3), which does not allow Czech Christians to befriend “outsiders.” However, research among Czech people indicates that relationships of acceptance may be the key element in reaching out to unchurched people.

A Transformed Commission

The less understood and less practiced missionary (centrifugal) concept is based on Jesus’ commission to go and make disciples (Matt 4:19; 28:19). It springs from Jesus’ revolutionary concept of incarnation, i.e., going out to plant the seeds of God’s truth and planting God’s kingdom in an unbelieving world. Vlk puts it this way: “God came for the unbelievers. He is their God!”

Because of the societal context, for Czech Christians this approach is a challenge that may have been underestimated. Vlk cautions that “the truth that Christ did not come for the healthy but for the sick is not being taken seriously! . . . We must still grow up a

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1Respondent 24, 6 April 2002.
2Olsen, 100.
3Vlk, 50.
lot to become witnesses in this sense. That is the first presupposition for tearing down the
many prejudices against the church which still exist."

There are Christians who realize their call to be “salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13)
and who sincerely believe in the centrifugal approach to mission. My findings indicate
three issues that may limit the effectiveness of Christian witness in the Czech society:
corruption of faith, lack of authenticity, and lack of practical religion.

Faith renewal

Though under communism churches were cut off from involvement in society,
church members did not escape the influence of society. The relationships and roots of
faith in spiritual values were corrupted by communism more than one might think.  
Therefore, to restore the credibility of believers in society, more than changed surface is
needed; it will take an ongoing spiritual renewal.  
To allow Atheists to experience Christ
in a visible and tangible way, believers need to revitalize their faith, hope, and love
through a genuine walk with God. Thus they will overcome the ghetto mentality adopted
during communism.

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1Ibid.

2Krejčí, “Religion and Anti-Religion: Experience of a Transition,” 115; Babiuch,  
215; Rufl, 121.

3Vlk, 45.

4Ibid., 50; Mádr, 52; Jakub Trojan, “Theology and Economics in the
Authentic witness

One way for Christians to break through the unhealthy gap between the private and public spheres, so vivid in Czech society, is through the courageous demonstration of Christian life and values in public. However, in the current situation, a majority of church-going believers live a “private Christianity.”

Richard Trca, an American missionary, compares Czech and American evangelical believers. He notes that the Czechs are “very spiritual and mature,” especially in matters of prayer and piety. He also believes that they are “more mature” in meeting and ministering to the physical needs of people than are Americans. However, the focus among the Czechs is only on meeting physical needs, not on spiritual needs. Thus, a dichotomy between the spiritual and physical worlds exists. Christians have strong beliefs but “are not sure how to apply them in their daily lives.”

In the workplace, unbelievers point out that “there is basically no difference between Christians and non-Christians.” Perhaps this statements alludes to the fact that there are Christian employers and employees, who are “not sure how their faith touches the nonbelievers they work with every day.” Kuzmic says that there is a “great need for transformers: Christian lawyers, teachers, psychologists, social welfare experts,

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1 Halík, Víra a kultura, 112.
4 Ibid.
According to Cardinal Vlk, "only in this way can [Christian believers] give a more authentic testimony." 

A lack of authentic witness may be shown by those who are too different. But their difference seems to be more like the vyhraněnost (selfness) described in chapter 3, which is counterproductive. Based on quantitative research one can draw a conclusion that the greater the cultural difference between a churched believer and an unchurched unbeliever, the more difficult will be the relation and a meaningful witness. Unnecessary differentiation from others often communicates feelings of exclusiveness and prevents credible witness. As one churched interviewee correctly observed: “People need to find out that we [Christians] are normal.”

Practical religion

As noted above, Christians contribute to society by providing social and charitable services for the needy. However, when it comes to meeting the needs of common and ordinary folks, the church seems to have lost a sense of people’s needs, as if the only thing Christians can offer in the religious sphere is dogmas. Perhaps the lack

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1 Kuzmič, 10.
2 Vlk, 51.
3 The research showed that the worldview gap between Protestant and Atheists is wider than between Catholics and Atheists. The research also indicates that it is more difficult for Protestants to connect with irreligious people in missionary endeavors.
5 Babiuch, 212, 214.
of concern in human lives comes as a result of the communist influence since the main emphasis was on ideology.

Active believers who sincerely want to carry out the legacy of the Czech reformation, emphasizing “practical ethical consequences,”¹ are sometimes misled to Pharisee-like legalism. Just as Lochman’s warning was true for Christians in a Marxist society thirty years ago, it is true today. For effective witness, Christians need to avoid the danger of falling back into old forms of slavery such as ideologizing and legalism.²

Although unchurched people are not interested in church, they are often interested in practical religion. For example, people seek out spiritual mentors to whom they go for help in solving emotional or relational problems. Regardless of religious affiliation, people seek counseling and healing. Many people have existential problems and they need help.³ They go to fortune-tellers and folk healers, perhaps because Christians do not provide such services. “The church is missing practical religiosity.”⁴

Conclusion

The findings discussed throughout this chapter are basic to a missionary revitalization movement. These insights equip us with understanding and resources needed to succeed in reaching out to Czech people, and caution us about mistakes that need to be avoided in developing a plausible missionary movement.

¹Lochman, Living Roots of Reformation, 73.
²Lochman, Church in a Marxist Society, 140-41.
Although the societal view of the church was very positive following the Velvet Revolution in 1989, it has changed for the worse. The Czech people acquired their present negative view of the church fairly quickly, but a change for the better will not happen rapidly. It is going to take much time and effort for the church to present itself in a good light and to rebuild its credibility.

The historical survey showed how some obstacles of the current missionary effectiveness (the passive view of mission, the traditionalism, the focus on dogmas rather than on people) are connected to unresolved issues of the past. The history of Czech churching is rich enough to help understand the failures of contemporary churches.

One of the main reasons why churches fail to succeed in the contemporary context is that they were built and succeeded in a completely different context. On the other hand, history is rich enough to provide resources for success in today’s context. The revitalization movement of the Moravian church comes helpful in particular.

This chapter has made evident a reality which may be painful for many Christians: the plausibility of Czech churching in the past does not guarantee its plausibility for today. Moreover, the unresponsiveness of the current churches to obvious seeking of the unchurched for spiritual resources is crying out for rethinking the role of the church in the society.

This chapter has clarified that Czech Atheists are not Atheists in the true sense of the word. Czechs are religious, but they are against organized religion. Although they may not be biblical, alternative forms of religion attract many irreligious people. Czech
people today are not considering whether their religion is biblical or not, as they used to do in the past. They are looking for a religion that is practical and meets their needs.

All of this information provides a basis for the next chapter. Chapter 5 considers biblical, plausible churching in contemporary Czech society through a mission revitalization movement.
CHAPTER V

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CZECH MISSION

REVITALIZATION MOVEMENT

In previous chapters the grounds for creating a theory of missionary outreach were laid. As indicated in chapter 2, a theory of revitalization movements is used as a framework for this proposal. The purpose of this chapter is to draw a picture of a plausible Czech churching which would become part of a missionary movement. By churching I mean the dynamics of life and outreach of the community of believers.

The theory of revitalization movement has been devised for analysis of past movements. Yet, based on fulfilling the premises of this theory, I attempt to propose how a future revitalization movement could take place through missionary outreach.

Based on Wallace’s theory, the revitalization movements rises as the sociocultural system of society is disrupted, and the societal stress continues despite of many attempts to reduce it. The revitalization comes when certain functions are successfully put at work. The analysis in chapters 3 and 4 adequately described the problem of religion in the Czech context and thus provided the evidence for a possible rise of the revitalization movement.
In this chapter, I use the functional structure proposed by Wallace as an outline for describing the development of a revitalization movement. The first section of this chapter deals with reformulating the mazeway of Christianity in the Czech context. The second section deals with issues of communicating the mazeway and organizing the new movement on the micro level. Finally, the third section deals with adaptation, cultural transformation, and routinization, which are issues dealt with at the macro level.

**Envisioning a New Religious Movement**

Revitalization movement theory gives a reason for new hope and optimism in matters of missionary work in the Czech Republic. The analysis in chapters 3 and 4 provides evidence of increased, perhaps intolerable, stress, not only in the area of relations between society and church and religious matters, but also how the church reflects upon its very nature, i.e., how it fulfills its mission. There is a high probability that in such frustration and mutual dissatisfaction, a new missionary movement will find its way.

As the theory of revitalization movement suggests, a mazeway reformulation is an essential step for raising up a new movement in the context of a stagnating church. Here I attempt to clarify the main features of the renewed theological understanding essential for a possible missionary movement. Although the new mazeway comprises elements of existing understanding, it becomes fresh and new when reformulated in the light of the theological, sociological, and analytical foundations laid out in the previous chapters.

1 The mazeway in this context means understanding and perception.
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The new mazeway is proposed in three sections. The first describes a new vision of God; the second elaborates on God’s people and the dynamics of Christian life and ministry; the third envisions a new perspective on missions and missionary focus, along with a perspective on the missionary target.

Perspective on God

A majority of Czechs will agree that there is "something up there." Although some do not think about the supernatural in terms of God, many are willing to admit the idea of God. Yet, Czech people have their questions about God. For example: If there is a God, why is there so much suffering? What can God say about scientific evidences that are against Him? In general, there is an uncertainty about God—who God is and what He is like. Nevertheless, indifferent, negative, and skeptical feelings toward God prevail on the surface, often as a projection of societal feeling towards the church.

There is a general understanding that God and science do not go together. It is believed that new scientific discoveries make it more difficult to believe in God. So it may come as a surprise for many to realize that God is not an old grandfather with a beard, but a supernatural and superintelligent being, beyond natural means of knowing. People can know about Him because He makes Himself known to people. He is the Creator of the world and humans are beings created by Him in a special way. He gives laws that keep the universe functioning. His reign is just and spotless. God made a beautiful world for people because He loved them. His desire for people was to develop and live in a peaceful and healthy community.
Although people turned against God, He did not stop loving them. Since the human Fall brought disharmony, war, suffering, and death, God has been actively involved in saving people. Because of His character He could not save people by such means as manipulation or force. That would be against His nature and character. And yet, He uses all possible means. The most significant expression of His love was that He sent His beloved Son to demonstrate who God is and to make an atoning sacrifice for fallen humankind. Thus Jesus died on the cross, carrying our faults and sins. Jesus rose from the dead, ascended back to the Father, and now both actively continue to be involved in the lives of human beings through the Holy Spirit.

