

MODERNISM AND CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM IN THE THOUGHT OF OTTOKAR PROHASZKA

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Little known in the West is the life and work of the Hungarian Ottokár Prohászka (1858-1927), Roman Catholic Bishop of Szekesfehervár and a university professor who was immensely popular and influential in Hungary at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. He was the symbol of modernism, for which three of his works were condemned, and Christian Socialism in his native land. For a time, he even served as a representative of the Christian Unity Party in Parliament. An eloquent and popular orator and writer who helped revitalize the Hungarian language, he was capable of anti-Semitic polemical outbursts.

Instead of doing either a biographical and historical sketch, the biographical elements and the pertinent historical context will be incorporated into the three sections into which the paper is divided. The first and second sections treat Prohászka's modernism and Christian Socialism in historical context. His anti-Semitism will not be treated as a part of his modernism nor of the program of Hungarian Christian Socialism, although characteristic of it and very much of a feature of the period, but will be dealt with separately in the third section. The evaluative comments, particularly Prohászka's relevance for the newly established Hungarian democracy and the role of religion in it, are contained in the last section.

I.

Following the suppression of the Revolution of 1848-49 and the ensuing reign of terror and the passive resistance of the Magyars (the Hungarian word for 'Hungarians'), Ferenc Deák, *A Haza Bolcse* (the country's or homeland's wise one), designed the Compromise of 1867, in effect creating a 'dualist' or 'dual' state. The Habsburg Empire became the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with common foreign, defense, and finance ministries, but separate, autonomous governments and parliaments. While the franchise was restricted and trade unions and socialist parties outlawed for some time, a form of parliamentary democracy with parties, including the Party of Independence which won the election of 1905 much to Emperor Franz Joseph's acquiescent chagrin, representing a variety of points of view beyond the imaginations of North Americans, was in place. In Bismarkian fashion, forms of national health care, unemployment insurance, and social security were enacted as early as the 1870s.

It was in this historical context that Hungary underwent a cultural renaissance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the secular side, the outstanding figure and symbol of this cultural renaissance was Endre Ady (1877-1919). His poetry was instrumental in the revitalization of the Hungarian language with its uncanny ability to express the joys, sorrows, and aspirations of the poor and the oppressed. Western oriented, an admirer of developments in French philosophy, he was a passionate advocate of social democracy (H 182, OTY 165-167).

On the religious side, Ottokar Prohaszka was the outstanding figure and symbol of this intellectual renaissance, contributing to the revitalization of the Hungarian language with his books, speeches, sermons, meditations, and commentaries, rich with imagery, much of it reading like poetry. Of Swiss-German background, he illustrates a frequent occurrence in Hungarian history, a member of another ethnic group becoming a Magyar nationalist and making a vital contribution to Hungarian culture.

We need to consider two other historical developments to be able to situate Prohászka's modernism in context. First, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were periods of intense nationalism for all of the various ethnic groups that constituted the Austro-Hungarian empire. The negative and tragic features of this outburst of nationalism are all too obvious and familiar. Nevertheless, part of an 'Hungarian' and 'Christian' 'awakening', the ambiguities of which we shall explore in the next two sections were intentional attempts to modernize and to 'raise' the Hungarian people in every way--intellectually, politically, economically, morally, spiritually; only through such an 'uplift' could they play a part in the drama of modern history. Prohászka's modernism was a deliberate attempt to stimulate the growth of his people into modern Roman Catholics (POE).

The second major development, starting in the 1840s, was the increasing rift, still evident in the constituencies today's political parties represent, between the 'urbanists' and the 'populists' (RH 74). The terms partly reflect the increasing urbanization of the country; during Prohászka's lifetime Budapest became the sixth

largest city in Europe (B 67). However, the terms also refer to some more fundamental differences in orientation: the populists were rural oriented nationalists who wanted to preserve the distinctiveness of Hungarian culture and identity while the urbanists were Western oriented intellectuals. Although propagated primarily by the populists, elements of both groups have idealized the pure innocence of the Hungarian peasant (RH 79).

Prohászka's life and thought reflects both urbanist and populist elements. Nowhere is this more clear than in his modernism, a deliberate apologetic aimed at secular urban intellectuals and designed to raise the intellectual sophistication of the faith of the peasants.

