Introduction

The 2000 Prague Symposium

The symposium on the Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice held at the Vila Lanna, Prague in June 2000 was the first in this series of symposia to be held as an independent conference. Having grown significantly in numbers with each successive meeting, the symposium came of age and no longer needed to meet under the umbrella of the SVU Congresses which had been the venue for earlier meetings. Thanks to the sponsorship of the Philosophical Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences and its Institute of Mediaeval Studies the symposium was able to meet in the nineteenth century Vila Lanna in the Bubeneč district of Prague where, from 26 - 28 June, more than twenty-five scholars were able to share their work on the Bohemian Reformation and aspects of its religious practice.

With each succeeding symposium, the importance of collegial, interdisciplinary work has become more evident. This collection of twenty papers by scholars of different, but complementary disciplines, covers topics ranging from the formative period of the Bohemian Reformation in the fourteenth century to the use (and misuse) of that reformation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The reader will, once again, find material on topics that is not otherwise available in lnguages other than Czech. While these papers fill gaps in our understanding of the history and religious practice of the Bohemian Reformation, a careful reading will make it clear that there are still many questions left unanswered and that there are many traditionally accepted opinions which must be reevaluated. It is to some of those questions that scholars gathering at Vila Lanna in June 2002 for the next symposium will address themselves.

The Introductions to this journal have, in the past, provided a locus for the expression of the editors' opinions on what appears to be an emerging consensus on the Bohemian Reformation and Utraquism in current historiography. In keeping with the tradition, we offer the following observations.

A Living and Vibrant Church

In summing up the genesis of Utraquism, it is evident that there was not, as it has often been claimed, a straight line of progress from Jan Hus to Taboritism, followed by a degeneration into mainline Utraquism. Rather, during the religious wars, extrinsic radical elements attached themselves to, and coexisted with, the reform movement stemming from Hus and the masters of the University of Prague, that is with mainline Utraquism. The radical militants fell away, partly through exhaustion and an ideological flame-out, after having performed a helpful, possibly indispensable, role in preventing a victory by the imperial and papal crusaders.[1] This permitted mainline Utraquism to reassert itself, and to continue the tradition of Hus and Hus's academic precursors and associates. This was not a degeneration, but essentially a reaffirmation of Utraquism's original image and its roots in the fourteenth-century Bohemian Reformation.[2] The doused flames of the essentially

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[1] On the field armies of the Taborites and Orebites see, for instance, Thomas A. Fudge, *The Magnificent Ride: The First Reformation in Hussite Bohemia* (Brookfield, VT, 1998) 170.

[2] For such an opinion see, for instance, Robert Kalivoda, *Husitské myšlení* (Prague, 1997) 69.

extrinsic (Waldensian and Picard) radical trend or of Taboritism would, however, partly rekindle in the Unity of Brethren by 1457. With King George's ascent to power and under Rokycana's guidance the theological self-definition of mainline Utraquism was essentially completed. Another phase of theological creativity would follow in the 1530s and 1540s when Bohuslav Bílejovský and Pavel Bydžovský would respond on behalf of Utraquism to the challenge of the German Reformation, particularly Lutheranism. Their reaffirmations of Hus's legacy would inform the Utraquists' stand vis-à-vis the two subsequent challenges, namely the Bohemian Confession of 1575 and the Letter of Majesty of 1609.

As for the future, the condition of the Utraquist church, as it stood at the turn of the fifteenth century, has been also subjected to much critical questioning. It has been berated for its excessive dependence on the monarch, even as a passive tool in the hands of the royal government, particularly to combat religious radicalism.[3] Its attachment to the idea of belonging to a universal or catholic church has been viewed as a naïve or even perverse reluctance to part with Rome.[4] Perhaps, most harshly, the Utraquist church has been described as an atrophied community no longer possessed of moral or creative vitality.[5] The story of the next hundred years provides answers to such critical queries. While the monarch needed to replace some of the abrogated papal administrative authority, most of it devolved to the Utraquist Consistory, which exercised it independently of the royal government. The Utraquist Consistory continued to uphold the ideal of liberal ecclesiology, highlighted by Hus's sacrifice, and its stance vis-à-vis the Roman Curia was one of salutary critique not one of abject sycophancy. The church's energy and vitality would be displayed not only in its challenge to the Curia, but also in responding to the Lutheran Reformation which would join the Unity of Brethren as a challenger on the left. Uppermost, however, the Utraquists' living contribution would be reflected in their fostering of the tolerance and intellectual liberalism of the via media.