This is the gospel in a nutshell. It is good news for the Czech people. Based on our analysis we can conclude that in general Czechs would not object if somebody genuinely loved them, wanted them to be happy, healthy, and live peacefully. Furthermore, Czech society, in its postcommunist period of transitions, needs to have a stable base in order to be restored and prosper. Faith in and a relationship with a loving heavenly Father could bring precisely that. The question then arises: Why are the Czech people turning their back on God?

The first possible answer is that Czechs find it hard to believe in such a God. This reality is too good to be believed. In general, God is perceived more as a cold-hearted disciplinarian, distant from people, who remains symbolically irrelevant. The idea that God is a loving father is something that does not make sense. As indicated in chapter 3, it may be because the father is in general an emotionally distant person, and also because the image of God presented by the church does not convey the idea of a loving father at
all. As a result, the image of God as a relational and loving father is difficult to accept. Yet, the image of God as a loving father provides a new perspective of God.

God loves people. Through His grace, He accepts them as they are. His salvation is not based on any conditions or requirements from people, such as good deeds or moral living. God does not need or accept any human payment for salvation. Any change in people’s lives is a result of God’s transforming love and accepting grace. People are not required to change in order to go to heaven or just to do God a favor; of this there is clear evidence in Jesus’ teaching. God is extremely happy about each repenting sinner (Luke 15), but He loves His enemies much as His friends and children. God’s attitude towards people does not depend on His mood; God does not change. He gracefully participates in people’s lives regardless of their attitude towards Him. Sadly, many churched people find this truth hard to believe. No wonder such a concept of God is inconceivable for the majority of irreligious Czechs.

God is a relational God. People matter to Him. He is involved with human suffering. He agonizes with every human tragedy and His compassion knows no boundaries. In His love He provided humans with the option of choosing; often, it is difficult for Him to let people make their own choices because He sees the future and the consequences of human decisions. He provided people with freedom of choice, He cannot manipulate or force them. Often ignored, misunderstood, despised, and accused, He patiently accomplishes His redeeming purposes. He longs for every human being to repent and turn to Him (2 Pet 3:9). He not only made the rules, He consistently plays by them.
Such a picture of God differs greatly from the picture irreligious Czech people carry in their minds. Moreover, many Christians may agree intellectually with this description of God, but may not have truly experienced it. It has not become a knowledge of their hearts. A new missionary movement can start only with a renewed knowledge of God and a fresh experience of God in people’s hearts. If the Christian religion is founded on trust and relationship with a loving God, the methods of communicating and presenting such a God must correspond. To believe in such a God, people need more time and more than just words about God.

Perspective on the Community of Believers

The first reason why Czech people refuse to believe in the Christian God was that the image of God as a loving Father is not plausible to them. The idea of the new mazeway is not to change God into a cold-hearted Disciplinarian in order to make Him plausible, but to make Him plausible by demonstrating the outcomes of His love in the transformed lives of God’s children.

A second significant reason why the Czech people hesitate to accept the Christian God as portrayed in the Bible is that they are critical of the church. In their eyes the proposed picture of God and the life of the church do not match. Although their perspective cannot be easily changed and perhaps may not be totally objective, the distorted picture of the church held by Czechs (see chapters 3 and 4) provides an opportunity to reformulate the mazeway of churching in the light of the biblical theological foundation laid in chapter 2.
The new perspective of the church naturally flows from the new view of God. As the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God lives in a relational community and provides a living model for humans. His desire is to restore human families and communities. For that purpose He sent Jesus to establish the Christian community, a church, which has existed since then. A church is far more than a hierarchical institution dominating peoples’ lives; it is God's family, a loving community. If God is a loving God and relational Being, then the Christian religion is relational as well. The church thus is at its best as a community. If the organic model of church is implemented, it will provide a powerful basis for a missionary movement.

The purpose of the community of believers is to worship and honor God and to love, encourage, and build each other up, thus inspiring and stimulating others towards faith in God. God’s plan and desire is to develop communities of faith for lost humans—loving communities that draw and embrace those weak in faith and resistant towards God. When a person is drawn towards God’s community and eventually gets to know God through Christ and falls in love with Him, such a person inevitably becomes a part of Christ’s body. Belonging to the community of God’s children then plays an essential role for every person considering faith in God.

With such a perspective, a community of believers is more than an intellectual gathering once a week. A community of believers cannot exist only by performing rituals. God seeks religion with a “human face,” a religion that leads to restoration of

1 Czech people are familiar with such a phrase because a few decades ago they were striving for socialism with a “human face.”
relationships, affecting everyday life. To this the Czechs can relate very well.

Although for some Czech Christians such an emphasis on God’s community may sound cheap and unspiritual, they need to realize that the community of believers is not an ordinary community. It is a spiritual community where people experience their new identity as God’s children (Rom 8:16; Gal 3:26; 2 Cor 5:17). Participants of such a fellowship are empowered by the Holy Spirit because the community of believers is “the creation of the Spirit, and the creation of community is the Spirit’s most important work.”¹

As a result, the Christian community breaks through the walls of prejudice and brings people into unity (Gal 3:27-28). As Richard Rice points out: “Christian community transcends all imaginable barriers.”² The church exists through the life of its members, through their relationships, and through their ministry. All believers are called to minister to each other (1 Pet 2:9). Anything that creates barriers and walls is not in harmony with God’s plan. Judging, condemning, and confronting others in the spirit of rejection have no place in God’s community. In the context of Czech churching, that is a challenge.

As the findings showed, there are strong barriers on both sides between the Czech society and the church. Just as for Czech atheists God is anything but a loving father, the church is not viewed as a loving community. Being associated with the institutions of public domain, the church is linked with uniformity, control, and manipulation. Going to

¹Rice, 27.
²Ibid., 48.
church is connected with loss of freedom. Those who go to church risk losing the right to be classified as "normal" in the eyes of others. Only those who need moral advice and improvement go to church.

A Czech often objects: "I am good enough. I do not need to go to church." This statement usually indicates a twofold misunderstanding: church is either for "better" people than "me," or it is for those who feel bad about themselves and therefore are willing to sacrifice their worldly happiness to live a moral and godly life. This statement also shows how people misunderstand not only the role and purpose of the church, but also the nature of the Christian life.

**Perspective on Christian Life**

As indicated earlier, the biblical image of a loving God may become more plausible to the unchurched as they are enabled to see God's love in action. One might expect that the most natural demonstration of God's love in action would be through lives of those who are close to Him, i.e., through lives of His believing children. As we already know, many unchurched are critical towards the church and churched people. A common criticism is that they are not different from irreligious people. The unchurched usually set up high expectations for clergy and churched people.

The church goers, on the other hand, realize that they are not angels. Yet, they know that they should be better people because they are Christians. In their view, the outsiders do not know any better because they do not believe in God. Thus, a prejudice is created and nurtured. Those who do not believe in God are bad people and faithful
believers should not associate with them. As a result, irreligious people not only consider believers weird, because they do not act normally, they also claim that there is no difference between the churched and unchurched because of the way the churched relate to the unchurched. An unhealthy division between “us and them” is thus created.

The misunderstanding of Christian life exists on both sides. The Czech people in general do not understand what difference it makes for them to be Christians. On one hand, the Bible teaches that all people have sinned (Rom 3:23). From this perspective there is no difference between churched and unchurched. As sinners, the churched are prone to failure, like anybody else. On the other hand, the Bible makes a great difference between believers and nonbelievers, because believers are saints (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2). However, they are saints not because they live a sinless or spotless life, but because they have been adopted by God and belong to His family. God accepts them the way they are. He does not require anything from people to be saved. Salvation is a gift of His amazing grace.

So what makes active believers different from others? We know already that one does not become a Christian on the basis of living a better and moral life, although some Christian fellowships have the tendency to present Christianity in that way. We also know that a person does not become a Christian in order to live a better and moral life, as many unchurched like to believe. Going to church or living a moral life does not necessarily please God. People become Christians as they realize and accept God’s love.
and passion for them, and His desire to have a relationship with them. Consequently, there is a fundamental change in their life because they experience God's love and live as those who are accepted.

It is generally known that long-lasting character transformation occurs in a loving and accepting environment, rather than amid rejection and high demands. Therefore, it is not surprising that a transformed character followed by good deeds is secondary to the fact that God is a loving Father who desires to meet and reconnect with His lost child (Luke 15). From this perspective, the major difference between Christians and non-Christians is that Christians live in God's acceptance.

That, however, is not the whole picture. As the believer is exposed to God's immeasurable love and enjoys being part of God's loving family, such a person naturally experiences transformation. The life is changed. Such a transformation of character is a lifelong process and results in multiplied acts of love as believers bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). That is why church community is essential for every believer. Life in the Christian community—where people care about each other, encourage each other, and edify each other—provides a wonderful opportunity for personal growth and character development. Each person may have different needs and follow a different timetable. There are moments of sorrow and loss; there are also times of new beginning and celebrating victory.

This is good news. A Czech desires to be better. Czech people have ideals for which they are striving. Because of their high expectations of the church, as Halik
explains, “they still expect something from it.”1 The church can meet their needs by allowing them to grow towards their ideals and those of God. This can happen through the miracle of God’s healing grace. From this perspective, the best Christians can offer to the lost is God’s loving acceptance. That is what the church is for. In the context of the church community, God provides His immeasurable and transforming power through the Holy Spirit. Thus, the churched may be empowered to reach out to the unchurched as never before.

**Perspective on Christian Service and Ministry**

Perhaps as the result of the influence of the communist regime, both religious and irreligious Czechs are skeptical of God’s supernatural intervention in people’s lives. Nevertheless, the New Testament picture of the church leaves us with no doubt about the fact that the family of believers is an arena for the Holy Spirit’s extraordinary, supernatural work. His gracious, transforming work also explains why people’s changed lives are not the result of their own efforts, nor prerequisites for being accepted into God’s family.

Not only does the Spirit bear the fruit of a changed character in peoples’ lives, He also provides each believer with special gifts intended for the common good (1 Cor 12:7). Every believer, whether layperson or paid clergy, whether new in faith or spiritually mature, is gifted and called to build Christ’s body. Spiritual birth is followed by spiritual growth and maturing, leading to the involvement of people in various levels of ministry.

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1Jandourek, 52.
Thus, unity of faith and the process of maturation within the body of Christ can be completed (Eph 4:12-13).