Prohászka studied in Rome (1875-1882), earning a doctorate in philosophy and theology. Initially, he was the inner city chaplain at Esztergom. He became seminary spiritual director in 1890 and professor of dogmatic theology at the university in Budapest in 1904. Consecrated by Pope Pius X on Christmas Day, 1905, installed as Bishop of Szekesfehervár in early 1906, Archbishop Samassa immediately told him he would be put on the Index. In 1911, three of Prohászka's works, Modern katolicizmus (1907), Az intellektualizmus tulhajtasai (1910), and Tobb bekesseget (1910) were indeed put on the Index. (See the excellent chronology of Prohászka's life, including quotes from his diary in MK 15-43.)

The centerpiece of the Hungarian theologian's modernism is his treatment of modern science, the theory of evolution in particular. In remarkably erudite treatments of geology and biology, he conveys an inner certainty with integrity about the compatibility of the Christian faith and the findings of modern science (FE Vol 3, Vol II 69). In effect, he is saying "What's the big deal? How can a modern Christian not believe in evolution, in the findings of science?"

But there is a 'big deal,' a major problem in modern science, namely its mechanistic view of the universe and positivist premises (FE Vol II 69). In an uncanny anticipation of ecological insights, Prohászka claims that common sense as well as science itself shows that the universe is living, dynamic, its parts creative, interdependent, and interrelated (FE Vol I 3, 6-8).

This living, creative, interrelated universe expresses the divine love; it is the artwork of the Divine Artist and reflects the image of God (FE Vol I 6-8). Prohászka's writing is poetic at this point, resembling the treatment of nature by some of the greatest Hungarian romantic poets, like Sándor Petöfi, coming close to 'nature mysticism.'

In spite of his anticipation of contemporary ecological sensibilities, he is clearly anthropocentric (and with our 20/20 ecological hindsight, we need to ask honestly what modernist was not?). For example, humans are the 'Benjamins' of creation with minds non-human animals do not possess (FE Vol II, 60 66). The evolution of humans was preparation for God's creation of the human soul (FE Vol II, 73). Although he does not state it explicitly in those terms, he clearly anticipates the doctrine of the special creation of the human soul.

It is striking that the Hungarian word for 'supernature', at least in Prohászka's use of it, does not have the dualistic connotations it has in English or in the Western philosophical tradition. Instead, the mysteries of nature point to a Mystery beyond and of which they are a part.

One may very well ask why three of Prohászka's works were condemned given that they seem so relatively tame. In these works, he was more emphatic about the importance of intuition in contrast to the arid rationalism of scholasticism, although this aspect of his thought is certainly present in his other works (MK 52). The influence of Bergson is clearly evident (MK 409, 419). Officially, Prohászka's intuitionism, his irrationalism, was the reason given for the condemnation of his works (MK 52). Unofficially, there has always been speculation that his condemnation was the result of his radical political views and activities (MK 52, 419).

It has been claimed by Roman Catholic and Marxist commentators alike that Prohászka was never the same after being put on the Index, that his works were more guarded and orthodox (MK 54, 418-419). I disagree with this assessment. Prohászka's later writings reflect a 'Christ' and 'Eucharistic Mysticism', elements of which were present in his earlier works and which provided him one of the main motivating factors in his first love, pastoral ministry--celebrating the Mass, hearing confessions, leading retreats. And Bergson provided him with a philosophical foundation for these concerns ("the elan vital is here in the Eucharist . . ." in MK 39).

Prohászka's apologetics in his books, lectures, sermons, speeches, articles, and meditations were very effective and influential among Hungarian intellectuals; many converted, others returned to the Roman Catholic Church in which they had been raised. His modernism was a call, anticipating Vatican II, to affirm the secular world and participation in it. It is to this topic we now turn.

II.

In addition to the historical context described in the first section, we need to look at several other socio-political developments to which Prohászka's Christian Socialism was a response.

First, Deák's Liberal Party was in power for most of the period between 1867 and the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy in 1918. In most ways typical of nineteenth century liberals, the Liberal Party, whose constituency was the enlightened nobility and the small but growing middle class supported constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy, economic growth, and the free market. Unlike classical liberals in the West, they were among the architects of the social welfare legislation of the 1870s.

