
Bohuslav Bílejovský and the Religious *Via Media*: Czech Utraquism in the Sixteenth Century

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After a century of institutional existence, at the opening of the Reformation era (c. 1517), the Utraquist Church found itself in a precariously exposed position, which placed it in double jeopardy with respect to maintaining its integrity. In the first place, the Czech Utraquists became subject to new, radical types of Reformational appeals, especially from German Lutheranism. In the second place, the risk stemmed from the alien and unsympathetic dynasty of the Habsburgs who were steeped in a tradition of strict loyalty to the Roman Church and who assumed the throne of Bohemia in 1526. As the Church of England under Elizabeth I is said to have steered a careful course between the Scylla of Rome and the Charybdis of Geneva,¹ so the Utraquist consistory and the main body of the church were now forced to navigate their ecclesiastical bark between the Scylla of Rome (usually supported by the Habsburgs) and the Charybdis of a full fledged Protestant Reformation.

The prominent but neglected Utraquist theologian Bohuslav Bílejovský (c. 1480–1555), a member of the Consistory, expressed most cogently on behalf of sixteenth-century Utraquism, the perception of his Church's *via media* between the Church of Rome and the fully reformed churches, as well as its sense of participation in the traditional Church of Western Christendom. His views were distilled in the *Kronyka czeska* [The Bohemian Chronicle], published in Nuremberg in 1537.²

1) For a characterization of the Anglican position see, for instance, John S. Marshall, *Hooker and the Anglican Tradition: An Historical and Theological Study of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity* (Sewanee, Tenn. 1963) 36, 64. Jarold K. Zeman notes, without elaborating, the similarity between Utraquism and Anglicanism in his *The Hussite Movement and the Reformation in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia, 1350–1650: A Bibliographical Study Guide* (Ann Arbor, Mich. 1977) xvi.

2) The text of Bílejovský's work is available in a nineteenth-century edition by Jozef Skalický (pseudonym for Josef Dittrich) *Kronyka cýrkewní [Ecclesiastical Chronicle]* (Prague 1816). Born around 1480 in Malín near Kutná Hora, he was ordained priest in Italy (perhaps in Venice) and served in Mělník, Čáslav, and Kutná Hora. Except for a brief mission to Tábor, he lived in Prague where he was elected to the Consistory in 1534 and died in 1555. For biographic data on

Modern Czech critics have tended to trivialize Bílejovský's views of Utraquism's origins and objectives by characterizing his book as an idiosyncratic or quixotic undertaking. On the one hand, he was blamed for being unbearably old-fashioned, if not outright reactionary, because he does not wholeheartedly embrace the Protestant Reformation, preferring instead to maintain the traditional Utraquist *via media*. On the other hand, he was virtually accused of national treason for his alleged derivation of the Bohemian Reformation from Eastern Orthodoxy because this called into question the Czech association with the civilization of Western Christendom, of which most of these critics were inordinately proud. One of the most outspoken critics, Josef Šimák, for example, has described Bílejovský's treatise as '... not a history, but a shallow, vile and dishonest polemic'.³

It is the objective of this paper to review certain misconceptions in historical literature concerning the role of Bílejovský, and more generally of sixteenth-century Utraquism, in Czech religious and cultural development. The aim is to show, in the first place, that Bílejovský's work represented a responsible and respectable effort to safeguard the authentic mature Utraquist Church in its fundamental religious orientation, based on earlier historical self-perceptions within Utraquism.⁴ It views Bílejovský's task as analogous to that subsequently performed by Richard Hooker on behalf of the Church of England, namely to provide a theological, more specifically ecclesiological, rationale for his church hitherto evolving largely on the basis of discrete historical events and *ad hoc* legislative edicts. In the second place, careful reading of his text shows Bílejovský deriving Utraquism from a distinctly Western Christian tradition as adapted to the Bohemian/Slavic

Bílejovský see Josef V. Šimák, "Bohuslava Bílejovského Kronika česká", *Český časopis historický* 38 (1932) 92–3.

3) Šimák, "Bohuslava Bílejovského Kronika česká", 102, see also 92–101. For other typical expressions of negative criticism of Bílejovský, see, for instance, Josef Kalousek, "O historii kalicha v dobách předhusitských", *Výroční zpráva obecního reálného gymnasia v Praze na školní rok 1880/81* (Prague 1881) 5, 18, 23; Jaroslav Viček, *Dějiny české literatury* (Praha 1951) I, 304–06; Jan Jakubec, *Dějiny literatury české* (Prague 1929), I, 652–53; Ferdinand Hrejsa, *Dějiny křesťanství v Československu* (Prague 1948) V, 32; František Kutnar, *Přehledné dějiny českého a slovenského dějepisectví* (Prague 1971) I, 53–54; Ivo Kořán, "Obraz a slovo v našich dějinách", *Kapitoly z českého dějepisu umění*, by Rudolf Chadraba and others (Prague, 1986) I, 17–18. Even such experienced scholars as Antonii V. Florovskii [*Chekhi i vostochnye slaviane: Oчерki po istorii cheshsko-russkikh otnoshenii X–XVIII vv* (Prague 1935) I, 403] and Howard Kaminsky [*A History of the Hussite Revolution* (Berkeley 1967) 99] accept the allegation that Bílejovský sought to derive Utraquism from Eastern Orthodoxy.

4) Kamil Krofta, "Slovo o knězi Bohuslavu Bílejovském", *Sborník prací věnovaný Janu Bedřichu Novákovi k šedesátým narozeninám*, ed. Bedřich Jenšovský and Bedřich Mendl (Prague 1932) 223, 226.

national setting. In other words, Bílejovský was innocent of the second charge leveled by his critics. His alleged derivation of Utraquism from Eastern Orthodoxy was based on misperceptions of his historical interpretation.

