

The reflection of childhood in Baroque miracles

This Master's thesis aims to capture the reflection of childhood in miraculously answered prayers of the Baroque era. It works with a representative sample of cases, which was collected from several diverse Czech and Moravian pilgrimage sites (Karlov in Prague, Church of Our Lady Victorious with the statue of Infant Jesus of Prague, Hájek, Sázava, Chlum sv. Máří, Chrudim, Dobruška, Svatý Kopeček u Olomouce, and Křtiny). The sample thus comprises children coming from various environments and social strata. The records referring to miraculous answers to prayer are taken from manuscripts as well as from printed books of the period related to religious pilgrimages. The individual chapters outline the main aspects of Baroque-era children's lives found therein. The thesis first analyses issues associated with the birth of new life – the infertility of married couples, miscarriages, or complications during pregnancy, giving birth and childbed. A significant part of the thesis is given over to childhood illnesses – an extremely serious issue of the early modern era. Attention is also paid to diverse accidents and injuries of children. In addition, matters concerning adolescent and adult offspring are presented (the world of work duties, various wrongdoings, problems concerning the proper upbringing of one's children). Separate chapters are dedicated to the day-to-day life of children of the period, the relationship between parents and their children, or the special bonds to sites of pilgrimage formed by particular families. The conclusion of the thesis summarizes the contribution made by this type of source to our general understanding of childhood history, as well as its limits.

Keywords

miracles, pilgrimage sites, childhood, parent-child relationship, early modern period