Second, in spite of the Liberals' efforts, aspects of the feudal social structure remained intact. In the late 1890s/early 1900s, the economic condition of the peasants, lower nobility, and relatively small urban working class declined. Life in the working class districts of Budapest was characterized by chronic housing shortages and overcrowding (B 98) (a preview of coming attractions in the second half of the twentieth century).

It was to this situation that Prohászka's Christian Socialism tried to respond. As early as 1896, he was a nominee of the People's Party, of which the Christian Socialists were one faction, in the parliamentary elections (he lost) (MK 24).

Since Prohászka does not define Christian Socialism with any degree of precision, we need to look at its characteristics. Hungarian Christian Socialism has been described an offspring of the Austrian Christian Socialists (HK 272). While there are family resemblances, such as anti-Semitism and advocacy of social welfare measures, they expressed competing nationalist aspirations, and, as we shall see, the particular brand of Christian Socialism advocated by Prohászka had some distinctively indigenous Magyar features.

The first characteristic of Hungarian style Christian Socialism, according to the former Bishop of Szekesfehervár, as with all forms of Christian Socialism, and in contrast to other socialisms, is that it is Christian. For Prohászka, this means taking the teachings of Jesus about the rich and poor literally and following them concretely (PNF, Vol I, 182, 388). Following the teachings of Jesus literally in social life will lead to a fully historical realization of the Reign of God. This has not been atypical of one side of Roman Catholic teaching in Hungary. Prohászka in this regard represents what can be, for lack of a better term, called popular piety or popular religion, which throughout Hungarian history has inspired struggles for national independence and the extension of freedom, whose representative figures shared the lives and struggles of their people, in contrast to the traditional unholy alliance between the hierarchy and existing political power structure and the higher aristocracy, of which they were a part, owning up to one-third of the arable land in the country as late as 1945.

A second feature of the Christian Socialism espoused by Prohászka is democracy. He comes close to identifying democracy with the historical realization of the Reign of God. It is the noblest and brightest ideal of the modern epoch, the embodiment of progress (MK 172, PNF, Vol. V 182). While he does not define the meaning of the word 'democracy', it is clear in his usage of the term that he means 'rule by the people', real and efficacious participation in the making of the decisions that affect their lives, self-determination. In quite a radical way, he wants to extend democracy to the church, eradicating hierarchicalism and its symbols (MK 171-181). In a way that anticipates liberation theology or perhaps articulates an early Magyar theology of liberation, he claims that the authority of clergy can reside only in their sharing the suffering of the poor and the oppressed. Moreover, it is through that sharing that not only clergy but all Christians participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (MK 171-181).

A third and the most distinctive feature of Prohászka's Christian Socialism is his persistent advocacy of land reform and redistribution. With a nearly mystical love of the land, he envisioned a paradisiacal Golden Age if each Hungarian peasant, innocent and uncorrupted, would own his/her land (MK 191-191). In a country where, as we have seen, the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches owned up to one-third of the arable land as late as 1945, Prohászka tried to be a role model for land reform and redistribution, giving 1,500 *hold* of his ecclesiastical estates to the peasants of his diocese (MK 65). During World War I, he advocated giving returning veterans free land (MK 65). In his advocacy of land reform, Prohászka stands in a long historical line stretching at least from György Dózsa, who led the Franciscan inspired Peasants' Rebellion in 1514, to Imre Nagy, the Prime Minister during the Revolution of 1956, and István Bibó, an anti-Communist radical socialist who joined Nagy's cabinet, whose political theories have been most influential on the democratic movement of the 80s and the nascent democracy of the 90s.

A fourth characteristic of Prohászka's Christian Socialism is a virulent anti-capitalism. In his view, capitalism by its very nature was based on greed and could not be anything but exploitative. For clergy to preach

passive acquiescence to poverty, much of it induced by growing capitalism, as the will of God is to show the most profound lack of understanding of both the gospel and history (PNF Vol I 125, MK 64).