The excitement and experience of belonging begs for a meaningful involvement in Christ’s body. As people are equipped and trained for their ministry in the church, they contribute to God’s family with their unique blend of spiritual gifts, natural abilities, and experiences. Various relevant and even innovative ministries are developed in different circumstances, based on God’s calling and the church community’s affirmation of each person individually.

The church has not been sent to the world to rule, but to serve in a Christ-like manner. Yet, ministry cannot be forced on anybody. Ministry is not intended to feed institutional needs, but to build Christ’s body. If the church is a living organism (chapter 2), people are more important than organization. Various ministries are designed to utilize people’s gifts and passions for ministry rather than ministries being placed upon people to fit the administrative requirements. In this perspective, ministry cannot be withheld from anyone who is an active part of Christ’s body. Acts of kindness and service among believers should build bridges and not create barriers.

In the organic model of church, involvement is natural for all parts of the body. Involvement in ministry is crucial for all who belong to Christ’s body. This is so not only because ministry generates joy for those who minister and those who receive the ministry, but also because there is a strong relationship between involvement and spiritual growth. Lack of involvement may gradually result in spiritual death. Also, lack of involvement usually leads to a decreased level of belonging, which has negative
implications for an empowered spiritual life. Therefore, spiritual growth and involvement in ministry cannot exist without each other, as both arise from experiencing graceful acceptance by God and meaningful belonging to God's community.

In the Czech context, possible barriers to involvement may appear because of the dualistic mind-set. As mentioned earlier, in the Czech way of thinking there are various differentiations which generate unhealthy divisions. For example, there is a division between new believers and “old-timers.” Often new believers are withheld from involvement in ministry because they are not considered spiritually fit or for some other reason. On the contrary, they need to be given opportunity to recognize God's calling and get involved in the area of their giftedness. As Jesus' disciples, they should be apprenticed to more experienced believers and mentored by them; they should never be looked down upon or criticized.

Another strong division is between clergy and laity. As a result of this division, hierarchical orders have been established among God's people and the gap between clergy and laity has steadily widened. The clergy is expected to live more moral lives, perform all religious rituals, and to do all the ministry. In this view, the clergy also takes all responsibility for the wrongdoings and failures of the church, and then gets blamed for controlling and manipulating the lives of others. If the vision of church as Christ's body in 1 Cor 12 is properly applied, such divisions disappear. There may still be full time gospel workers and volunteers, but the ministry of all will be equally appreciated.

Although inclusion in God's community is free and unconditional, spiritual growth and maturing do not happen by chance. God's grace is not “cheap” and His
powerful transformation does not happen automatically. However, ministering to each other in the light of God’s acceptance brings about a significant difference.

With such a foundational understanding of the church community, Christian life, and ministry, the main concern of this study comes back to the basic problem: missionary outreach to the unchurched.

**Perspective on Mission**

God’s people are those who have received and accepted His generous offer of grace to restore their connection with Him and with each other. Through this divine connection, God’s desires will naturally become the church’s desires. If mission is a matter of God’s heart, and if God is a missionary, the best way to serve God is to become actively involved in what He is doing. The church is “a community whose inner dynamic reflects God’s inner reality.”

The church’s mission is derived from who God is and what His intentions towards people are. The church exists because of God, not the other way around. The church has been designed to expand and reach out to lost people. Mission is the primary nature of a church. Mission provides purpose for the church. God fully employs humans in His work for saving the lost. Thus, the faithful community of believers will reach out to lost people. Its sociological structures will reflect the dynamics of Christ’s body incarnated into a given context.

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1Rice, 31.
The term mission has not been used often among Czech believers. Perhaps this has been because the Czech Republic, with its rich Christian history and tradition, has not been considered a mission field, although official polls dealing with the status of Christianity there suggest so. In academic theological circles in the Czech Republic, mission and missiology have been marginalized and considered secondary. The concept of mission has often been misunderstood among Czech church leaders, and mission has not been given its due importance.

Mission has generally been perceived as evangelization, narrowed to the verbal proclamation of the gospel. Many believers have attempted to proclaim the gospel, but with very little response from the unchurched. As a result, there is frustration on both sides. Unchurched people feel that Christians impose their beliefs and put pressure on them. Believers, on the other hand, hide their faith because they fear being misunderstood and humiliated. At its worst, mission has been profaned into forcing or manipulating people into something they do not want, and sometimes into recruiting people to join the church.

The Process of Mission

It may be surprising for some to realize that mission is far more than verbal proclamation, particularly in the Czech context where people do not trust each other. God’s mission is more than passing information or advising the ignorant. In light of

1Pressure was reported by the unchurched as one of the major obstacles in Christian witnessing. Respondent 12, 18 April 2001; Respondent 13, 19 April 2001; Respondent 15, 15 May 2001; Respondent 23, 6 August 2001.
chapter 2, the Christian mission is to present God in understandable ways. Making God plausible to the unchurched does not mean to change the message of the gospel, but it does require a meaningful demonstration of God's love to people in their everyday life.

People need to understand in practical terms, by being told and by having it modeled, what difference Christianity can make for them. If the key difference in being a Christian is living in God's acceptance, in intimate relationship with God, the primary goal of mission is to pass this possibility on! Mission is sharing God's love with people by every possible means. Christians should be recognized by their love for one another (John 13:34-35). Mission will include any activity that allows people to experience God's grace.

If the essence of mission is to facilitate God's acceptance of people, every aspect of church life, including the teachings of the church, needs to be reconsidered in light of this truth. For example, among Seventh-day Adventists the requirement to keep the Sabbath day holy has often served as a point of division. People who did not abstain from work on Saturday were often rejected and looked down upon.

As this requirement became a legalistic condition to God's acceptance, the church's teaching then served to create barriers among people instead of bringing them together. If the same teaching were presented as a sign of God's acceptance instead of a condition of God's acceptance, as God's blessing of time reserved for developing relationships that matter to Him, God's missionary purposes would be accomplished and God's love would be communicated.
A missionary church will demonstrate God’s character on both the macro and micro levels; participate in the restoration of people’s lives; facilitate establishing a relationship with God; and empower people by embracing them in God’s community. The purpose of mission is to accept people into Christ’s body, not to recruit them into an organization. The agenda of mission should not be to increase church membership but to introduce Jesus Christ to people. If they find Him satisfying, they will be happy to join the church on their own.

Because the foundational motive for mission is God’s loving grace and immeasurable passion for lost people, the ways of doing mission and the message communicated will reflect those characteristics. A missionary movement requires structural flexibility. Mission consists of holistic and multivariate processes, and it needs to be understood that way. Just as a trusting relationship does not happen overnight and full confidence is not won on one occasion, God’s mission cannot be accomplished through one event. God’s mission takes time.

Since the Czech people find it awkward to go to church, particularly because of what others may think, one cannot force them or even expect them to attend. Regarding church attendance, people need choice and variety. If the Christian religion is based on relationships, a revitalization movement will start in the private sphere—through social networks, small groups, informal gatherings, mostly in private. It would not occur in the fashion of public meetings, since in the Czech Republic the public sphere is not soil for building loving relationships. However, as the movement grows, it cannot stop there. Because of the transforming power of the gospel, the public will soon be affected in a
positive way as well. Kindness, honesty, caring service, and good deeds will serve as bridges between the private and public worlds.

In the public sphere the custom has been to get the most and give the least. This has led to the development of an unhealthy society. When Christians expose the “private” values of kindness, honesty, and openness in public, a new societal element is applied. Christians can help to model and initiate the restoration of a healthy society by intentionally giving and not getting back. As people see over time that there is someone who selflessly fills the void in the public sphere, as they see loving care that is expressed in nonthreatening ways and without conditions, they may wonder what makes the difference.

In the Czech context, the mission of the church needs to be seen in two ways. The first is a macro perspective. The presence of the church in the society should be beneficial to the society as a whole. The church’s primary mission is to be salt and light to the world (Matt 5:13-16). God’s movement cannot exist in isolation from society. Christian leaders need to be involved in a positive way in the public sphere of society.

A Christian presence and influence are stabilizing elements, as the postcommunist society goes through moral crisis and corruption. The presence of an active body of Christ should lead towards diminishing the impact of evil. In various ways the church can initiate the process of healing and restoring peace in society (Matt 5:9). The purpose of Christ’s body is to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:45).

The second dimension is the micro level of mission. Here too, Christians need to overcome their fears and allow their faith to touch others in practical ways. This will take
time and effort. One missionary concept is to present God by going out and dwelling among people where they are. The other is to bring people in and allow them a tangible experience of God's community. These concepts are not contradictory; they complement each other. Often they have been implemented independently, which has contributed to disintegrated mission and counterproductive results. Believers who focused only on spending time with the unchurched (centrifugal mission) may have lost their faith, and people who emphasized centripetal mission may have remained isolated from the ones to be reached.

Missionaries need to find places where the people are and mingle with them. The most obvious places in the Czech context are pubs, coffee shops, nature trips, etc. At the same time, the unchurched need to come and see. With all the biases in society and the fears of the unchurched, the best place for them to come may not be a church, whether it is a building or a long-established group of believers who inherited dysfunctional patterns of churching. Outsiders can come and join home circles or small group meetings.

If the main goal of mission is change (change of allegiance, change of worldview, change of character, change of life), the key element of mission is acceptance because that creates the room in which change occurs. God did not send His son to condemn the world but to save the world (John 3:17). In the same way, God does not send the church to judge other people, but to save them, to accept them back into His family.

In the past, newcomers who did not fit were often looked down upon. Sooner or later they were expected to conform to unwritten rules of church fellowship. Their acceptance was conditioned to their accepting certain beliefs and/or meeting certain
standards of behavior. That is not in harmony with God's way of mission. As people experience conversion and begin to have a trusting relationship with Christ, the community of believers empowers them to continue this relationship with God by inclusion, whether through baptism or another symbol of acceptance. Thus, they might experience transformation which they could not have dreamed of before. Belonging to God's family will be the new element of their new identity formation.¹

Once the new believers experience God's forgiveness, grace, and the embrace of His family, they will naturally desire to bring the same experience to others. Because of the underlying values of the Czech worldview, if conversion can be experienced together with friends and family, instead of being cut off from them, the experience would be even more powerful. God's saving love does not use force, but God's love is willing to do anything possible to save the lost.

The Target of Mission

Jesus came not just to restore what has been broken but to offer salvation to the lost. Jesus came to show God's love to those who did not know God and who did not believe in Him. The mission of the church remains the same today. A significant part of the Czech population does not know God or believe in Him. Many others question His existence. The outreach proposal in this study is focused on unchurched people.

