

# Konrad Konhofer († 1452) as an Opponent of Jan Hus and the Bohemian Reformation

---

Petr Hlaváček (Prague)

The problems of the Bohemian Reformation – that many-layered phenomenon of European history – need to be intentionally researched even in seemingly irrelevant contexts of contemporary theology, ecclesiastical politics, and intellectual activity. Then we can often encounter hitherto unsuspected connections, which constantly and repeatedly show that the Czech reform movement was not some kind of marginal sectarian, national, or regional phenomenon.

A notable manifestation of the autumn of the Middle Ages, the importance of which was pointed out by the late Johan Huizinga,<sup>1</sup> was the cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers that – as early as the thirteenth and the fourteenth century – emerged in the Austro-Bavarian region and in Central Europe in general as an instrument of the Mendicants, especially the Franciscans and the Dominicans, serving the Christianisation and the imposition of the discipline of ecclesiastical politics on the burghers from Passau to Brixen all the way to Regensburg, Munich, Nuremberg, and Bamberg. In the period from 1445 to 1446, four apparitions of the Holy Infant and the Fourteen Holy Helpers occurred at the Court of Frankenthal near the Upper Franconian Bamberg, namely, on the estates of the prominent Cistercian Abbey of Langheim. The apparitions were interpreted by contemporaries eschatologically as a foretaste of the Parousia, the Second Coming of Christ. A pilgrimage church was soon erected in the place of the apparition or vision, which had been experienced by the historically well-authenticated shepherd Hermann Leicht. Ecclesiastical authorities then interpreted the apparitions of the Infant Jesus in a strictly Christocentric manner, and the new dynamic pilgrimage site, called now *Vierzehnheiligen*, hence attracted religious, political, cultural, and intellectual elites. At the turn of the Middle Ages, they included such grandees as the reform-oriented Cardinal and Papal Legate Nicholas of Cusa, Roman Emperor Frederick III of Habsburg, Elector of Saxony Frederick III the Wise, and the painter Albrecht Dürer. Subsequently, the Christ-centered cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers appeared until the beginning of the European Reformations as a specific spirituality of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (London, 1990) 162, 165–167.

elites, and spread over an enormous territory between Denmark and Italy, and from France to Poland and Hungary. It is, therefore, not surprising that at the relevant times the cult was viewed negatively by the Prague Utraquist Archbishop Rokycana, on the one hand, and by the Wittenberg Reformer, Martin Luther, on the other.<sup>2</sup>

Before the pilgrimage site could function, the local cult needed official approbation. This was, in fact, the customary procedure, as we can see, for instance, in the case of the pilgrimages to the site of the Holy Blood in Wilsnack in Brandenburg. This institution required the authoritative approval of the Bishop of Havelberg, Dietrich II of Man; subsequently it became a matter of concern to a theological commission, the membership of which included even Jan Hus.<sup>3</sup>

Also the so-called Frankenthal Apparitions were still being discussed in 1446 by a specialised theological commission, which included beside the Abbot of Langenheim, Frederick III Heugelein the Bishop of Bamberg, Anton of Rotenhan.<sup>4</sup> Another member was the notorious Cistercian inquisitor and theologian Dr. Johann, infamous for his persecution of Waldensian and Hussite heretics in Franconia.<sup>5</sup> The key actor, moreover in every regard educated and experienced, who played the principal role in the expert and orthodox (re)interpretation of the apparition, was a certain Dr. Konrad Konhofer, a distinguished diplomat and a fierce opponent of

<sup>2</sup> On these issues see my recent study Petr Hlaváček, *Čtrnáct svatých Pomocníků. K pozdné středověké spiritualitě elit a její christocentrické dimenzi* [Fourteen Holy Helpers: On the Late Medieval Spirituality of the Elites and Its Christocentric Dimension] (Prague, 2014). The present study is a revised and augmented version of one of the subchapters of the above monograph.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Hrdina, "Wilsnack, Hus und die Luxemburger", in Felix Escher and Hartmut Kühne (eds.), *Die Wilsnackfahrt. Ein Wallfahrts- und Kommunikationszentrum Nord- und Mitteleuropas im Spätmittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Brussels, New York, Oxford, and Vienna 2006) 41–63.

<sup>4</sup> Erich Freiherr von Guttenberg, "Anton, Bischof von Bamberg," *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 1 (1953) 314–315. On his career in Bamberg, see also Dieter J. Weiss, "Das Kloster Michelsberg und die Stadt Bamberg," in Christine van Eickels and Klaus van Eickels (eds.), *Das Bistum Bamberg in der Welt des Mittelalters* (Bamberg, 2007) 227–245, especially 233–235.

<sup>5</sup> Franz Machilek, "Ein Eichstätter Inquisitionsverfahren aus dem Jahre 1460," *Jahrbuch für fränkische Landesforschung* 34–35 (1974/1975) 417–446. Caution was certainly called for. In the same period, namely, 8 July 1446, Nikolaus of Budelsdorf was convicted and executed by fire as a result of an inquisitorial procedure at the Council of Basel. The victim stemmed from the Franconian-Bavarian region and called himself *pastor angelicus*. Moreover, this simple layman – venerating in his eschatological enthusiasm St. Emmerama and St. Henry (that is, the patron of the Bamberg Diocese), stemmed – according to some indications – directly from the surroundings of Langheim Abby, namely, from Puelsendorf near Staffelstein; see Alexander Patschovsky, "Nikolaus von Buldesdorf: zu einer Ketzerverbrennung auf dem Basler Konzil im Jahre 1446," in Johannes Helmuth and Heribert Müller (eds.), *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert* (München, 1994) 2: 269–290. Even the shepherd of Frankenthal, Hermann Leicht, might have easily mutated from "a visionary" and an initiator of a new pilgrimage site into a convicted heretic.

the Bohemian Reformation. Precisely thanks to him, the new pilgrimage site was equipped with a Christologically balanced context, whereby it was blatantly designed for a struggle against both the Bohemian nonconformists and their Waldensian sympathizers. This article will attempt to discover, who Dr. Konrad Konhofer, in fact, was, and why “the Bohemian question” weighted so heavily on him.