For further insight to Prohászka's Christian Socialism, we need to probe his life and political activities. In the early 1900s, particularly during the time he spent in Budapest, he and other Christian Socialists frequently debated representatives of the Social Democrats. Their major philosophical differences were over a mechanistic, deterministic understanding of dialectical materialism, the class struggle, and the role of violence in the revolutionary struggle (MK 66). Ady, whose poetry did not reflect mechanism and determinism, just as he had symbolized the secular side of the intellectual renaissance, represented the best in the Social Democrats (MK 28, PNF Vol. III, 116). There was surprising agreement about public policy measures, including the nationalization of industries (MK 66). Prohászka shared the broad consensus concerning basic features of the welfare state, which he wanted to extend, that has existed among Magyars since the 1870s.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Prohászka, an anti-Habsburg Magyar nationalist, unusual in the hierarchy, was very much against World War I. His ruminations during this period reflect his anguish over the tragedy of war. He stated unequivocally that as far as he was concerned, the provoking of such slaughter for the basest of imperialist motives, defended by immunized politicians and stupid, lazy diplomats as a necessity, was nothing short of diabolical (MK 32).

With military defeat imminent, Mihály Károlyi, an aristocrat and a leader of the Independence Party, came to power in October, 1918. When the Emperor Charles IV abdicated, Károlyi embarked on a program of reform that sought to establish Hungary's independence, a separate peace treaty, universal suffrage with secret ballot, land reform and redistribution, and recognition of the rights of national minorities. He, like Prohászka, was a role model for the land reforms he attempted to enact. When it became evident that the allies had reneged on their promises regarding Hungary's territorial integrity, compounded by problems of massive unemployment, inflation, shortages of food, coal, and heating fuel, Károlyi's government collapsed in March, 1918. It was replaced by a short-lived Soviet Republic (March-August, 1919) under the leadership of Béla Kún (H 203-207, OTY 177-189). At times romanticized in Marxist literature, Kún's Soviet Republic (the Republic of Councils) is remembered by most Magyars (except for emigre participants) as a brutal reign of terror.

In spite of religious persecution, Prohászka took a very balanced approach. He editorialized that at the depth of the revolution burns the fire of the Holy Spirit (MK 66). However, revolutionary social change by itself is inadequate; it needs Christianity if there is to be hope, understanding, peace, and reconciliation (MK 67). He wrote a pastoral letter to his clergy and people encouraging them to cooperate with the new government as long as its actions were not contrary to Christian conscience and beliefs (MK 67, 420). Because of the latter caveat, government censors did not allow its circulation (MK 67, 420).

After the fall of the Soviet Republic, the "Red Terror" was followed by a period of "White Terror," some of it propagated by the military, some spontaneously by the peasants (H 209-235, OTY 191-23). Prohászka was emphatic that the post-war reconstruction of Hungary could emanate only from the peasants and the urban proletariat (MK 67). The old order was gone and he urged those forces that defeated the Bolsheviks to eschew coercion, brutality, and oppression (MK 67). Just as he had condemned the "Red Terror," he was uncompromising in his condemnation of the "White Terror" (MK 67).

Admiral Miklós Horthy became regent in 1920 and quickly became the focal point of Hungarian yearning for the restoration of national pride, lost territory, and prestige. At times stereotyped as a fascist in the West, he was in fact a moderating and stabilizing influence among the turbulent political movements in Hungarian society. Under Horthy, while the franchise was limited and the Communist party outlawed (with many Communists imprisoned, some executed, mostly on charges of sabotage), parliamentary democracy was restored, with a proliferation of political parties representing once again a great range of points of view. A degree of accommodation was reached with peasants, workers, and even with the Social Democrats who had united with the Bolsheviks during the period of the Soviet Republic. Reform minded parties such as that of the Independent Smallholders representing mostly peasants with small parcels of land, the only one of today's political parties with historic roots in the pre-World War II period, exerted a considerable degree of influence (H 209-235, OTY 191-231).

During the period of consolidation in the early days of the Horthy government, the new regent (himself a Hungarian Reformed Protestant) asked Prohászka, much to the latter's dismay, to assume the office of Prime Minister. The bishop refused, although he did agree to become a part of the cabinet (MK 37). He ran for Parliament on the ticket of the ruling Christian Unity Party. This time he won (MK 37).

This was an awkward period in Prohászka's career. He was the first to admit he was not a politician. He was impatient with the incessant posturing and inflated egos of his fellow members of Parliament, who, in his view, were trivializing public life (MK 37-39, 686). His secular, non-Christian Socialist, and Jewish friends were embarrassed by his anti-Semitic outbursts on the Parliament floor. When Horthy asked Count István Bethlen to become the Prime Minister, Prohászka, gratefully, left the cabinet and Parliament in early 1922 (MK 39). One of the reasons he gave for leaving was the "liberalism" of the Bethlen government (POE).