Chapter 3 focused on the Czech people, their view of religion and values, and

¹Beliefs and lifestyle issues are still important, but their place is different. They do not serve as conditions for being accepted, but they are areas of God's transforming work in people's lives as they are accepted into God's community.
their worldview. Chapter 4 assessed the plausibility of Czech churaching. In view of this analysis several assumptions can be made.

Although the Czech people do not want to have anything to do with the church and often with God, they are not bad people. The fact that they keep their distance from religion does not necessarily mean that they are not spiritually hungry or that they are irreligious. Many people are spiritually confused and some are searching. My research also shows that many unchurched people are more likely to be receptive to plausible churaching.

The Czech people have a strong desire to be accepted and to be loved. As the research in chapter 3 showed, friendship is, to a large degree, a way to happiness for the Czech people. They enjoy friendship and acceptance to the degree that they are willing sometimes to compromise their ideals in order to enjoy acceptance. Most Czechs enjoy relationships, but they also have wounds and various defense mechanisms to soothe emotional pain.

Due to the high degree of intolerance towards any deviation in the society, the Czech person simply wants to be normal in order to avoid confrontation and conflicts. Because going to church is not normal for Czechs, church attendance may threaten a loss of friendship and acceptance within society. With the picture of the church that exists in people's minds, there is no way the church can replace such a loss.

The story about God's love and friendship is too incredible for the Czech person to believe. This happens because a Czech finds it very difficult to accept such a gracious gift from God. Pride creates resistance. In addition, the history of Czech Christians, as
known and perceived by unchurched people, does not provide a positive picture of God and/or the church; therefore God's love is unrealistic and unbelievable. Moreover, Czechs are skeptic and cautious, afraid to be manipulated into believing in God. There is a subtle fear that if one openly confesses faith in God, such a decision will result in rejection, conflicts, broken relationships, or some other hardship.

Despite their fears and insecurities, I believe that when the Czech people are given an opportunity to see, touch, and experience God as a loving father and God's people as a loving community, they will be drawn closer to God and be transformed. Despite their misery and troublesome past, God loves the Czech people. They matter to Him. He is on their side!

Building Bridges through Local Missionary Structures

The message is clear and does not need to be changed. The gospel is good news about God's relationship to people, about the radical and positive change He brings into people's lives once they become part of His community. It is an offer worth more than anything else. What is not clear yet, however, is how to communicate the message in a plausible way.

Czech Christians have been trying to communicate the good news for a long time. But somehow, over time, something has gone wrong and, today, the usual way of communicating the gospel not only brings little effect, but may be counterproductive. The usual methods turn people away and decorative changes do not help. Anything that is directly related to church—particularly its organization—is looked upon with caution.
If there were a new mazeway without adequate local missionary structure, which includes communication and organization, the purpose of the new mazeway would be defeated. This is what Jesus had in mind when He spoke of “new wine in new wineskins” (Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-38). Methods matter if people are to be touched. Dave Patty reflects on the work with Czech people saying that it is like “putting thread in a needle—if you strike home, it’s wonderful, if you miss, you are out.” Both communication and organization need to be rethought. The following sections search for plausible ways of communicating the gospel and organizing new believers on a local (micro) level.

Communicating the New Mazeway

It is not easy to communicate God amid the prejudices of unchurched people who have mixed feelings about church. Some of them have been disappointed with the church. Others have only heard about other’s disappointments. Such people perceive that God, the church, and Christianity have all failed. Just as it is not simple to rebuild trust with somebody who has been disappointed, it is not easy to communicate God to people who are suspicious. If a stranger knocks on the door and starts to talk about God, a common reaction would be: “Do not give me that rubbish.” To convince people that the gospel is not rubbish one needs to build communication bridges and establish spiritual mentoring and teaching.


2Vopálecký, “Ocima Americana.”
Building Communicational Bridges

Three main ingredients are necessary for successful communication: 1 (1) the knowledge of the communicator; (2) a positive attitude of the communicator towards the receptor; and (3) a positive attitude of the receptor to the communicator.

Knowledge

Knowing that Czech people are well-educated and intelligent people, a witness to the gospel cannot approach them with a shallow knowledge of God and His Word. In order to communicate with confidence, one needs to know in one’s heart that the gospel, or in Wallace’s terms the “mazeway,” is not rubbish but a very powerful message.

Moreover, being aware that the Christian religion is not just about abstract knowledge, as it is often presented, but about getting to know a loving heavenly Father, the communicator needs to have a living relationship and experience with God and His community.

Another area of knowledge, often overlooked, is the knowledge of one’s audience. In order to communicate well, one needs to learn the unchurched people’s language and live among them in order to communicate in their cultural terms. This method was used by Jesus. He knew people He dealt with. He was actually one of them and was thus able to connect with them.

Attitude of the communicator

My attitude and the way I relate to the people are as important as the message I

1These elements were adapted from Marguerite Kraft, 79.
communicate. The meaning of my communication to the unchurched is not primarily in what I say, but in how I relate to them. People usually notice if somebody truly cares about them; they do not need to be told. Communication is initiated before words are pronounced. This is particularly relevant when people are prejudiced and do not trust.

In chapter 2 we reviewed four models for a plausible presentation of the gospel. Although all of them allude to the problem of communication, the one that most vividly deals with the situation of prejudiced people is Masaryk’s model of Jesus’ religion. This model does not rely so heavily on a verbal presentation of the gospel as on religion in practice. A person demonstrates his or her relationship with God by showing love to other people. People are touched by this kind of religion, whether they want to or not; and yet, without being confronted or forced.

Czech people are motivated by a good example or model. Communicating God’s love to people for whom God’s love does not make sense, without actually showing them how God’s love works in practice, is not plausible. Before the unchurched will trust believers enough to listen about God, they first need to know that the believers trust and love them.

Attitude of the receptor

The third important element for communicating the gospel lies in how the receptor relates to the communicator. If the receptors do not trust, they will not take

1Ibid., 85.

seriously what is communicated. Czech people do not trust; witnessing to them without gaining their trust first is often counterproductive.

Building trust with people is important for communicating with them, although it may take some time.\(^1\) If the communicator’s attitude towards them is consistent and predictable, over time trust will be built.\(^2\) In order to trust, people need to find out that Christians “are normal,” suggested one of the followers of alternative religion.\(^3\) Because of the Czech vyhraněnost (selfness) described in chapter 3, this is very true.

The best way to gain people’s trust is to establish a personal relationship with them. People usually do not talk about their intimate life with just anybody. It is the same with conversations on religion and a relationship with God. It is difficult to share matters of the heart with people one does not know. The effectiveness of communication regarding a personal relationship with God will depend on the level of mutual trust.

In the context of dual social space, as described in chapter 3, outsiders in the social realm have a small chance to be heard. They are not trusted and only a surface relationship is possible with them. In order to win trust, outsiders must become insiders. A trusting relationship can be built as the Christian becomes part of someone’s private sphere. For example, an invitation to a barbecue, a birthday party, a visit to someone’s cottage, or to spend a vacation together, all convey the certainty that a special bond is being formed. This will contribute to a relationship of trust.

\(^{1}\)Trca, interview, July 11, 2001.


\(^{3}\)Respondent 12, 18 April 2001.
From this perspective, for effective missionary work, friendship with unchurched persons is more valuable than the verbal presentation of the gospel. When the missionary’s love for the person comes directly from a loving relationship with God, the result may be surprising. Stark’s findings presented in chapter 2 are relevant: The only people who joined a religion were those “whose interpersonal attachments to members overbalanced their attachments to nonmembers.”1 Knowing that the essence of the gospel is attachment to God, this finding is important for any missionary endeavor. The unchurched may convert, not because they are seeking an ideology. They are more likely to convert to bring their “religious behavior into alignment with that of . . . [their] friends and family members.”2

**Spiritual Mentorship**

One way to build bridges towards the unchurched is to be their spiritual mentors. As the relationship with an unchurched friend develops meaningfully, the Christian becomes a spiritual mentor. People need that; they often look for spiritual advice when visiting folk healers, reading horoscopes, or paying fortune-tellers to seek direction for their life.

As an insider, the Christian can be a good spiritual mentor before ever talking about religion, dogmas, or doctrines. The religion of the mentor becomes practical as the Christian shows how practical faith works. This must be faith that relates to their life and

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1Stark, 16.

2Ibid., 16-17.
their children, a faith that uses words of their everyday life. As Christian witnesses "we need to choose words people understand."¹

Because God knows the future and the Christian is connected to God, He will give wisdom to share with unchurched friends. The believer must listen to their stories, their desires, and help them interpret life as it is here and now. One does not need to impose personal values, but only help them to achieve their own ideals. As a spiritual mentor, one does not begin with the word God; one waits for people to speak about it, to ask about it. The Christian's task is to help them identify barriers to belief.² If one's life speaks about God's love, the "Czech person will start to ask."³

**Spiritual Teaching**

As the unchurched person asks questions about religion, the Christian shares his or her story. As the person asks more, the missionary gives examples that lead the person to his or her own conclusions. Beliefs should not be hidden. If people ask, they should be shared, using the Bible as needed. At this point, a decisive moment comes. The findings of chapter 4 give an unambiguous message: Do not force your beliefs on people! Do not use your information to manipulate the respondent in any way.

As a friend, the believer must allow people to discover truth for themselves. They must be helped to find God in their own life. The missionary's task is to listen to them,

¹Šolc, interview, July 17, 2001.
³Ibid.
pray for them, and love them. As the interviews with followers of “other” religions indicate, the Christian’s beliefs may not make sense for the person immediately. Perhaps a crisis in relationship between the two, seeker and the “missionary” may occur in the process. But if the teaching agrees with the way the Christian acts, the tension will pass. Example is very powerful.

Based on my interviews, I disagree with Lochman, who suggested that in order to prove the freedom of the gospel, the rules of life need to be reduced. He may have been referring to Pharisee-like legalism,¹ and his words were uttered in the context of a communist regime with many rules of life; however, in the light of the picture of God presented in our maze way and also in the context of today’s free society, searching people seem to be receptive to guidelines for life and a more conservative lifestyle.

When communicating the gospel and its implications for life, one must be simple and radical. That is the legacy of the Czech reformation. The biblical message does not need to be softened. On the contrary, a holistic message that relates to all aspects of life is more appealing to people than reduced or twisted teachings. There is no need to hide the truth. One only needs to be patient, friendly, and gentle in presenting the new maze way.