Like Richard Hooker would do on behalf of the Church of England, so Bílejovský aimed at defining the complex relationship (one is almost tempted to say the love-hate relationship) between the Utraquist Church and the Church of Rome. Hooker expressed this attitude on behalf of the Church of England thus:

Where Rome keepeth that which is ancients and better, others whom we much more affect leaving it for newer and changing it for worse; we had rather follow the perfections of them we like not, than in defects resemble them whom we love.⁵

According to Bílejovský, the Bohemian Church historically evolved in full harmony with the Church of Rome and was administered by bishops, often named by the popes. He expressed a high regard for the popes who had properly guided the general (*obecná*) holy church, and with a few exceptions, like that of Pope Liberius (352–366), effectively opposed several heresies arising mainly in the East among the Greeks. He is not even disturbed by papal schisms. Even when there were two or three popes, they still continued to keep Christians correctly adhering to matters essential to salvation.⁶

However, the obedience to the popes, as well as to the general church councils, had its limit, and that was the authority of the Bible. This criterion of religious truth was embedded in principle in the Accord of Cheb (*iudex in Egra compactatus*) on which the Czech Utraquists insisted before embarking on the negotiations with the Council of Basel in 1432, recognizing the supremacy of the Bible over any other ecclesiastical institution.⁷ In other words, the Bohemian Church respectfully acknowledged the authority of the popes, the councils, the Church Fathers, and the doctors of the Church in teachings that could be not specifically contained in the Bible, but not in

5) Richard Hooker, *Works* V, 28, 1 (Oxford 1865) I,520.

6) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 27.

7) *Ibid.* 17. On the principle of the Accord of Cheb (*soudce chebský*), recognized by the Council of Basel in 1432, see also Rudolf Urbánek, *České dějiny* (Prague 1913), III, 1, 91; on the Utraquists' refusal to obey popes or councils, if contradicting the Bible, see also František Bartoš, *Husitská revoluce* (Prague 1966), II, 49, 66, 113, 181–82; or the English translation *The Hussite Revolution, 1424–1437*, trans J. Weir, ed. John M. Klassen [Eastern European Monographs 203] (New York 1986) 79–82; and Frederick G. Heyman, "John Rokycana: Church Reformer Between Hus and Luther", *Church History* 28 (1959) 246.

those teachings which actually contradicted the Scripture. As it turned out, this questioning attitude, though strictly limited and seemingly innocuous, came to represent a crucial obstacle, perhaps largely a psychological one, for even the mildest of the Utraquists in coming to terms with the Church of Rome.⁸ Herein seems to lie another distinct element of Utraquists' kinship with germinating Anglicanism, represented by Richard Hooker.⁹

For Bílejovský, of course, the cardinal issue, and the primary source of other disagreements, between the Utraquists and the Church of Rome was the onset of the latter's insistence on communion in one kind (*sub una specie*) for the laity. Prior to that when all of the Western Church under Rome's jurisdiction received communion in both kinds (*sub utraque specie*) the Czechs had no problem in remaining in full communion with Rome. Accordingly, the Czechs received communion *sub utraque* from the time of the introduction of Christianity in the days of the first Christian rulers Bořivoj and St Ludmila.¹⁰ According to Bílejovský, it was virtually impossible to determine the exact time and reason for the Roman Church's fateful departure from the established tradition and its embracing a form of communion flatly contradicting Christ's precepts, unambiguously recorded in the Scripture.

In looking into the timing and causes of the communion *sub una*, Bílejovský maintained that until the twelfth century the entire Western Church received communion. In particular, he stressed the condemnation by Pope

8) In other words, even when the differences on dogma and ritual had become apparently miniscule, the difference on the source and exercise of ecclesiastical authority proved virtually insurmountable. On the failure of reunion in the 1560s and 1570s, see Klement Borový, *Antonín Brus z Mohelnice, arcibiskup pražský: historicko-kritický život* (Prague 1873) 176, 180–96, especially 195; František Kavka and Anna Skýbová, *Husitský epilog na koncilu tridentském a původní koncepcie habsburské rekatolizace Čech* (Prague 1968) 183–4; and *Nuntiatuiberichte aus Deutschland nebst ergänzenden Aktenstücken*, Abteilung 3, 1572–1585, vol. 6, ed. Helmut Goetz (Tubingen 1982) VI, 153–4, 467; for the 1580s, Klement Borový, *Martin Medek, arcibiskup pražský: historicko-kritické vypsání náboženských poměrů v Čechách* (Prague 1877) 73–4; and Karel Stloukal, “Počátky nunciatury v Praze: Bonhomie v Čechách, 1581–84”, *Český časopis historický* 34 (1928) 15–17, 247, 253, 255, 278; on the failure of reunion negotiations in 1590–1610, see Josef Matoušek, “Kurie a boj o konsistoř pod obojí za administrátora Rezka”, *Český časopis historický* 37 (1931) 285–91; *Die Hauptinstruktionen Clemens' VIII. für die Nuntien und Legaten an den europäischen Fürstenhöfen, 1592–1605*, ed. Klaus Jaitner (Tubingen 1984) I, 58–9; *Sněmy české* (Prague 1910) XI, i, 74, 79; Josef Vávra, “Katolíci a sněm český roku 1608 a 1609”, *Sborník historického kroužku I* (1893) 4.

9) On the Anglican view of the relative status of the Scripture, reason and tradition, see for example Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church: Theological Resources in Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis 1989) 63–67.

10) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 2, 28.