Throughout his career, Prohászka had attacked liberalism. It is very unclear as to what he meant by 'liberalism' and perplexing as to why he would accuse the Bethlen government of being 'liberal'. Bethlen himself was of aristocratic background, concerned with stability and constraining the excesses of the left and the right given the events of the immediate post-World War I period; he was hardly the Magyarized version of radical chic! In the context of our discussion of Prohászka's Christian Socialism in this section, 'liberalism' was synonymous with the free market and free trade—which the Bethlen government favored as it sought increased trade with and loans from the West (sound familiar?).

It may also be helpful to consider the conflict between liberalism and the "integralism" of the Roman Catholic Church during that era. Even though Prohászka, whose social thought was profoundly shaped by Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical "*De Rerum Novarum*," was a radical, if imprecise democrat, he was obedient to the teachings of the Church. Perhaps most importantly, his ecclesiastical experience did not encompass anything other than integralism. Thus, while it is not clear that indeed this is the case, I see Prohászka as ambivalent toward democracy and integralism, an ambivalence he did not seem to resolve in his own mind.

III.

The most perplexing, ambiguous, and tragic dimension of Prohászka's life and thought is his anti-Semitism. We shall look briefly at historical developments that unfortunately helped reinforce a long tradition of anti-Judaism from which the other nations of Central and Eastern Europe are hardly immune.

Following the emancipation of Jews in Hungary in 1867, the most liberal legislation of its kind in Central and Eastern Europe, large scale Jewish assimilation took place very rapidly. By 1900, 20% of Hungary's Jewish population lived in Budapest; the same percentage of the city was Jewish with some streets and districts up to 70%. Since at least the Revolution of 1848, Jews had been Magyar nationalists, liberal and democratic. For the most part they were assimilated; many became a part of the capitol's new 'financial aristocracy', and numerous others were at the forefront of the intellectual renaissance. The Emperor Franz Joseph conferred titles and ranks of nobility on a significant number of emancipated Hungarian Jews. They played important roles in the Liberal and Social Democratic Parties and among the urbanists. And even though most of the Jewish population was anti-Communist, Béla Kún and thirty-two of the forty-five Commissars were of Jewish origin.

A significant shift in the makeup of the Jewish population took place in the late nineteenth century with an influx of refugees from Poland and Russia. These refugees were not assimilated; they tended to be poor. Unlike religious Magyarized Jews, who were Reform Orthodox; if politically active, they were inclined to be radical. Assimilated Hungarian Jews resented them as much as non-Jews.

Even though a considerable degree of respect for the older Jewish population was evident even during the rule of the Arrow Cross, the Hungarian fascists, in the latter part of World War II, after 1900 the distinction between the older, assimilated Jews and the newer immigrants began to disappear. The genuine Hungarian loyalty of even assimilated Jews was questioned. Assimilated or not, the Jewish population was highly visible. And as we know all too well, Jews make all too convenient scapegoats during times of economic downturn and intense nationalism, especially in a part of the world with a long history of anti-Judaism. A new, entirely modern anti-Semitism that saw assimilation as impossible and even undesirable was brewing. And adding fuel to the fire, in an era of intense and competing nationalisms, were the perhaps understandable remarks of a few intellectuals in literary journals and academic and political debates claiming Jewish superiority (for an excellent history of Jews in Hungary during this period, see B 87-96, 191-196, 204, 84-218).

It is in this historical context that we need to situate Prohászka's anti-Semitism. The bishop seemed to accept the stereotypes about Jewish greed and unique financial abilities. Some of his anti-capitalist tirades were laced with anti-Semitism.

A recurring theme in Prohászka's anti-Semitism is resistance to the 'Judaification,' as best as I can translate his term from the Hungarian, of Hungary (OPE 25). It is difficult to pin down just what he means by this. Certainly, he did not hate Jews as a race. Neither did he advocate limiting Jewish immigration or restricting the participation of

Jews in prominent positions. He did resent the cosmopolitan attitudes of urbanist Jews. Expressions of Jewish nationalism served to reinforce his acceptance of stereotypes and the anti-Judaism of the inherited tradition.