Spiritual teaching cannot be forced. There are times, however, when such teaching can be initiated by churched people. It is a common knowledge that the Czech people are receptive toward Christian holidays. One can facilitate meaningful celebration of religious holidays, such as Christmas and Easter. These days provide an occasion when talk about faith in God comes naturally.

¹Lochman, Church in a Marxist Society, 140.
In any event, once the message gets across, once the prejudices and barriers are removed, and people realize who God is, how He cares about them and wants their best, they will accept His offer of guidance.

Organizing around the New Mazeway

So far the discussion has been about befriending people and communicating with them, which occurs best in informal settings and on a one-to-one basis. However, teaching of the Word may occur in a family setting, in small groups, or with a cluster of small groups. A good example is the Alpha course, which is designed to familiarize Atheists with the basics of Christianity. Before each simple Bible presentation people interact together while eating, each small group at one table.

Once people decide to accept the new mazeway, follow Christ, and become part of His body through baptism, there is a need for a certain type of organization. If there is only a small group of church planters, matters of organization are not urgent.

In order to allow for the development of plausible organization, there must be flexibility and willingness to learn, not only from other movements but also from the new believers. Once they understand the dynamics of Christ’s body, they may actively participate in applying the dynamics to the life of their believing community and decide how to fellowship together, edify each other, minister to each other, and worship God together.

For more about the Alpha course, go to: <www.alpha.org.uk>. In the Czech Republic, this course is organized by KMS (Christian Mission Society) in Prague, Nám. Dr. V. Holého 3, 180 00 Praha 8. Phone: 02/6833505.
New believers can always join the existing church structures, if they decide to. However, if they do not find formally organized religion meaningful, which according to the polls is the way a majority of Czechs feel, they need to make a careful study of the mazeway and agree how to organize themselves. Every new church plant needs to have space for the development of churching that reflects their best understanding and application of the mazeway.

There are different models of churching besides the traditional churches, such as house churches and cell churches. These relational models of churching have been successfully implemented all over the world. But again, because the church is organic rather than static, one should not be limited to textbook structures.

Within the Czech context, one place that has taken the place of church for the unchurched is the bar or pub. It is a place where Czech people naturally look for community. It is a place where they go when life treats them miserably or gives them reason to celebrate.

A centrifugal approach to missions would be Lochman’s model of churching, in which Christians appear in unexpected places. A pub is a place where the Christian is

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2Lochman, *Church in a Marxist Society*, 88.
not expected but can meet people where they are. But a ministry of love in a pub over time would be welcome.

A centripetal approach would be to build or rent a pub for the need of a newly planted community of believers. Such a place can serve as a sanctuary where people come to worship God, and during the week it could serve as a non-alcoholic bar and simulate the function of a pub. To go to the pub is natural for Czech people; to go to church is not. The concept is derived from the Bible, where God desired to meet His people where they were (Exod 25:8). The example of the pub is only one possibility. The concept can be applied in different ways, according to the needs of a given situation.

Every new community of God will have different needs for organization. There is no fixed way of churching. Some people have a need for complex structure (Mormons), some prefer looser but still visible structures (Hare Krsna), and some prefer churching with no visible structure (esoteric movement, illegal movement, underground movement).

The church leaders of established churches worldwide are more and more aware of the need to respond to the issue of reaching the unchurched. For example, The Global Mission Issues Committee at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists stated that “at times experimental organizational structures can be approved for testing, especially as a part of new initiatives in the mission of reaching resistant or previously unreached peoples.”

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This section has considered the practical implications of the new mazeway. Communication that breaks through barriers and prejudices may allow the unchurched to see God in a different light. Organization that reflects the dynamics of God’s organic community, where believers can grow by being ministered to and by ministering to others, is inevitably going to build bridges to unchurched people. Chapter 4 pointed to the emotional distance from, rejection of, and intolerance toward unchurched newcomers. Loving relationships with all who come to taste God’s community and their acceptance and inclusion in the community will be the turning point in Czech outreach.

Plausible structures are important in helping people to see God for who He is. If the structure communicates a picture which is in conflict with who God is, then Christianity is not believable and has failed. The new mazeway that is clearly spelled out and plausible structures are a good starting point to reverse that process.

Transforming Irreligious Czech People through a Revitalization Movement

Chapters 3 and 4 described the resentfulness of Czech people towards the church, on one hand, and the stagnating church on the other hand. In the first part of this chapter, the mazeway was reformulated in light of the Scripture in order to restore God’s mission by building bridges between the Christian church and society.

With clearly formulated mazeway in the first section, and the micro level missionary endeavor in the second section—in the context of working with individuals and small groups, comes the activity aiming the expansion of the body of Christ on the societal or macro level.
On this level, the resistance of irreligious, unchurched people must be overcome and revitalization movement developed that would facilitate cultural transformation. This section continues to follow the blueprint of the revitalization movement and elaborates on the three remaining points: adaptation, cultural transformation, and routinization.

Adaptation

Adaptation is inevitable for planting a missionary movement that is culturally relevant. Understanding and following the reformulated mazeway will lead to change. While this study does not specialize in change, the main objective of the movement includes change, both on the micro and the macro level—change in the lives of individuals and eventually change in the societal attitude towards the Christian God and His church.¹

The theory of revitalization points out that in the process of facilitating these changes, there are going to be adaptations. One area liable to change is that of methods of communicating the mazeway. In light of the feedback from the unchurched, regular assessment of the outcomes needs to be made, followed by revisions of the strategy to maintain plausibility. Adaptation will become necessary as the movement grows.

God does not change, but our perception of Him may change. The message of the gospel does not change, but the mazeway may be reformulated in order to remain faithful to God-given purposes. Adaptation will follow newly emerged societal changes that add

stress and dissatisfaction. Vision will be molded and shaped by changes in the cultural context.

The resentment of the unchurched will not fade in a short time. In some cases this may take years. Their disappointment with Christianity will have to be dealt with. If necessary, Christians need to initiate an open dialog with humility and repentance.

Although a missionary movement may not be directly linked to an existing church system, the criticism and blame will surely fall upon the movement as well. In the spirit of God's love leading to reconciliation, the intent is not to disassociate or detach from believers of the traditional churches nor to condemn them in any way. However, it is very likely that the presence of a missionary movement will be a threat to some of the existing churches and they may take offense at members of the movement.

The analysis of the life of churches permits drawing a conclusion that may help the members of traditional churches to realize that a fresh start may have an impact on the quality of church health. As chapter 4 shows, a higher percentage of acceptance of change and innovation in the neo-apostolic churches that were planted recently is followed by a higher score in the quality of various areas of church health involving spiritual experience or feelings of mutual interdependence. From their experience it seems that change may not only bring positive results, but may revive the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

Cultural Transformation

The goal of a revitalization movement is to bring cultural transformation and with
that, a reduction of societal stress and dissatisfaction. In the Czech context, the mission revitalization movement is geared towards facilitating cultural transformation as well.

Interestingly, this is not the first time this has happened in Czech history. In the sixteenth century, a revitalization movement was initiated among Czech Christians (see chapter 4). The start of the Moravian church seems to fit the description of a revitalization movement. Under the strong leadership of Lukas, steps were made to redefine the role of the church. The Moravians defined their identity, not in opposition to the world as their predecessors had, but for the sake of the world. Their focus was not on dogmas and correctness of their beliefs, as it had been with the Old Brethren, but in being a living witness, embracing unchurched people in the Christian fellowship. In the desire to reach out, the Moravians turned to the world, not to judge, but to save the lost. The change was not without schism and tensions, but the movement bore fruits. Their open attitude turned other people around.

Unfortunately, their movement was violently fought when it reached the stage of cultural transformation. Komensky, their last bishop, was devoted to the betterment of human life and society. He led the church to be more directly and positively involved in society. Through his work he was building bridges, hoping to bring all people into one faith and become one body of Christ.

Such a transformation was envisioned not only by Komensky centuries ago, but also in the twentieth century, by Masaryk, the first Czech president. The role of religion in the society for him was “to make the world truly Christian, not through power but
through love." That dream might come true for Czech society. Although, on the surface, society is religionless, the survey showed that deep, inside, people are religious. As Masaryk pointed out, "what many people take to be a definite movement away from religion is sometimes a desire for another religion, one that is living, pure, and more perfect."2

The legacy of Czech Protestantism, with its emphasis on living the truth in everyday life, is still present in the soul of the Czech nation. Perhaps that is the reason why Czechs are so critical of the church. They seem to be hungry for a religion with a human face. They often point out that there is no difference between Christians and non-Christians. For that reason, the revitalization movement of the New Unity of Brethren is an excellent model of plausible churching for us today as well.

While the presence and knowledge of God as a loving Father will be spread through social networks in the private, invisible sphere, and while people will be allowed to see God and become part of His community, God's presence will be established also in the public sphere, in the market place, public services, and local government. Christians who accept the new mazeway will emerge as living witnesses in "unexpected places," as Lochman envisioned thirty years ago.3

Naturally, when more and more people are exposed to the power of God's love, their transformed lives will shine with His love wherever they go. Such Christians will be

1Masaryk and Čapek, 137.
2Ibid., 138.
3Lochman, Church in a Marxist Society, 89-99.
the light of the world and as their light will shine, people will see their good deeds and praise the Father in heaven (Matt 5:14-16). The influence of Christian lives will become irresistible.¹

Good deeds and unselfish Christian service play a key role in God’s plan of salvation. However, the good deeds are not intended to secure our salvation or to hide our selfish desires to be better than others, or to gain favor with God. Good deeds are intended to demonstrate the power of God’s love. Rice notes that “the most important effect of Christ’s saving work is the unique quality of Christian corporate life.”² Good deeds are the result of God’s work in us through His Son and His Holy Spirit.

God wants our good deeds for the sake of others. Good deeds are to build bridges, not to widen the gap. The basic mission of Christians is to be known for loving one another (John 13:34-35). If Christians focus more on loving one another and bettering people’s lives, God’s image in society can be changed. Unchurched Czechs need to see in order to believe. That is their language. As Ambros, in his description of the Cyril-Methodius tradition, reminded his readers: Czech people were initially converted by hearing the gospel in their own language.

This remains true. Unchurched people will not understand the message of the Lewis’s model of a church with irresistible influence is relevant. When he talks about building bridges to the society, he describes how for more than ten years people from his Bible Fellowship Community slowly moved into the community with “love and charity, establishing preschool programs, literacy assistance, friendship clubs, summer camps, even college scholarship funding.” Lewis and Wilkins, 70. I believe that a similar service to Czech society can become an important message to the unchurched and allow them to see “proof positive.” Ibid.