Gelasius II (1118–19) of the “splitting” of the sacrament of the altar. Even under Innocent III (1198–1216) communion *sub una*, if it occurred, had to be practiced in secret. It appeared that it was Thomas Aquinas, followed by Nicholas of Lyra (c. 1270–c. 1349), who undertook openly the defense of the misguided practice, though both of them also testified that communion had been practiced by the early church. Bílejovský seems to suggest it was the year 1283 when the first evidence of corruption began to manifest itself in the Church of the West.¹¹ However, he also claims that long afterwards the popes and cardinals, particularly in Rome at Easter, still distributed communion to laymen.¹²

Even on the Roman side, as the discussions with the Utraquists at the Council of Basel had shown, theologians were unable to demonstrate when and where the communion *sub una* originated, which in itself was a strong argument, in Bílejovský’s eyes, for its illegitimacy. Since communion was solemnly instituted by Jesus Christ, as recorded in Scripture, and was the practice of the Apostles, the primitive church, and a long succession of bishops, popes, doctors, priests and monks, it would seem logical that its discontinuation, and its replacement by communion *sub una*, would have required another solemn act of equal standing with the Gospel record of the Last Supper to legitimize it. There was no such solemn act.¹³ Bílejovský returns to this argument elsewhere. The champions of communion *sub una* claimed that their belief was so old that they did not know by whom, where and when it had begun. With more than a touch of irony, he asks: “Perhaps, it was before the world was here, and there was no human being to accept it and to remember it?... Then it did not originate with Christ the Lord.”¹⁴ After all, there was the Holy Writ from which it was possible to learn the beginning of all religious fundamentals, such as the creation of the world, the birth of Adam, and the birth of Christ, as well as the institution at the Last Supper of the sacrament of the altar at which Christ distributed.¹⁵ While unambiguously commanding communion, the Scripture said nothing about the origin of communion *sub una*.

11) *Ibid.* 7–8, 16.

12) *Ibid.* 30–31. According to Bílejovský, this practice lasted in Rome until the death of Pope Pius II in 1464, *ibid.* 31. He also claims that as late as the 1390s Pope Boniface IX approved communion *sub utraque* for the church of St. Barbara in Kutná Hora, *ibid.* 28.

13) *Ibid.* 16–17.

14) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 25.

15) *Ibid.*

Bílejovský also sought evidence on the acceptance of communion for infants and little children in the Western Church. He related that St Adalbert (Vojtěch), sometime Bishop of Prague in the tenth century, subsequently, as a missionary, introduced the custom of communion for infants right after baptism into Hungary where the custom was maintained, at least for royal infants, until 1235. Bílejovský claimed that Pope Innocent III upheld the practice of communion for infants, as well as communion. He also pointed out that Nicholas of Lyra (whom he otherwise regards as a champion of communion *sub una*), in 1327 cites John [6: 52–59] on the issue of communion for little children, as an essential complement to baptism, as the Greek Church still recognized.¹⁶

Bílejovský felt strongly the need to defend the Czechs against the suggestion that they had lost the right to communion since they had actually adopted communion *sub una* in the fourteenth century. Hence, so their opponents claimed, the Czechs' situation was fundamentally different from that of the Greeks who had never stopped the practice of communion.¹⁷ According to Bílejovský, the truth was that his countrymen had not stopped receiving communion voluntarily. Under Charles IV, Archbishop Arnost of Pardubice first began to introduce restrictions, and the full force of pressure against communion was unleashed only after the death of Archbishop Jan Očko of Vlašim (1380).¹⁸ At that point a campaign of coercion was launched to enforce communion *sub una*. Priests who could not be bribed, were pressured into conformity through the threats of losing their parishes; the simple faithful were intimidated with a total denial of the sacraments, including baptism, if they opposed communion *sub una*. Bílejovský maintains that succumbing to such terrorism should not be confused with voluntary acceptance. Moreover, there was an almost immediate opposition to the practice of communion *sub una*, which was led by Jan Milič of Kroměříž and

16) *Ibid.* 4, 7–8. On the importance and significance of communion for infants and small children in Utraquism, see articles by David R. Holeton, “The Communion of Infants and Hussitism”, *Communio Viatorum* 27 (1984) 204–225, and “The Communion of Infants: The Basel Years”, *CV* 29 (1986) 15–40, and his book *La communion des tout-petits enfants; Étude du mouvement eucharistique en Bohême vers la fin du Moyen-Âge* (Rome 1989) especially 235–303.

17) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 17.

18) *Ibid.* 8–9.

Matthias of Janov, and a reversal was to occur within barely twenty years of the death of Očko, under Jakoubek of Stříbro (by 1414).¹⁹

In fact, Bílejovský was almost certainly wrong in seeking to narrow to a couple of decades the period between the discontinuation of the communion and its restoration under Jacoubek. He stood on weak ground. Josef Kalousek, for example, cites instances of communion *sub una* in Bohemia for 1253, 1267, and 1281. There are no documented cases of lay communion from the cup according to the Roman rite for Bohemia in the fourteenth century. The editor of the 1816 edition of *Kronyka církevní*, Josef Skalický, suggests that Bílejovský mistook for communion references to the “reception of the body and blood of the Lord” [přijímání těla a krve Páně], a formula used – in a potentially confusing way – by the Roman Church to describe the communion *sub una*.²⁰ The minimization of the hiatus in Bohemia between the discontinuation and the resumption of communion, however, was not an idiosyncratic effort on Bílejovský’s part. Instead, as Krofta has shown, Bílejovský puts forth a conviction perpetuated in the Utraquist Church at least since the religious settlement under Archbishop Jan Rokycana in mid-fifteenth century. Thus Vaclav Koranda the younger, Rokycana’s successor as administrator of the Utraquist Church, also claims in his 1493 work *O svátosti oltářní* [On the Sacrament of the Altar] that communion from the chalice had been available for the laity in Bohemia as late as the reign of Charles IV, and even for a while longer, in such localities as the church of the Prague castle and in certain monasteries. On these points Koranda cites, rather surprisingly, the authority of Rokycana who allegedly had been informed about such practices by surviving credible witnesses.²¹