Orthodoxy and Liberal Ecclesiology

The Utraquists' disavowal of Roman authoritarianism and exclusivity, and their replacement by more permissive instrumentalities, such as dialogue, search for consensus, and toleration can be illustrated in several areas. The injunction to preach the Word of God freely, originally raised by Hus among others, passed into the mainstream of Utraquism through its incorporation into the basic Utraquist creeds.[6] It was reinforced by the Test or so-called Judge of Cheb (*iudex in Egra compactatus*, *soudce chebský*) of 1432 which had adopted discussion based on the Scripture, not an administrative fiat, as a way of resolving theological disputes. Subsequently, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the Utraquists fostered discussion and preserved a non-confrontational, even cordial tone toward

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[3] See, for instance, Frederick G. Heymann, "The Impact of Martin Luther upon Bohemia," *Central European History* 1 (1968) 110-111.

[4] Josef Macek, *Víra a zbožnost jagellonského věku* (Prague, 2001) 59.

[5] See, for instance, Georg Voigt, "Georg von Böhmen der Hussitenkönig," *Historische Zeitschrift* 5 (1861) 438-39; Frederick G. Heymann, "The Impact of Martin Luther upon Bohemia," *Central European History* 1 (1968) 110-111.

[6] In the Four Articles of Prague of 1419 (as Article One), and the *Compactata* of the Council of Basel (as Article Two), see Rudolf Říčan, ed., *Čtyři vyznání* (Prague, 1951) 39; Ferdinand Hrejsa, *Dějiny křesťanství v Československu*, 6 vv. (Prague, 1947-1950) 2:271.

their counterparts, especially the Brethren and the Lutherans.

In ecclesiastical government the Utraquist Church renounced interdicts, anathemas, excommunications and other dreaded spiritual weapons employed conspicuously by the Roman Church in late medieval and early modern times.[7] While, as firm adherents to the historic or apostolic succession for valid ordination of priests, the Utraquists remained episcopalians and even papalists, from the viewpoint of church governance they feared the heavy hand not only of the pope, but also of monarchial bishops, and preferred to rely on a collegium of priests, the Consistory, so that their system of ecclesiastical administration could be called presbyterial (though of course not Presbyterian). In this one regard, they differed markedly from their counterpart on the via media, the Church of England, which had retained an administrative episcopacy as one of its cornerstones. The Utraquists also afforded freedom from the oppressive feature of the luxuriant fiscalism of the Roman Church. Although they maintained the belief in the soteriological value of good works and did not deny the existence of purgatory, the practice of good deeds was not to be an occasion for fleecing the faithful for the purposes of architectural splendor or military campaigns.[8] One can see this going back to Hus's controversy with the Curia over the marketing of indulgences in 1412. Furthermore, the stress on assent rather than submission within Utraquism's administrative system was also reflected in the appointments or transfers of priests, particularly in urban parishes, which were not dictated, but rather negotiated between the Consistory and the local authorities.[9] Ironically, modern Central European historians accustomed to the automatic obedience claimed by the typical over-bureaucratized state of their region, viewed this practice with disapproval as a descent into administrative chaos. Another liberalizing feature was the de-emphasis of auricular confession as a prerequisite for communion or as an annual obligation. This was so particularly in view of the Roman Church's use of confession as a means of disciplinary enforcement.[10]

Moving on to other characteristics, the Utraquists' sense of preserving an integrity of the doctrinal fundamentals, compared with the more radical dissidents, probably freed them, at least in part, from the compulsion of a militant assertion of orthodoxy. One may recall in those regards the harsh self-righteous stance of the

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[7] Kamil Krofta, "Václav Koranda mladší z Nové Plzně a jeho názory náboženské," *Listy z náboženských dějin* (Prague, 1936) 258. As a parenthetical observation, the Utraquists likewise escaped the dread engendered by the Calvinist stress on predestination. Concerning the potentially deleterious effect of this doctrine see Alexandra Walsham, "The Parochial Roots of Laudianism Revisited: Catholics, Anti-Calvinists and 'Parish Anglicans' in Early Stuart England," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 49 (1998) 629, as well as her references to Michael MacDonald, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990) 64-67; and John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford, 1991) especially, ch. 1.