Prohászka did not share the view of the new, modern anti-Semitism that claimed that Jews could not and, more importantly, should not be assimilated into Hungarian society. On the contrary, he was adamant in his advocacy of Jewish assimilation. He sounds quite patronizing in this attitude, in effect saying that Jews were 'good' as long as they 'behaved' by assimilating. Ironically, his position was not substantially different from that of most of the older, assimilated, Magyarized generation of Jews.

During the reign of Communism, Prohászka was described as a fascist. He was not; Hungarian fascism had not yet come on the scene during his lifetime, and his thought bears no family resemblance to other fascist ideas. Some of Prohászka's younger and no less anti-Semitic colleagues in the Christian Socialist movement, such as Sándor Giesswein, renounced their anti-Semitism during the period of fascist ascendancy, and, at not inconsiderable risk to their personal safety, were heroic defenders and protectors of Hungarian Jews (B 205).

In no way have I wanted to defend and justify anti-Semitism; it is indefensible. More than anything, I have tried to show that Prohászka's anti-Semitism is an expression of a tragic dimension of the history of his people to which, because of his stature, he added an aura of credibility and legitimacy. It is my hope that our look at the historical context has been somewhat illuminating to the task, not only for Hungarians, but for the Christian tradition itself, of coming to grips with its long tradition of anti-Judaism that has been the breeding ground of anti-Semitism and its fateful consequences.

IV.

Some evaluative comments, particularly Prohászka's relevance for the newly established Hungarian democracy and the role of religion in it, are in order.

The most pertinent aspect of Prohászka's life and thought, in my view, is his modernism. To make my case for this claim, I shall explore the relevant historical context, as I have done throughout this paper.

After the Communist Party came to power in the late 1940s, a period of severe repression followed. Church properties were confiscated, religious orders disbanded, clergy imprisoned, tortured, and even executed. While the Reformed Church for the most part reached a *modus vivendi* with the government, the very symbols of defiance, József Cardinal Mindszenty, Archbishop of Esztergom and Primate of Hungary, the traditionally powerful see of the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary, and Lajos Ordass, the Lutheran Bishop (who spent twenty years under house arrest), were tried and imprisoned. In the aftermath of the Revolution of 1956, it was not until after Mindszenty left the sanctuary of the American embassy in 1971 that all of the Hungarian churches reached a *modus vivendi* with the existing regime. Still experiencing repression, the major preoccupation of the churches was with institutional maintenance-survival. Theology became exclusively confessional. The focus of practical interest was on how Christians can function appropriately as citizens of a socialist society.

Although some have claimed that the close relationship between the religious hierarchy and the state machinery helped pave the way for the recently established democracy (SN 68-72), there can be little doubt that church leaders lagged far behind the pace of reform. Most Magyars tend to see them as continuing the long history of the uncanny ability of ecclesiastical hierarchies to accommodate any regime. It is no state secret that even as both church and secular political leaders have been pleading for forgiveness and reconciliation, it is the church that has been conducting purges. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence--growing church attendance, an increased number of ordinations--of a religious resurgence. This is in no small measure due to the novel forms the popular piety that has stirred the yearning for freedom so often in the past have taken in the 1960s and 1970s, such as 'the base communities', condemned by both state and church, organized by Father Bulányi around the issue of conscientious objection (FBPCH 9-28).

This reputation for accommodationism, combined with a near oblivion to the inseparability of intellectual currents and political developments, is preventing the churches in Hungary from being a more effective, positive, socially transformative influence at a time of hope, anticipation--and anxiety. For example, although the most secular of intellectuals appreciate and want to preserve the vital role of Christianity in Hungarian culture, to them the almost exclusively confessional theological stance of the churches seems obscure and far removed from the adventure of creating and forming a democracy.