In the final analysis, however, Bílejovský’s main point was that the change from to *sub una* had occurred in Bohemia only after several centuries of practice and that the change was illegitimate in any case. Thus ultimately, the length of the discontinuity was not the crucial issue. The crux of the matter was that there was no evidence for a theologically or juridically lawful institution of communion *sub una* in Bohemia. Had it occurred legitimately, there would have to be some official act on record authorizing this practice,

19) *Ibid.* 9, 18. The actual time span was thirty-four years; on 9, Bílejovský gives the correct death date for Očko as 1380.

20) Josef Kalousek, “Ruské badání o příčinách a účelích hnutí husitského”, *Časopis českého musea* 56 (1882) 102; see also Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 138, n. 30.

21) On Koranda, see Kamil Krofta, “Václav Koranda mladší z Nové Plzně a jeho názory náboženské”, *Sborník městského historického musea v Plzni* 3 (1913) 27–8.

such as an entry into the Tables of the Land (*desky zemské*), or a parchment provided with seals, like the text of the Compacts of Basel. There was no such document.²²

Bílejovský had two other reasons for emphasizing the continuity of communion in the Bohemian Church. In the first place, he sought to refute what he considered slanderous assertions by the adherents of the Roman Church that their faith was older and that of the Utraquists' dated only from the time of Hus and Jan Žižka.²³ The term "*hussiti*", in fact, seemed to be a favorite term of opprobrium used by the Roman curia to designate the Utraquists,²⁴ while the courteous form was *communicantes*.²⁵ In the second place, Bílejovský sought to establish the Utraquists' right to the possession of Bohemian churches against the assertion of their opponents that they had been usurped from the faithful of the Roman Church to which they rightfully belonged. He pointed out that from the start of Christianity in Bohemia, since the days of St. Ludmila and St. Wenceslas, the churches built in towns and villages by nobles, gentry, and burghers had been intended to distribute communion. Hence from St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague to the churches in the smallest villages, all these places of worship belonged rightfully to the Utraquists. In other words, the legacy of Bohemian Christianity rightfully belonged to the communicants; the communicants *sub una* had been the usurpers.²⁶

With the error of communion *sub una*, Bílejovský links two other features which made the Roman Church objectionable to the Utraquists: (1) excessive love of earthly possessions, and (2) the penchant for the exertion of secular (physical) power. These objections were among the traditional tenets of Utraquism, they were embedded in the Compacts, and they were almost

22) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 18.

23) *Ibid.* 24. The Anglicans encountered similar malicious questionings of their ecclesiastical origins. Thus William Palmer had to reject propositions such as: "... the Church of England was founded at the Reformation by separation from the catholic church; ... its faith was then invented or changed by Henry VIII ...; ... the Church of England was responsible for all the views, motives, acts of Henry, Edward, Elizabeth and their courtiers ..." cited by Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* 179.

24) For instance, *Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland, Abteilung 2, 1560–1572*, ed. Johann Rainer (Graz 1967) VII, 46–47; *Abteilung 3, VI, 154, 365, 369; Abteilung 3, 1572–1585*, ed. Almut Bues (Tubingen 1990), VII, 49, 88. *Hauptinstruktionen Clemens VIII* I, 59, II, 710.

25) *Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland, Abteilung 3, VI, 467*; see also *Abteilung 3, VII, 98, 376*.

26) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 7, 23–25.

certainly connected with denunciation of priestly wealth and the Caesarian clergy by John Wyclif, about whose influence on Utraquism more will be said later.²⁷ According to Bílejovský, it was in large part clerical indolence that had led to the abandonment of communion in the first place. He cited Hus chastising such clerical vices as avarice, simony, gluttony, fornication, pride, idleness, and neglect of religious functions. He himself further denounced unworthy priests who, instead of preaching to and serving the faithful, were interested only in collecting parish incomes, easy eating and drinking, and enjoying their young housekeepers sexually, as well as “the lord abbots” who “transformed monastic religion into earthly dignities”.²⁸ The inappropriate and unseemly use of physical force was epitomized, for Bílejovský, in the campaign against Utraquism, particularly in Pope Martin V’s (1417–31) sponsorship of several crusades against Bohemia and his grants of indulgences to the crusaders who would murder adherents to the divinely ordained communion.²⁹ Incidentally, Martin V had participated in the sentencing of John Hus at Constance in 1415, and subsequently as pope was virtually obsessed by the idea of extirpating the Utraquists. For his misguided application of secular power, Bílejovský called Martin “an enemy of Christ”, though he stopped short of ascribing to him the metaphysical attributes of an authentic “Antichrist”.³⁰

A third subsidiary objection to the Church of Rome, clearly brought up by Bílejovský, was its opposition to liturgical use of vernacular languages. According to Bílejovský, the liturgy had been sung in Czech since the beginning of Christianity in Bohemia. There were occasional setbacks. Thus German monks who used Latin were settled in the Sázava Monastery in the

27) A condemnation of the temporal power and the wealth of the church was incorporated into the third article of the Compacts, see Bartoš, *Husitská revoluce* II, 226. The demand for disendowment of the church was reinforced also by Wyclif’s disciple, Peter Payne, who had been chosen to defend the third article in Basel, see Richard R. Betts, *Essays in Czech History* (London 1969) 246. On Wyclif’s attitude, see also Michael Wilks, “*Reformatio Regni: Wyclif and Hus as Leaders of Religious Protest Movements*”, *Studies in Church History* (1972) 118.

28) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 21, see also 11.

29) *Ibid.* 13, 30. Bílejovský likens to the perverts of Sodom and Gomorrah the papally anointed thugs, who were ready to kill young and old, and rape virgins and married women, whose only fault was their scrupulous adherence to the Gospel commands, *ibid.* 13.

30) *Ibid.* 13, 30. Equating the pope with Antichrist was not only a hallmark of the Lutheran reformation. Wyclif also claimed that Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) inaugurated the age of Antichrist with the mendicant orders instituted by the pope as pseudo-apostles, see Wilks, “*Reformatio Regni: Wyclif and Hus as Leaders of Religious Protest Movements*”, 117. In his reluctance to perceive the pope as Antichrist, Bílejovský again resembles Hooker, see Robert K. Faulkner, *Richard Hooker and the Politics of a Christian England* (Berkeley 1981) 31.

eleventh century to replace the Czech-speaking denizens. Bílejovský recounts the legend that thereupon the monastery's dead founder St. Procopius made three ghostly appearances exhorting the Germans to leave. When his admonitions failed, he materialized temporarily and expelled the intruders by wielding his abbatial staff and inflicting deep cuts on these promoters of Latin. According to Bílejovský, it was only with the terrorist enforcement of communion *sub una* that the campaign against Czech in the liturgy started in earnest in the late fourteenth century. During this period of ecclesiastical vandalism, liturgical books were destroyed or mutilated, just like centuries previously a certain Alchymus in Jerusalem had sought to destroy the books of the Prophets.³¹ The insistence on Latin, Bílejovský maintains, reflected the Italian hubris of the papal establishment, and the Germans, always eager to please their superiors, became its dedicated apostles. It was absurd to argue, as some had done, that the use of Czech or other vernacular languages had led to heresy. Bílejovský asked: Had not Greek and Latin been used to express the most horrendous heresies, against which the Fathers of the Church had to defend the true faith?³² Heresy, for Bílejovský, stemmed, not from the language, but from the "evil heart" and "perverted reason".³³

Inasmuch as the Latinizing Germans were assigned a significant role in the issues surrounding the use of liturgical languages, it is relevant to note the rather peculiar nature of Bílejovský's attitude toward the Czechs' other Teutonic neighbors. He does not express dislike of them, nor anger against them. He seems to convey the notion that, as undomesticated strangers, they simply could not help ending up on the wrong side doing the wrong things,

31) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 20–22, 46. The "Alchymus" is probably the Hellenized member of a Jewish priestly family, Alcimus, who was appointed high priest in Jerusalem (162–160/59 B. C.) with the assistance of Demetrius I Soter, the Seleucid ruler of Syria, to combat Judah Maccabee and his followers; see *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem 1971) II, 550.

32) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 23. Bílejovský also points out domestic instances, when Latin was used for heretical writings, as by Mikuláš Biskupec of Pelhřimov to compose the Taborite *Acta*, and by the Bohemian Brethren for their theological works, including an *Apology*, recently published in Nuremberg, *ibid*. He probably refers to Mikuláš' *Confessio Taboritarum* of 1431, see Zeman, *The Hussite Movement and Reformation 179*; and to the *Apology* of the Bohemian Brethren, published in 1511, which also attracted the attention of Erasmus and Luther, see Rudolf Říčan and others, *Jednota Bratrská, 1457–1957: Sborník k pětistému výročí založení* (Prague 1956) 29.

33) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 23. Anne Hudson describes similar arguments against the use of English for theological writings at the turn of the fourteenth century, citing in part from a manuscript in the Brno University Library, see her "Lollardy: the English Heresy?" in *Lollards and Their Books* (London 1985) 157–58.

whether by championing Latin liturgy and communion *sub una*, or by destroying a large section of Prague in 1419 at the behest of Queen Sophie, Wenceslas IV's widow.³⁴ He does not, however, make them directly responsible for the anti-Bohemian crusades, claiming that the crusaders spoke no fewer than thirty-five different languages.³⁵

Bílejovský viewed the course of the Bohemian religious wars of the early fifteenth century as a sure sign that the Utraquist critique of the Roman Church was correct. Only divine favor could explain the repeated victories of the relatively small Czech forces against the enormous European hosts mobilized by Martin V's papacy. God fought his own battle through his small Czech flock, as he had done through the Israelites in Old Testament times. Repeatedly, from the siege of Prague in 1420 to the invasion of Domažlice in 1431, the Lord struck terror in the hearts of the crusaders, led by cardinals, papal legates, and bishops. As a result – often before the Czechs came in sight – these invaders, whom Bílejovský characterizes as cutthroats, rapists and arsonists, turned and ran, even soiling their pants from fear.³⁶

If Richard Hooker on behalf of the Church of England saw the opposition on the left mainly in the Puritans, Bílejovský focused on the Bohemian Brethren as Utraquism's radical challengers. He sought the root of Bohemian Brethren's religious problem in the legacy of the sect of the Picardi, hence he persists in calling the Brethren *Picardi* or Pikarts. According to Bílejovský, the Pikarts had made their appearance in Prague in 1418 and gained their most important Czech convert in Martin Húska (or Loquis).³⁷ From this source sprang the various erroneous teachings initially manifest within the Taborite wing in the Bohemian Reformation. Here Bílejovský followed a Utraquist tradition dating at least to 1420 when Jan of Přebram had applied the label of Pikarts to the radical Taborites.³⁸ Bílejovský catalogs the

34) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 8–10, 13, 27–28, 46,

35) *Ibid.* 13.