[8] Otakar Odložilík, "Utrakvistická postilla z r. 1540," *Věstník České společnosti nauk* (1925) 15-17, 20-21; on purgatory see František M. Bartoš, *Husitská revoluce*, 2 vv. (Prague, 1965-66) 1:21, 37.

[9] The consensual system of administrative discipline was stipulated, for instance, in the Candlemas Day Articles of 1524, points 1-6, see Bartoš Písař, *Kronika pražská*, ed. Josef V. Šimák. Prague, 1907 in: FRB 6:21-22.

[10] On Utraquist laxity on confession see Julius Pažout, *Jednání a dopisy konsistoře pod obojí způsobou přijímajících, 1562-1570* (Prague, 1906) 342-343; Josef Matoušek, "Kurie a boj o konsistoř pod obojí za administrátora Rezka," ČČH 37 (1931) 262-263; *Sněmy české* 8:337.

Lutherans toward the Calvinists and the Zwinglians, and that of the Calvinists vis-à-vis the Unitarians.[11] Their relative serenity led the Utraquists to acquire the aura of flexibility and tolerance, verging on a gentle bemusement and bonhomie, with respect to what they regarded as the foibles of others. Although using nautical similes more suitable for seafaring Britain than for landlocked Bohemia, Diarmaid MacCullough has pointed out an analogous religious situation in England in the 1530s: "...evangelicals [i.e., Cranmerian Lutherans] were often more bitter about religious radicalism [i.e., the sectarians] than the traditionalists [i.e., the high churchmen] were, because it revealed the insecurity of their own position: were not the radicals seeking to capsize a boat which the evangelicals themselves were already rocking?"[12]

Another way of looking at this exceptional characteristic of the Utraquists is to say that they escaped the need of confessionalisation in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.[13] They avoided the process by which Protestant groups had to define themselves against each other and against the Church of Rome, and by which the latter had to adopt its own demarcations against the churches of the Reformation. The Utraquists were already secure in their own delimitation vis-ŕ-vis both Roman authoritarianism (since the period of Hus and the *Compactata*), and vis-ŕ-vis the Protestant biblical reductionism through the fifteenth-century encounters with the Taborites and the Brethren. Accordingly, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, they were spared the process of differentiation, sometimes called 'confessionalisation', which often led others to cast anathemas against one another, and which in general militated against the adoption of tolerant attitudes.

Finally, the Utraquists had become accustomed to a considerable degree of tolerance by their earlier legal coexistence with the remnants of the Roman Church, explicitly codified by the Peace of Kutná Hora of 1485, and informally observed since the adoption of the *Compactata* of Basel in 1436, which proscribed accusations of heresy and mutual vilification.[14] These pacific inclinations were in turn conditioned and enhanced by the memory of the destructiveness of the internal and external conflicts of the Bohemian Reformation.

Zdeněk V. David   **David R. Holeton**
Woodrow Wilson Centre   **HTF-UK**
Washington   **Prague**

Co-Organizers of the Symposium

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[11] See, for instance, John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (New York, 1998) 104. A similar phenomenon of anxiety and need to affirm a stern orthodoxy was attributed to the Council of Constance in its treatment of Jan Hus. Challenging the power of the papacy with their conciliarism, the fathers of the Council felt compelled to counterbalance their daring departure - and the likely appearance of doctrinal impropriety - by the demonstration and reaffirmation of their doctrinal strictness in other respects. According to this view, it was this minefield that Hus had entered, and it was the defensive mentality of Pierre d'Ailly, Jean Gerson, and Francesco Zabarella, to which Hus owed to a large extent his martyrdom and subsequent fame. Paul De Vooght, *L'hérésie de Jean Huss*, 2vv. (Louvain, 1975) 1:502, 507-508.

[12] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven, 1996) 145.

[13] On the concept of "confessionalisation" see, for instance, Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Washington, D.C., 1999) 6-8.

[14] Thomas A. Fudge, "The Problem of Religious Liberty in Early Modern Bohemia," CV 38 (1996) 68-71; Václav Koranda, Jr., *Traktát o velebné a božské svátosti oltářní* (Prague, 1493) ff. A3b - A4a.