²Rice, 49.
churched unless it is transmitted in understandable communication. Words run out of power. Christian lives are the only message about God some will ever hear. Therefore, the testimony of Christians cannot be less than that of the apostle John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim" (1 John 1:1). Once the unchurched are able to see and their lives are changed by what they see, cultural transformation will have happened.

Routinization

As noted in chapter 2, people are social beings and there is a dialectic relationship between them and the environment they live in. Experiences of individuals contribute to the whole of the society. As more individuals experience change in their lives that comes from their new perspective on God, the whole society will be affected. It is, therefore, reasonable to believe that the Christian values modeled through the transformed lives of God's children will become the basis for a true democratic society, as the transformed culture will be routinized.

The values that the Czech people have been striving for over the centuries were recaptured by Trojan shortly after the collapse of communism. Trojan envisioned a new democracy in the Czech Republic, in light of the Czech reformation, in living these four values:

1. Truth. People may live in truth, with integrity and authenticity.

2. Grace. People may live in grace, with compassion and acceptance.
3. **Respect.** People may live in respect and tolerance of one another, with the dignity of God’s children.

4. **Love.** People may live in mutual love, caring about others and sharing with them what they have received.¹

As the culture transformation becomes routinized, these four values will become the foundation of a new Czech democracy. Not only will the image of the Christian God and His followers change, but life in society will be different. People will have learned to expose their private values in public for the benefit of those whom they do not even know and yet still care about. People will learn to own responsibility for their surrounding environment. They will be kind to each other and greet each other in public places always—not only on a day when the Czech ice hockey team wins gold as in the 1998 Winter Olympics.

As a result of culture transformation, people live a more purposeful life. New activities reduce stress and restore meaning to the society. The understanding of the image of God will be changed and a new meaning of the role of church in society will be established. People will not be afraid to build relationships with others, and their fears will gradually resolve. As people experience how God relates to them, their identity will be reshaped. Pride filled with inferiority will be replaced by humility filled with dignity. Czech intolerance will be replaced by loving acceptance. Czechs will no longer have to live in two worlds. Thus, the balance the Czech people long for will be restored, and new wisdom will guide their lives.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to develop a proposal for missionary outreach to irreligious Czech people by applying a theory of revitalization movements. In the first chapter, the problem and purpose were briefly stated, methodology explained, and terms defined.

Chapter 2 laid the foundation for this study by examining the theological understanding of church and mission, plausible ways of communicating the reality of God, and reviewing the theory of revitalization movements as the theoretical framework for implementing change.

In the third chapter, the problem of the Czech attitude towards church was further explored and specified. The main objective was to explore how the worldview and culture of the Czechs may contribute to the current disaffection of society with the church. In light of my historical analysis and evaluation, the work of other scholars, and my ethnographic research I was able to identify the three traits of the Czech worldview most relevant for this study:
1. The Czech Hussitism, which I call the ability to detect errors and respond in a radical way.

2. The Czech *vyhraněnost*, which indicates the uncertainty of Czech people about their identity and which is often expressed by Czech national pride mingled with feelings of inferiority, and by a high degree of intolerance towards others.

3. The Czech dualistic world, which describes how the life of Czech people is organized into two distinct spheres—private and public—with different set of values and expectations for each.

Chapter 4 complemented the argument of chapter 3, focusing on institutional church factors. Following a brief review of the history of Czech churching, the present view of the role of church was described. Furthermore, I attempted to profile the four major religious groups present in the Czech Republic. In the final part the role of the church in the postcommunist period was assessed, and the missionary effectiveness of the churches was analyzed and evaluated.

The main reasons for loss of credibility of the church in the postcommunist period are: the (Catholic) church’s ambiguous involvement in politics, the church’s demand of restitution for possessions, which raises suspicions in the population that the church is still motivated by greed and power, and the tension between the leaders of the main Protestant churches and the Catholic church, which are seen as a replay of past hostilities.

The assessment of the missionary effectiveness of churched people indicates that the Czech churched people hold on to a rather passive view of mission—"come and join us." However, when the unchurched come to church, they often face lack of acceptance,
and a pressure to conform. In the eyes of unchurched people, the values of the public sphere—uniformity, manipulation, and control—also permeate organized religion. Among unchurched people, the Czech churched people are challenged to show how their faith in God connects with and applies to their daily life. According to the unchurched, their religion still lacks practicality and is therefore largely irrelevant to their lives.

As illustrated in figure 3, the methodology for developing model in this study started by a continuous bibliographical research (on both theoretical foundation and contextual factors). Building on the theological foundation in chapter 2, I used the insights of ethnographic findings (both my findings and findings of others) to describe and analyze the societal factors in chapter 3, and the findings of church assessment to analyze and evaluate the institutional factors. The findings and conclusions of chapters 2,
3, and 4 served as foundational building blocks for a synthesis of a theoretical model for reaching unchurched Czech people in the Czech Republic (chapter 5).

As a framework for the proposed model, a theory of revitalization movements was integrated in order to envision practical dimensions of how to translate the theory of reaching irreligious people into reality which will be tested in the near future. Thus, plausible ways of communicating the transforming message of the gospel were explored and suggested, and the role of church in society was redefined. If God is a loving heavenly Father who by all means wants to save the lost, then this message needs to get through to the unchurched in a credible way. That goal affects all aspects of churching, including ways of reaching and ways of organizing the community of believers. God is not changing, but He wants to change His people so they are truly becoming a redemptive community in which the unchurched experience God’s grace in credible and practical ways and live as the salt of the world.

Conclusions

Through my interviews with and surveying of unchurched people, I found, to my own surprise, that the Czech people are not as irreligious as presented in official polls such as the 2001 census. All Czechs seem to believe in something. However, they have a rather negative view of religion and the church, in particular.

Czech history provides some explanation for their current attitudes and their worldview. For example, the spirit of John Hus, who dared to pinpoint the errors of the church, is still with the Czech people, as they are very critical towards the church.
However, unlike Hus, they stay away from church. The fact that for most of their history the Czechs were under foreign domination causes the Czechs to suffer from an ongoing identity crisis. The Czechs are very proud to be Czechs but at the same time they lack self-worth. As result, various defense mechanisms are set in motion.

The Czechs are critical and intolerant of others. Although inside they are friendly and sensitive, on the surface they are rough and suspicious. It is common for Czechs in the public sphere to be two-faced. The question, “What will other people say?” often drives many of their everyday decisions. By these defense mechanisms people subconsciously protect themselves from getting hurt.

The world Czechs live in is in many aspects divided into two realms—public and private. It is impossible to know a Czech person truly in the public sphere. The private sphere is protected because that is where people treasure their dearest values—happiness, love, friendship, and relationships. The public arena, on the other hand, is like a jungle where people hide to catch their prey. The primary value of work is not so much in making a difference in the world as in satisfying material needs.

In the Czech mind-set, the church clearly belongs to the public domain. The value of going to church, therefore, is measured by the same criteria as any other public institution. People make their decision based on what benefits (mostly of a material nature) they might obtain from going to church. The result is obvious. In the public perception, going to church carries with it significant losses and minimal gains.

A church is seen as institution that asks for money, volunteer work, and other sacrifices. A church is not seen as an agency that gives to people. The church is often
associated with loss of freedom, loss of happiness, loss of friends, loss of self, loss of comfort, and perhaps even loss of peace. The people’s reserve towards the church is nurtured by their fear that they would become extremist (or at least not normal), that they would be manipulated into believing, or that they would be controlled by the church hierarchy. In summary, people are afraid that church would invade and spoil their most valuable domain, their private world.

Repeatedly in its history, the country was violently taken over and the public was oppressed by a hostile power. The last experience of such a caliber was the communist dictatorship. Interestingly, the communists were not satisfied with controlling the public sphere; they tried to gain access to people’s private worlds but were not successful. However, the walls protecting the private part of people’s lives grew thicker.

The password into the private sphere is credibility and trust. The church as a public institution lacks that. Although the church gained a favorable position through the Velvet Revolution in 1989, through unfortunate developments, soon afterwards the church lost its credibility. Thus, for an increasing number of the unchurched, the church does not count.

By its nature religion includes the private sphere of life. Czechs substitute semireligious forms such as the pub, nature, sports, and horoscopes for the church and religion. There is also a growing group of spiritually hungry people who search for plausible forms of religion and are part of various cults, sects, or hidden religious circles, away from the church or a publicly organized religion. Plausible churching attracts people, regardless of whether or not it is biblical.
One of the claims of unchurched people is that there is no difference between Christians and "atheists." My research of deeper values among major religious groups agrees to a certain degree with the voice of the unchurched. The religious values of Catholics, the largest Christian group, are much closer to those of unbelievers than those of Protestants or other religious groups.

The often hostile attitude of the unchurched towards the church obviously wounds the believers who then, naturally, tend to use defense mechanisms to protect themselves from getting hurt. And since the Czechs use many defense mechanisms, the churched do well at defending themselves. The churched are unbelievably intolerant towards the unchurched. And since churched people have a rather passive view of mission, the gap between the churched and unchurched is not surprising.

Czech churching has a rich history of which the churched people can be proud. This history, however, also implies a tendency to defend traditions and a lack of flexibility. Neo-apostolic churches that broke away from the traditional churches tend to be more flexible to changes and, according to Schwarz's theory of Natural Church Development, are healthier. They have seen some success in reaching the Czech people. However, because of the view society has of the church, any visibly organized church has difficulties to build meaningful bridges to unchurched people.

Without plausible communication bridges, God's tremendous love and desire to save lost people do not make sense to unchurched people. For that reason, a strategy for reaching out to Czech people based on the revitalization movement theory is appropriate.
In this model the message of the gospel does not change; what changes is the manner of communication based on the needs of the unreached people. Content is superior, form is subordinate. If the form does not communicate the content, it is counterproductive. For that reason, the goal of a revitalization movement is to develop ways of churching that are not threatening to people and allow them to experience God’s transforming love.

Recommendations

This study attempts to treat a problem that many churched and unchurched people in the Czech Republic deal with. It provides information and the distinction between facts and myths or stereotypes in the area of Czech religiosity. This study provides a brief and significant picture of where both the average unchurched and average churched person are. It can be used as a resource for any Christian witness who desires a deeper understanding of the contextual and institutional factors.