36) *Ibid.* 13–14.

37) *Ibid.* 50. Howard Kaminsky seeks to identify the “Picardi” with the “Berghardi” or the Brethren of the Free Spirit who were widespread in fourteenth-century Europe and condemned by the Council of Vienne in 1311, see his *A History of the Hussite Revolution* 354–55. The main competitors of the Picardi for ideological input into radical Taboritism were the Waldensians, and the Lollards (the folkish followers of John Wyclif), see *ibid.* 359–60; Josef Pekař, *Žižka a jeho doba* (Prague 1927) I, 15–17; and Anne Hudson, “A Lollard Compilation in England and Bohemia”, in *Lollards and Their Books* 31–42. Bílejovský, however, as we shall see later, categorically rejects the influence of the Waldensians, and seeks to rehabilitate Wyclif.

38) Bartoš, *Husitská revoluce* (1965) I, 116.

Pikarts' false teachings. Their key errors were the denial of transubstantiation and the sacramental priesthood. Other sacraments, such as confirmation and confession, as well as purgatory and prayers for the dead, were also rejected. Traditional liturgy was abolished, including the use of holy water, blessed oils, sacred books, and special vestments or vessels. The invocation of saints and the dedication to them of churches, chapels, or altars, were condemned as blasphemies. These radicals also denied the authority of the Church Fathers and Doctors, even if the latter's writings were in full conformity with Scripture.³⁹

These radical ideas, according to Bílejovský, inspired the Taborite iconoclasm of the 1420s when armed hosts of gentry and peasantry proceeded to demolish ecclesiastical buildings, not exempting Utraquist ones, under the excuse of extirpating idolatry. Assaulting churches and chapels, the radical Taborites ruined altars (engaging in the curious practice of cutting off their corners), smashed chalices and monstrances, stepped on consecrated bread, and spilled consecrated wine on the ground. Missals were thrown into the mud under wagon wheels, and church vestments resown into common clothes. The iconoclasts used the holy oils to waterproof their footwear, and defecated into baptismal fonts.⁴⁰

As an exception to condemning the Taborites' religious terrorism, Bílejovský seeks to justify the destruction of monasteries during the early stages of the Bohemian Reformation. According to him, the monks proved to be incorrigible opponents of Utraquism. Failing to respond to earnest exhortations and admonitions, they persisted in casting their anathemas against the Utraquists and in favoring the foreign invaders. Hence the Utraquists had little choice but to neutralize these fifth columnists (to use a modern military metaphor) in order to prevent the monasteries' employment as shelters or points of support for the genocidal campaigns of the crusaders.⁴¹

Bílejovský relates the religious outlook of the Bohemian Brethren to the doctrines of Pikarts, coupling this with a curiously insistent denial that the former were influenced by the Waldensians. Commenting on the public emergence of the Brethren, which he dates to 1479 (thirty-five years after the

39) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 51–53. Bílejovský himself refers with approval to a wide range of patristic and scholastic literature throughout his *Chronicle*.

40) *Ibid.* 53, 55.

41) *Ibid.* 25–26.

routing of the Taborites), Bílejovský writes: "... they are again called Pikarts, though for a long time, by those ignorant of history, they were counted as Waldensians; however, nothing that is Waldensian was theirs."⁴² Most of the third Book of his *Kronyka* is dedicated to establishing the connection between the Brethren and the Pikarts.

A delicate problem for Bílejovský in seeking to navigate past the Charybdis of religious radicalism was to define the attitude of the Utraquist Church toward John Wyclif and his teaching, inasmuch as the orthodoxy of his views had been questioned, and the Taborites, the spiritual ancestors of the Brethren, had tended to appeal to his authority.⁴³ Yet, Wyclif could not easily be condemned without disparaging the most distinguished son of the Bohemian Church, Jan Hus, who had been sent to the stake in 1415 for refusing to renounce Wyclif without an open debate on where his use of Wyclif contravened the Scripture.⁴⁴ Luckily, some of Wyclif's doctrines had been given a sanitizing exegesis in 1547 by Peter Payne, an English follower of Wyclif and a prominent figure in the Bohemian Reformation.⁴⁵ A reliance on Payne's interpretations substantially eased Bílejovsky's task, and his attitude toward Wyclif did not follow the negative opinion of Jan Příbram, but rather the more generous view of the Utraquist mainstream, epitomized by Jakoubek and Jan Rokycana.⁴⁶ Bílejovský denied that Wyclif's influence had caused Jan Hus to waver on the issue of the eucharist. At the same time, he

42) *Ibid.* 109, see also *ibid* 105; and Šimák, "Bohuslava Bílejovského Kronika česká", 101. On the relationship between the Bohemian Brethren and the Waldensians, often called Waldensian Brethren (*fratres Valdenses*), see Giovanni Gonnet and Amadeo Molnár, *Les Vaudois au Moyen Âge* (Turin 1974) and Rudolf Říčan, *The History of the Unity of Brethren*, trans. C. Daniel Crews (Bethlehem, PA. 1992) an abridged version of the original Czech edition, *Dejiny Jednoty bratrské* (Prague 1957).

43) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 102.

44) On Wyclif's influence see also Gordon Leff, "Wyclif and Hus: A Doctrinal Comparison", in *Wyclif in His Times*, ed. Anthony Kenny (Oxford 1986) 105–125, as well as Reginald R. Betts, *Essays in Czech History* (London 1969) 29–62, 132–59; Paul De Vooght, *L'Hérésie de Jean Huss*, (Louvain 1975²), II, 521–6; and Vilém Herold, *Pražská univerzita a Wyclif* (Prague 1985). The pioneering classical treatment is by Johann Loserth, *Hus und Wiclif: Zur Genesis der Husitischen Lehre* (Munich, 1925²). For a penetrating reassessment of the Wyclif-Hus relationship, see David R. Holeyton, "Wyclif's Bohemian Fate: A Reflection on the Contextualization of Wyclif in Bohemia", *Communio Viatorum* 32 (1989) 209–22.

45) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 90. See also Josef Pekař, *Žižka a jeho doba* I, 140–41; and Ferdinand Hrejsa, *Dějiny křesťanství v Československu* (Prague 1947) II: 218–19; on Payne, see also Betts, *Essays in Czech History* 236–46.

46) Payne together with Jakoubek had to defend Wyclif on the eucharist against charges of unorthodoxy by Jan Příbram, especially in 1426, see Bartoš, *Husitská revoluce* (1966) II, 18, 25, 56; Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution* 461.

deplored the consignment of Wyclif's works to the flames in Prague in 1410 by Archbishop Zbyněk Zajíc of Hasenburk, whom he considered a hopeless oaf who "... in a silly way.. caused many difficulties to the learned students, bachelors, and masters, who were steeped in godly truths, and to spite them he ordered Wyclif's books (not understanding them himself) to be burnt in their presence in his court yard".⁴⁷

Bílejovský assessed the principal issues of Wyclif's beliefs in his commentary on the Diet of 1444, which routed the Taborites.⁴⁸ He attributed to Payne (and by implication to Wyclif) an orthodox view of the eucharist acknowledging the physical presence of Christ therein. He quotes Payne as asserting: "I believe that the real Body of Christ, born of Virgin Mary, martyred on the cross, is according to its substance and real being in every visible aspect of the sacrament."⁴⁹ According to Bílejovský, Payne advocated the retention of the seven sacraments, appealing to Wyclif's *Trialogus*: "Master Petr Engliš [Payne] confirmed this approval of the sacraments ... when he testified about the seven sacraments that they should be held and preserved. And for this he adduced Master John Wyclif that the latter had thus maintained in the *Trialogus*, in the first three chapters."⁵⁰

Also, according to Bílejovský, Wyclif in his *De Civili Dominio*, [*On the Worldly Dominion*] affirmed the existence of purgatory: "... in the books *On the Worldly Dominion* he [Wyclif] derives purgatory from St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians in the New Testament ..."⁵¹ Further, he cites Peter Payne's references to Wyclif in the *Decalogue* to show his master's belief in the efficacy of prayers and other charitable deeds for the dead: "... Master Petr Engliš [Payne] who states the following: The purgation of souls that have left the body should be accepted ..., and one should pray and perform other charitable acts for these souls. He backs this up by quoting Wyclif from the *Decalogue* and several other books."⁵² These were significant issues for Bílejovský, inasmuch as the related beliefs in purgatory and prayers for the dead had occupied an important place in utraquist theology. Early in the Bohemian Reformation in 1415, Nicholas of Dresden had condemned both,

47) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 11.

48) *Ibid.* 86. See also Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Prameny k synodám strany pražské a tábořské (vznik husitské konfesse) v letech 1441–1444* (Prague 1900) 168–69.

49) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 90; see also 95.

50) *Ibid.* 99.

51) *Loc. cit.*

52) *Loc. Cit.*

as profit making inventions to augment clerical income from masses for the dead. This view, however, was reversed two years later by the authoritative ultraquist leader Jakoubek of Stříbro who had become convinced about the genuinely ancient origin of these beliefs.⁵³

Continuing within the context of the Diet of 1444, his defense of Wyclif against his misuses by the Taborites, Bílejovský cites Payne's references to Wyclif's *Triologus* on the efficacy of the intercessions of the saints: "Those can beg for our sins, who had their own – to the the extent that they had any – washed off by their blood. ... Master Petr Engliš [Payne] backs this up by Master John Wyclif in the *Triologus*, chapter 31."⁵⁴ Likewise, he refers to Wyclif concerning the preservation of traditional Christian liturgy and other customs sanctioned by tradition, citing from the Evangelical Doctor's *De Potestate Papae [On Papal Domination]*. Some rules depended, Bílejovský maintained, on the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the homey reason that the Bible would reach a simply unmanageable elephantine size, were it to specify every detail of the Christian order: "... proper ecclesiastical customs should be observed, even if not explicitly contained in the Holy Scriptures ...; because too large and heavy would be Christ's Testament, if all such customary particulars were written down in it. Thus it should be believed that the Holy Ghost had communicated to Christians all necessary matters ... Thus Wyclif."⁵⁵ Finally, Bílejovsky cites the authority of Payne that Wyclif advocated the use of special liturgical vestments at mass and other Christian rituals: "... Petr Engliš [Payne] ... says that Christian priests when they celebrate mass or conduct divine services, should use the vestments instituted for that service, and he backs this up with Master Wyclif."⁵⁶

Having spoken of Bílejovský's attitude toward the Church of Rome on the one hand, and toward Taboritism/Bohemian Brethren on the other, let us now sum up before concluding the particularly sensitive issue of his attitude

53) Bartoš, *Husitská revoluce* (1965) I, 21, 37. Nicholas was immolated as a heretic in Meissen about 1416, *ibid.* 22.

54) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 100.

55) *Ibid.* 103; see also 102. Hooker similarly would caution on the limitation of the Scripture: "Others ... grow likewise unto a dangerous extremity, as if Scripture did not only contain all things in that kind necessary, but all things simply, and in such sort that to do any thing according to any other law were not only unnecessary but even opposite unto salvation, unlawful and sinful. ... And as incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation; so we must likewise take great heed, lest in attributing unto Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which indeed it hath most abundantly to be less reverently esteemed." See *Works* II, viii, 7; I,274.

56) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 104.

toward Eastern Orthodoxy that seems to lie at the heart of much of the negative criticism surrounding his *Chronicle*. Contrary to what has been said on this issue by his critics, Bílejovský actually kept his distance from Rome's elder sister.⁵⁷ For him it is neither a peculiarly Slavic, nor a particularly admirable and orthodox establishment. When he speaks of the Eastern Church, he presents it as an exclusively Greek institution which, though preserving the correct form of communion, had fallen into many early heresies and had to be rescued from error by the popes.⁵⁸ Conversely, when he speaks of extra-Bohemian Slavic elements in Czech ecclesiastical history, such as the Christianizing mission of Cyril and Methodius in the ninth century, or the settlement of Slavic monks in the Na Slovanech Monastery of Prague by Charles IV in the fourteenth, he does not refer to the Orthodox Church. Instead, he confines these Slavic aspects to the orbit of Western Christendom. For him, Sts. Cyril and Methodius were dispatched by the pope and the cardinals; the monks of Na Slovanech were the spiritual progeny of St. Jerome, a distinctly Western/Latin church father, moreover hailing from Bílejovský, like the monks, from ultra-Catholic Croatia.⁵⁹ Finally, Bílejovský consistently maintains that the communion *sub utraque* was always administered in the Bohemian Church according to the Western, not the Orthodox, rite. The earlier Roman practice, which Utraquism restored, was drinking from the cup rather than the Byzantine custom of distributing both species together on a spoon.

Bílejovský, as a spokesman for traditional Utraquism, did not imply, much less assert, a direct historical connection between the original mediaeval Christianity of Bohemia, and hence the Bohemian Reformation,

57) To compound the irony, Bílejovský's marked detachment from Eastern Orthodoxy contrasts even with the warmer feelings which the Utraquists had entertained for the Orthodox in mid-fifteenth century. Then, the Utraquists had urged an inclusion of the Byzantines, together with the Armenians, in the Council of Basel in 1432, and negotiated briefly for formal ties with the Byzantine Church at Constantinople in 1452. See Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Dějiny husitského zpěvu* (Prague 1955) V, 169–70; Bartoš, *Husitská revoluce* (1966) II, 52; Ivan S. Pal'mov, *K voprosu o snosheniakh Chekhov-gusitov s vostochnuiu tserkov'iu v polovine XV veka* (St. Petersburg 1889), 15; Urbánek, *České dějiny*, (1918) III, ii, 597–98, 608; Milada Paulová, "Styky českých husitů s cařihradskou církví na základě církevních poměrů byzantských", *Časopis českého musea* 92 (1918) 6–7; 93 (1919) 17–21. Perhaps, changed conditions might explain Bílejovský's coolness toward the Orthodox Church. The fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 caused the prestige of Orthodoxy to plummet. This catastrophe also ended any chance for a Utraquist reunion with Rome piggybacking on a grander union between Rome and Byzantium. For the rest of the fifteenth century, however, sporadic expressions of sympathy for the Orthodox Church still appeared in Utraquist pronouncements, see Urbánek, *České dějiny* (1918) III, ii, 614, 616–17.

58) Bílejovský, *Kronyka* 27.

59) *Ibid.* 1, 22.

and the Eastern Orthodox Church. The belief in a direct Eastern Orthodox connection was not entertained by the traditional Utraquists, but was unequivocally postulated, as Kamil Krofta points out, only in the seventeenth century by the Czech Lutheran (or “Neo-Utraquist”) exile, Pavel Stránský in his notable work *Respublica Bojema* (Leyden 1634), and subsequently by the world-famous bishop of the Unity of Bohemian Brethren, Jan A. Comenius in his *Ecclesiae slavonicae brevis historiola* (Amsterdam 1660). Paradoxically, it was these paragons of western-style Protestantism who unabashedly sought the pedigree of the Bohemian Reformation in Eastern Orthodoxy. It is symptomatic of the animus against Bílejovský, however, that at least one critic blames him for having misled Stránský, and presumably Comenius, into a belief in the Orthodox connection.⁶⁰

Conclusion

In the first place, Bílejovský may be seen as a Czech parallel to Richard Hooker whose objective was the daunting task of charting more clearly the correct path for the Bohemian Church between the perceived biblical deviations of the Church of Rome and the stark biblicism of the full fledged Protestant Reformation, exemplified by the Unity of the Bohemian Brethren. In the second place, he did not suffer from an identity crisis (between the East and the West), but located the Bohemian Church squarely in the bosom of Western Christianity. Hence there is no reason to question the sincerity of his assertion that the Utraquists were “the true Romans”,⁶¹ for he saw them as more truly Catholic than the pope. Bílejovský shared with Hooker not only the grim view of the foibles of the Roman Church, but also the implied hope of its salvageability. The latter would subsequently express this attitude thus:

The indisposition therefore of the Church of Rome to reform herself must be no stay unto us from performing our duty to God; even as desire of retaining conformity with them could be no excuse if we did not perform that duty. Notwithstanding so far as lawfully we may, we have held and do hold fellowship with them.⁶²

60) Jakubec, *Dějiny literatury české*, I, 652. On Pavel Stránský see Krofta, “Slovo o knězi Bohuslavu Bílejovském”, 225; for Stránský’s views see his *Ceský stát. Okřík* (Prague 1953); and for Comenius’s views his *Stručná historie církve slovanské*, ed. Josef Hendrich (Prague 1941) 24.

61) Bílejovský states literally: “... we Czechs *sub utraque* are the true Romans” [... my Čechové pod obojí jsme praví Římané], *Kronyka* 27.

62) Hooker, *Works* III, i, 10, I, 283.