Given this analysis of the current situation, the potential of the Hungarian churches to have an effective, transformative impact would be enhanced greatly by developing a 'public theology' or, more accurately, a variety of 'public theologies'. What I mean by 'public theology' is twofold: (1) theologies that deal effectively with public

affairs, and (2) theologies whose criteria for adjudicating truth claims are not limited to the 'special' criteria that apply only within communities of faith but are open to the 'public' criteria of human experience and reason. In no way do I want to claim that confessional theologies are irrelevant public affairs; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the signers of the Barmen Declaration, the Sojourner community in the United States, Christian anti-apartheid activists in South Africa, the base communities of Latin America and Asia, and Father Bulanyi himself provide eloquent testimony to the contrary. However, given the inseparable connection between intellectual currents and political developments, democratic reforms, in contemporary Hungary, the development of a public theology or theologies would greatly enhance the churches' responsiveness to present needs and enrich the public discussion of issues of importance.

Prohászka's modernism is an indigenous Hungarian form of such a public theology. Additionally, aimed at both urbanists and populists, it has the potential for being a healing force in this traditional rift. An exact replication of that modernism is impossible and unhelpful. However, a critical reappropriation of his modernist style of theologizing can provide an opening to a contemporary, indigenous public theology that can revitalize the state of theological reflection and connect it to the dramatic historical changes that have been occurring during the course of the last few years.

The legacy of Prohászka's Christian Socialism is more ambiguous. First of all, if we consider what I view as his ambivalence toward democracy and integralism, there can be little doubt that the Hungarian churches need to affirm democracy unequivocally (in spite of pockets of nostalgia for integralism). Whether democracy can be extended to the traditionally hierarchical churches remains to be seen. It must be admitted, however, that the egalitarian base communities of the 60s and 70s came close to reflecting Prohászka's vision of clergy sharing the lives, the joys, sorrows, and sufferings of their people.

Second, while the word 'Christian' applied to a political party may be problematic to most North Americans (pace Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson et al.), we need to remember the degree to which a literal understanding of Jesus' teachings, like Prohászka's, concerning love, the rich and the poor, has penetrated the collective psyche of Hungarian popular piety. Even if not necessarily expressing itself in the form of a political party, this outlook is such a prevalent part of Magyar Roman Catholic social conscience that it will be on the Hungarian scene in the foreseeable future.

Prohászka's uncompromising advocacy of land reform, while reflecting his populism at its best, is such a symbol of the historic aspirations of the Hungarian people, the free, landowning, self-determining peasant, uncorrupted because of her/his rootedness in the earth, that it is capable of including the hopes of all Hungarians. Indeed, the nearly universal appeal of this symbol to the Magyar psyche profoundly shaped his endeavors to reach out to the urban proletariat.

In concluding the comments on Prohászka's Christian Socialism, one should note that while in one sense it is true, as some have claimed, that the left is dead in Hungary (RH 84-85); in another sense this claim needs to be profoundly qualified. Even as Hungary enters the global economy, as the mechanisms of the market are adopted and foreign investment encouraged, measures supported in varying degrees by the vast majority of Hungarians, it is important to realize that the historical, broad national consensus supporting the basic features of the social welfare state is intact (the Alliance of Free Democrats, which received 34% of the vote in the election of 1990, may be somewhat of an exception, although 'the safety net' they envision is closer to that of the Scandinavian countries than those of the United States and Great Britain). A consideration of Prohászka's Christian Socialism serves to remind all of us of this basic characteristic of Hungarian political and economic life.

Prohászka's anti-Semitism reflects one of the most tragic ambiguities of Hungarian history. Hungarians need to come to grips with and admit honestly this ambiguity, to confess it, repent ('turn around'), and seek liberation from it, a history of anti-Semitism nurtured by an even longer history of anti-Judaism in Christianity. No less do they need to retrieve and celebrate a more liberal and empowering part of the past, such as the Revolution of 1848, when the greatest of national heroes, Petöfi, in spite of pogroms, maintained that national independence and democracy could not be achieved until all Jews, assimilated or not, were emancipated, the post-1867 period, when Jews were welcome, their contributions celebrated, and appreciate the traditional pride of Hungarian Jews in their national origins. In spite of some ever ominous public signs of anti-Semitism and comments of a similar nature by some politicians, it is to the credit of the current ruling coalition and all contemporary political parties that they have condemned anti-Semitism, called for an honest appraisal of the past, and celebrate publicly the indispensable contributions of its Jewish citizens to Hungarian culture.

Finally, an all too brief but hopefully thought provoking note about the relevance of Prohászka for North Americans, to whom his historical context, life and thought must seem to terribly remote: Holderlin once said, we

cannot understand our home until we have ventured from it.

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