This study unfolds a vision for a fresh way of missionary outreach to unchurched people. The intention is to stimulate and provoke rethinking the role and place of Christians in society. For a Czech pastor or layperson, this research can become a philosophical guide for a paradigm shift in reaching out to unchurched Czech people.

However, this theory needs to be tested in practice and evaluated accordingly. As a theoretical proposal it does not include practical steps for implementing the revitalization model. Neither does it teach Christians how to do mission in this way or
how to obtain the skills needed for such a missionary approach. As this model is put into practice, a practical guidebook needs to be developed that incorporates new insights gained from practical experience.

The limitation of this study lies in that both societal and institutional factors change. As the model is tested in the next decade, the situation in the Czech Republic may also look different, requiring that this study be updated, revised, and/or reevaluated.

The study of Czech worldview, for example, is far from exhaustive. Further research and testing of the ideas proposed are needed. For example, one specific worldview trait that deserves further research is the dualistic aspect. Where does this dualistic view of life come from? To what degree did the Czech reformation legitimize this dualistic view? To what extent was the Czech Reformation influenced by Platonic idealism? To what degree is the Czech worldview still concurrent with Plato’s worldview?

Another area begging for further research is the religiosity of the Czech people, which has not been adequately explored and understood, particularly because of the Czech dualistic worldview. People do not talk about their private religious activities and do not present themselves as religious although they might be. For that reason, it is difficult to comprehensively assess and generalize the religiosity of unchurched people. However, my data has provided helpful insights which may serve as a starting point for further research of the unofficial and invisible religion of the Czech people.

Finally, in this study the focus was exclusively on the context of the Czech Republic. A study of the development of religiosity in other postcommunist countries...
could provide further light on the topic, and could help to provide a clearer picture of the current state of religion and further specify implications for missionary outreach.
APPENDIX A

Interview Guidelines

Part I: Life Review

1. Factual Data: Date and place of birth; family information (number and ages of siblings), occupation and education; religious identification (if none, than family of origin); characterization of social class (family of origin and now)

2. Divide life into chapters: (major) segments created by changes or experiences - “turning points” or general circumstances.

3. In order for me to understand the flow of movement in your life and your way of feeling and thinking about it, what other persons and experiences would be important for me to know about?

4. Thinking about yourself at present: What gives your life meaning? What makes life worth living for you?

Part II: Life-Shaping Experiences and Relationships

1. At present, what relationships seem most important for your life? (E.G., intimate, familial, or work relationships.)

2. You did/did not mention your father in your mentioning of significant relationships. When you think of your father as he was during the time you were a child, what stands out? What was his work? What were his special interests? Was he a religious person? Explain.
   When you think of your mother... [same questions as previous]?
   Have your perceptions of your parents changed since you were a child? How?

3. Are there other persons who at earlier times or in the present have been significant in the shaping of your outlook on life?
4. Have you experienced losses, crises or suffering that have changed or "colored" your life in special ways?

5. Have you had moments of joy, ecstasy, peak experience, or breakthrough that have shaped or changed your life? (E.g., in nature, in sexual experience or in the presence of inspiring beauty or communication?)

6. What were the taboos in your early life? How have you lived with or out of those taboos? Can you indicate how the taboos in your life have changed? What are the taboos now?

7. What experience have affirmed your sense of meaning in life? What experiences have shaken or disturbed your sense of meaning?

Part III: Present Values and Commitments

1. Can you describe the beliefs and values or attitudes that are most important in guiding your own life?

2. What is the purpose of human life?

3. Do you feel that some approaches to life are more "true" or right than others? Are there some beliefs that all or most people ought to hold and act on?

4. Are there symbols or images or rituals that are important to you?

5. What relationships or groups are most important as support for your values and beliefs?

6. You have described some beliefs and values that have become important to you. How important are they? In what ways do these beliefs and values find expression in your life? Can you give some specific examples of how and when they have had effect? (E.g., times of crisis, decisions, groups affiliated with, causes invested in, risks and costs of commitment.)

7. When you have an important decision to make regarding your life, how do you go about deciding? Example?

8. Is there a "plan" for human lives? Are we - individually or as a species - determined or affected in our lives by power beyond human control?

9. When life seems most discouraging and hopeless, what holds you up or renews your hope? Example?
10. When you think about the future, what makes you feel most anxious or uneasy (for yourself and those you love; for society or institutions; for the world)?

11. What does death mean to you? What becomes of us when we die?

12. Why do some persons and groups suffer more than others?

13. Some people believe that we will always have poor people among us, and that in general life rewards people according to their efforts. What are your feelings about this?

14. Do you feel that human life on this planet will go on indefinitely, or do you think it is about to end?

Part IV: Religion

1. Do you have or have you had important “religious” experiences?

2. What feelings do you have when you think about “higher power”?

3. If you pray, what do you feel is going on when you (or someone else) pray?

4. Do you feel that your beliefs system (life outlooks) is “true” and the best? In what sense? Are life philosophies (including religious traditions) other than your own “true”?

5. What is evil? How have your feelings about this changed? How did you feel or think about evil as a child, an adolescent, and so on?

6. (Do you consider yourself a religious person?) What is your experience with religious people? How do you feel about church?

7. Some people believe that without religion morality breaks down. What do you feel about this?

8. Where do you feel that you are changing, growing, struggling or wrestling with doubt in your life at the present time? Where is your growing edge?

9. What is your image (or idea) of mature faith (hope, confidence, human being)?
APPENDIX B

Survey of Religiosity

Part A. Purpose in Life

Please complete each item by making a single response.

1. I am usually:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   completely
   bored

2. Life to me seems:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   completely
   routine

3. In life I have:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   no goals or
   aims at all

4. My personal experience is:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   utterly
   meaningless
   without a purpose

5. Every day is:
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   exactly
   the same
   constantly
   new and
different

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6. If I could choose, I would:
   1 2 3 4 5 6
   prefer never to have been born

7. After retiring, I would:
   1 2 3 4 5 6
   loaf completely the rest of my life

8. In achieving life goals, I have:
   1 2 3 4 5 6
   made no progress whatsoever

9. My life is:
   1 2 3 4 5 6
   empty, filled only with despair

10. If I should die today, I would feel that my life has been:
     1 2 3 4 5 6
     completely worthless

11. In thinking of my life:
     1 2 3 4 5 6
     often wonder why I exist

12. As I view the world in relation to my life, the world:
     1 2 3 4 5 6
     completely confuses me
13. I am a:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
very
irresponsible
person

14. Concerning man’s freedom to make his own choices, I believe man is:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
completely
bound by
limitations of
heredity and
environment
absolutely free
to make all
life choices

15. With regard to death, I am:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
unprepared
and
frightened
prepared and
unafraid

16. With regard to suicide, I have:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
thought of it
seriously as
a way out
never given it
a second
thought

17. I regard my ability to find a meaning, purpose, or mission in life as:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
practically
none
very great

18. My life is:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
out of my
hands and
controlled by
external factors
in my hands
and I am in
control of it

19. Facing my daily tasks is:

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
a painful
and boring
experience
a source of
pleasure and
satisfaction

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20. I have discovered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no mission</td>
<td>or purpose in</td>
<td>life</td>
<td>clear-cut goals</td>
<td>and a satisfying</td>
<td>life purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part B. Nondoctrinal Religion

Please use the following scale to indicate the extent to which you agree with each item below.

1 = fully agree  
2 = partly agree  
3 = uncertain  
4 = partly disagree  
5 = fully disagree

21. I am not very interested in discussion of the question of the meaning or meaninglessness of life.

22. Despite of the often chaotic conditions of human life, I believe there is an order to existence that someday we will come to understand.

23. I often wonder what life is all about.

24. Although mankind understands the world around him better, the basic meaning of life is beyond our understanding.

25. In recent generations, there has been a significant reduction in the amount of human suffering.

26. It is a mistake to believe that the reduction of suffering on earth is the critically important question for mankind.

27. The types of human suffering may have changed, and continue to change, but mankind is not likely to reduce the extent of suffering.

28. In recent generations, suffering has increased in the world.

29. The types of injustice may have changed, and may continue to change, but mankind is not likely to reduce the extent of injustice.

30. In recent generations injustice has increased in the world.

31. In recent generations there has been a significant reduction in the amount of injustice in human life.
32. It is a mistake to believe that the reduction of injustice on earth is the critically important question for mankind.

33. Mankind's most difficult and destructive experiences are often the source of increased understanding and powers of endurance.

34. In the long run, undeserving persons seem to be the ones who win the most advantages.

35. In the face of the almost continuous conflict and violence in life, I cannot see how men are going to learn to live in mutual respect and peace with one another.

36. Suffering, injustice, and finally death are the lot of man; but they need not be negative experiences; their significance and effects can be shaped by our beliefs.

37. Efforts to deal with the human situation by religious means, whatever the context of the beliefs and practices, seem to me to be misplaced, a waste of time and resources.

38. There are many aspects of the beliefs and practices of the world's religions with which I might not agree; nevertheless, I consider them to be valuable efforts to deal with man's most important questions.

39. Efforts to deal with man's most difficult problems by political means seem to me to be a waste of time and resources.

40. In the long run, mankind will be able to reduce injustice and suffering by wise political action.

Part C. The Death Transcendence Scale

Please respond to each of the statements below using the following rating scale.

1 = strongly disagree  3 = agree  4 = strongly agree
2 = disagree

41. I have had an experience in which I felt everything in the world to be part of the same whole.

42. I have had an experience in which I realized the oneness of myself with all things.
43. I have never had an experience in which all things seemed to be unified into a single whole.

44. I have never had an experience in which I became aware of the unity of all things.

45. I have never had an experience in which I felt myself to be absorbed as one with all things.

46. My death does not end my personal existence.

47. Death is a transition to something even greater than this life.

48. I believe in life after death.

49. Death is never just an ending, but is part of a process.

50. There is a Force or Power that controls and gives meaning to both life and death.

51. Only nature is forever.

52. Death is as natural as anything else in nature.

53. I may die, but the streams and mountains remain.

54. No matter what, all of us are part of nature.

55. Streams, trees, and people are all one in nature.

56. Meaningless work makes for a meaningless life.

57. It is important for me to do something in life for which I will be remembered after I die.

58. If I never do anything significant, my life will have been wasted.

59. If others I love do not remember me after I die, my life will have been wasted.

60. To be creative is to live forever.

61. After death much of myself lives on through my children.

62. Without children, much of what is most precious in life would be wasted.
63. Without children, life is incomplete.

64. My life may end, but that which is important will live on through my family.

65. Solid relationships with family and friends is a lasting value.

66. Relationships with family and friend are among the most lasting values.

Part D. Attitudes Towards God (Theism and Non-theism)

Please indicate how you rate each of the statements below by using one of the following labels:

1 - you agree with the statement
2 - you disagree with the statement
3 - you have no opinion about the statement
4 - you are uncertain about the statement

67. I believe that men working and thinking together can build a just society without any supernatural help.

68. Belief that in the end God’s purposes will be achieved tends to destroy man’s sense of social responsibility.

69. The idea of a personal God is an outworn concept.

70. We live in a universe which, in so far as we have any reliable evidence, is indifferent to human values.

71. Belief in God as a personal force, or being, in the universe is not consistent with a scientific view of the world.

72. “God” is only a symbol of man’s ideals.

