

Abstract

The Legal Order of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren – History and Present

The aim of this thesis is to gather available sources concerning the legal order of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) since its establishment in 1918 to the present day. The sources used address the legal history of the Protestant Church in Cisleithania from 1848 until the end of World War I. A critical analysis of the sources is carried out to document the development of the church constitution and the orders of the ECCB. The criteria for the elaboration of individual storylines are primarily the historical relevance and the practical applicability of the information regarding the ECCB Strategic Plan of 2019.

The thesis consists of an introduction, followed by three parts, and a conclusion. The first part, (1848–1922), comprises four chapters covering the legal history of the Protestant Church in Cisleithania from the revolutionary years 1848/1849 until the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and the establishment of both Czechoslovakia and the ECCB. Particular attention is given to the circumstances surrounding the creation of the church constitution of 1861, the constitutional reform efforts of the Czech-speaking Czech and Moravian Protestants of both confessions (Augsburg and Helvetic), the movement of Czech Protestants in 1917/1918 which resulted in the establishment of the ECCB, and finally, the creation of the church constitution of 1922.

The second part, (1922–1954), comprises eight chapters which describe the development of the church constitution during the First Czechoslovak Republic, the enforced changes in the legal order of the ECCB during the Second Republic and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the consolidation of the church after World War II, the process of revision of the church constitution in 1946/1947, negotiations of the synodal council of the ECCB with representatives of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia, the ongoing revision of the church constitution in 1948–1950, the issue of the ordination of women, and finally, the process to develop the church constitution (proclaimed in 1954).

The third part, (1954–2020), comprises eight chapters which address the draft of the Rules of Christian Life which resulted in the adoption of the Order of Church Membership and the Order of Congregational Life. Following this, the Order of Church Administration is discussed, together with the partial proposals to change the church constitution in the second half of the 1960s, the project for a new church constitution, the internal division of the church in the 1970s and the legal consequences, the proposed changes in the Order of Pastoral

Service, Care and Discipline, the period of stability for the church constitution and orders, the restoration of religious freedom after 1989, the subsequent revision of the church constitution and orders in the first half of 1990s, and finally the recent development of the legal order of the ECCB up to the adoption of the Strategic Plan.

Keywords: Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Protestantism, church law, church constitution