73. I can make sense of the world without thinking of any mind higher than man.

74. The term “God” is a symbol no longer helpful in man’s quest for the good life.

75. Whether there is or is not a God is a matter of indifference to me.

76. The attempt to believe in God is sign of a person’s failure to accept responsibility for his own life.
APPENDIX C

Survey of Natural Church Development

Church Profile—Questionnaire for the Pastor
© Institute for Natural Church Development

1. Church name:

2. Church address:

3. Country:

4. Phone number:

5. Fax number:

6. Your name (name of pastor filling out the questionnaire):

7. Your age:

8. Your gender: Male Female

9. Your highest level of education:

10. Denomination:

11. Number of church membership:

12. Type of community where your church is located:

13. What year did you become pastor of this church?

14. At present, the average number of adults attending church services every week is:

259
15. At present, the average number of children attending church services every week is:

16. During the past five years the average adult attendance at your primary worship service was:

17. Have you planted daughter churches?

18. If yes, how many?

19. Has your church given church members to daughter churches during the past five years?

20. If yes, what year(s)?

21. If yes, how many members?

22. In your church there are church services per week.

23. What is the total amount of small groups (cell groups, prayer groups, etc.) in your church?

The following statement is true:

0 = to a very great extent
1 = to a great extent
2 = to an average extent
3 = hardly
4 = not at all

24. Our church services attract visitors.

25. I have a written, formulated plan for the next steps of our church growth.

26. Our church has specialized ministries for new believers.

27. I consider it dangerous to worry too much about “feeling comfortable” in the church fellowship.

28. I would describe our church as “modern”.

29. Concerning my personality, I prefer to act on the spur of the moment without over-planning.

30. I think it is important that the church is socially relevant.
31. For us, it is more important that a person attends a small group than the church service.

32. I enjoy reading books.

33. I enjoy church work.

34. The volunteer lay leaders of our church are trained for their ministries.

35. The leaders of the ministries of our church have frequent meetings (i.e., at least once per month) for discussion.

36. The leaders in all ministry areas are trained for their tasks.

37. I know which individuals in our church have the gift of evangelism.

38. I know about the personal problems of the core lay people.

39. I think it is important that young and old interact in the church as much as possible.

40. The church should actively fight economic misery.

41. I personally do not like church statistics very much.

42. I think it is important that as many church members as possible are involved in church decisions.

43. When a lay person takes over a task, we give a written description of the task.

44. I do not think clapping is appropriate in church services.

45. Before or after church services, we offer opportunities for fellowship.

46. I think it is important that the church involve itself in other cultures.

47. I would love to have more free time.

48. I think that idiomatic expressions taken over from the military world are inappropriate in the church.

49. When a new person comes into our church services they can stay anonymous if they want to.
50. I think we Christians radiate too little joy.

51. I do not like dogmatic thinking and speech.

52. I would rather act intuitively or spontaneously than to make plans.

53. I feel uneasy when church members have no time left for activities outside the church.

54. I regularly read a daily paper.

55. I am sure that God wants our church to grow.

56. My work is regularly discussed and assessed by an "outside assistant" (i.e., church counselor, pastor colleague, etc.).

57. In the long term we are concerned that lay people take only those tasks for which they are gifted.

58. We have leaders for the individual ministries in our church.

59. Our church reacts to change with skepticism.

60. In our church we consciously promote the reproduction of small groups by dividing them.

61. The church leadership supports individual Christians in their evangelistic activities.

62. It is important for me to regularly express praise and acknowledgment to the lay people.

63. I am disturbed that, in my area of responsibility, people without Jesus Christ are lost for eternity.

64. I am the type of person who likes to do it all by myself.

65. The church leaders (elders, deacons, board, etc.) actively support evangelism and church growth.

66. The leaders of small groups or ministries each have apprentice leaders.

67. We set great importance on integrating newly converted people into evangelistic work.
68. I feel that church work is a burden.

69. The maintenance of relationships with individual church members is more important for me than planning or organizing activities.

Answer the following questions:

70. How many friendships do you maintain with people inside your church?

71. How many friendships do you maintain with people outside your church?

72. How many time do you have for private affairs in the course of an average day?

73. How could the music style of your church be described?

74. Did your church publicly announce a goal for the number of congregational members (or worship attenders) you would like to have by a given date?

75. How would you describe your leadership style?

76. Which of the following slogans would describe you best?

77. Which of the following would you identify as your spiritual gifts?

78. What percent of your congregation use their gifts for building up the church?

79. What percent of your congregation is integrated into small groups?

Church Profile—Questionnaire for Lay People
© Institute for Natural Church Development

The following statement is true:

0 = to a very great extent
1 = to a great extent
2 = to an average extent
3 = hardly
4 = not at all

1. How much time do you spend per week (excluding church meetings) with friends from church?
2. How often have you been invited by church members (not relatives) for dinner or coffee during the past two months?

3. How often have you invited church members (not relatives) for dinner or coffee during the past two months?

4. Approximately what percentage of your gross income do you give in tithes and offerings for church support, missions, etc.?

5. How many friendships do you have with other church members?

6. Your gender?

7. How many hours per week do you invest in church activities (attendance of church services and other meetings included)?

8. How many friendships do you have with non-Christians?

9. Has your church sent out one or more missionaries into other cultures?

10. How long have you been actively involved in your church?

11. The leaders of our church (pastor, elders, etc.) have an inspiring optimism.

12. I know my spiritual gifts.

13. I know that other church members pray for me regularly.


15. Attending the worship services is an inspiring experience for me.

16. I am a member of a group in my church where it is possible to talk about personal problems.

17. I know that programs exist in our church which are particularly applicable to non-Christians.

18. I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings.

19. I get the impression that my opinion is often asked for in my church.

20. I would like to assume more responsibility in the church.
21. I would call myself a happy and contented person.

22. The leaders of our church prefer to do the work themselves rather than delegate it.

23. I enjoy the tasks I do in the church fellowship.

24. I enjoy reading the Bible on my own.

25. I know which goals our church will pursue in the coming years.

26. I enjoy listening to the sermons in the worship service.

27. I am a member of a group in my church in which others will pray with me and for me if needed.

28. New Christians find friends in our church quickly.

29. In our church it is possible to talk with other people about feelings and problems.

30. I would describe our church as “modern“.

31. Personally, I take care to eat healthily.

32. The leaders of our church concentrate on the tasks for which they are gifted.

33. I feel that my church supports me in my ministry.

34. I experience the transforming influences faith has in the different areas of my life (i.e. profession, family, spare time, etc.).

35. It is my impression that the structure of our church hinders church life rather than promotes it.

36. I feel that the worship service has a positive influence on me.

37. I am a member of a group in our church in which we talk about spiritual issues.

38. It is my impression that the evangelistic activities in our church lack imagination.

39. There is a lot of joy and laughter in our church.
40. I have many reasons to be happy.

41. Our pastor looks for help from lay people to complement those areas in which he is not gifted.

42. It is my experience that God obviously uses my work for building the church.

43. I am enthusiastic about my church.

44. The activities of our church are characterized by successful planning and organization.

45. I feel that the sermon in the worship service speaks to my life needs.

46. I am a member of a small group in which I feel at home.

47. When new people come to church events, we approach them openly and lovingly.

48. The atmosphere of our church is strongly influenced by praise and compliments.

49. The leaders of our church prefer to evade conflicts.

50. The tasks I perform in my church are in accordance with my gifts.

51. The Word of God is the most important authority in the decisions of my everyday life.

52. In our church we often try new things.

53. In my small group we spend lots of time with things which are irrelevant to me.

54. In our church the subject of evangelism is discussed at all possible opportunities.

55. When someone in our church does a good job, I tell them.

56. Our pastor has too much work to do.

57. I feel my task in the church is a great challenge.

58. Our pastor is a spiritual example to me.
59. Very often, I have reason to thank God for his work in my life.

60. I could write down the organizational structure in my church.

61. The music in the church services helps me worship God.

62. Optimal care is given to our children during church services.

63. In my small group we show trust towards one another.

64. I enjoy bringing my friends, colleagues, or relatives (who do not yet know Jesus) to church.

65. When someone in our church has a different opinion from me, I prefer to be silent rather than to endanger peace.

66. Our pastor gives a lot of church members the opportunity to be actively involved in organizing and conducting worship services.

67. I know what value my work has in the total work of the church.

68. I firmly believe that God will act even more powerfully in our church in the coming years.

69. The lay people of our church are trained frequently.

70. I'm often bored in the worship service.

71. I can be as active as I like in my small group.

72. I pray for my friends, colleagues and relatives who do not yet know Jesus Christ, that they will come to faith.

73. I attentively observe world events through the media.

74. Our pastor seems to feel at home in our church.

75. I often tell other Christians when I have experienced something from God.

76. I consider our church to be tradition-bound.

77. I don't think people should clap in church services.

78. In our church there is a leader for each ministry.
79. My most important motive for attending the church service is a sense of duty.

80. In the groups I belong to it is easy for newcomers to be integrated.

81. It is hard for me to sum up in a few phrases what faith means for me.

82. Our church does something about hunger in the world.

83. People in our church are highly motivated to do church work.

84. Times of prayer are an inspiring experience for me.

85. When a church member is obviously in the wrong (moral misconduct, passivity, etc.) this is corrected with love, but firmly.

86. Despite my church activities, I still have sufficient time for my hobbies.

87. I enjoy bringing visitors to our church services.

88. It is the declared goal of our small groups to reproduce themselves by cell division.

89. The various offers of our church are helpful for my particular needs.

90. In our worship services new faces are a rarity.

91. I try to deepen my relationship with people who do not yet know Jesus Christ.
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