Konrad Konhofer was born around 1374, apparently in Hilpoltstein bei Roth in Central Franconia. He stemmed from a burgher family of Nuremberg, to which at times a noble origin has been attributed. For us, however, his relation to the Kingdom of Bohemia is of paramount importance, specifically to the capital city of Prague, which at that time served as the residence of the Roman Emperor and Bohemian King, Wenceslaus IV. It so happened that Konhofer was a student at the University of Prague and there a member of the Bavarian university nation.<sup>6</sup> He was not only there in the critical time at the beginning of the Bohemian Reform movement, but we can even count him among Hus’s fellow students. In Prague he studied “antequam Bohemia erraret, dum ibidem studium vigeat,” as the later *Liber Decanorum* states, that is, before the outbreak of the anti-Roman revolt. On 13 March 1398, he submitted to an examination by Master Johann Pfister of Eichstätt at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Prague, whereupon he was granted the title of Bachelor.<sup>7</sup> As early as February 1399 he received the title of Master of Liberal Arts, and subsequently also the Licentiate in Theology. Simultaneously, however, he studied at the Prague Law University, from which he had received already in 1398 the title of doctor of both the canon and the civil law. Supposedly, he then worked in Prague as a professor of theology and, in addition, became a doctor of medicine. Likewise, in Prague he was supposedly ordained priest.<sup>8</sup> On 14 April 1402, shortly after Hus had received his own priestly ordination and had become preacher in the Bethlehem Chapel, Konhofer matriculated in

<sup>6</sup> On Konhofer’s stay at the University of Prague, see Josef Tráška, *Životopisný slovník předhusitské pražské univerzity 1348–1409* [A Biographical Dictionary of the Pre-Hussite University of Prague, 1348–1409] (Prague 1981) 76.

<sup>7</sup> *Liber decanorum facultatis philosophicae universitatis Pragensis* (Prague, 1830) I/1: 330: “Item anno eodem Conradus Konhofer de Nürnbergga det. sub. mag. Joan. Pfyster de Eystet die 13. mensis Martii.”

<sup>8</sup> A reference to Konhofer’s ordination appears in the contemporary Nuremberg chronicle of Konrad Herdegen (d. 1479), a monk of the Benedictine Monastery of St. Giles in Nuremberg, see Konrad Herdegen and Theodor von Kern (eds.), *Nürnbergger Denkwürdigkeiten des Konrad Herdegen, 1409–1479* (Erlangen, 1874) 183 (a short biographical note on the occasion of Konhofer’s death in 1452): “ipse antiquissimus Doctor Pragae ante eversionem ibidem ordinatus etc.” Regrettably, the list of the ordinands of the Prague archdiocese from the turn of the fourteenth century does not include Konhofer’s name, although it provides evidence of more than twenty ordinands from the Bamberg diocese and directly from Nuremberg; see Eva Doležalová, *Světcenci pražské diecéze 1395–1416* [The Ordinands of the Prague Diocese, 1395–1416] (Prague, 2010) 193–194.

the University of Vienna, to which he wished to transfer his academic and priestly activity. Perhaps, we can already then anticipate Konhofer's opposition to Wyclifism and to the incipient Bohemian Reformation that later was to become fully manifest.

Konhofer, however, stayed in the Austrian metropolis only a few months and soon moved to his native Franconia, where a promising career was opening up. As it happened, still in 1402, he was appointed personal chaplain and adviser to the Bishop of Bamberg, Albrecht of Wertheim, a reform-oriented Roman prelate, for whom he subsequently served as Vicar General from 1403 to 1405. In 1405, he entered the service of the Bishop of Eichstätt, Friedrich IV of Oettingen, an erudite lawyer, who once studied at the universities of Padua and Bologna. Simultaneously, Konhofer was listed as Vicar General of George of Hohenlohe, the Bishop of Passau.<sup>9</sup> Summed up briefly, Konhofer – emerging as a priest and a canon lawyer, occasionally also as a collector of various prebends – right from the beginning of his career moved in a particular ecclesiastical milieu, which could be called progressive or even reformist. Pope Gregory XII, representative of the Roman obedience (recognised in the Bohemian Kingdom and in broader Central Europe) granted him the benefice of the parish church of Zell in Fichtelgebirge in the Bamberg diocese. From 1409 Konhofer was, of course, active as a canon in Eichstätt.

The following years of his life are usually presented as blank spots, albeit incorrectly. What happened was that Konhofer merely left Central Europe, when for unknown reasons he obtained a prestigious Cisalpine appointment at the papal curia in Rome. In local documents he figures – at the latest from 1412 – as a papal auditor, moreover even during the reign of John XXIII.<sup>10</sup> And precisely at this time the destinies of the two earlier Prague fellow students fatally intersect: those of Konrad Konhofer and of Jan Hus, the latter of whom now had the status of an excommunicated heretic. As early as 1411 Cardinal Odo Colonna issued an anathema on Hus, which was aggravated in 1412 by Cardinal Pietro degli Stephaneschi, the newly named judge in Hus's case. In December 1413, however, Hus's opponent Michael de Causis succeeded in obtaining from the papal curia an agreement to employ “the secular arm” against Hus. This step was promoted by no one else but the papal auditor Konhofer who, thereby, shifted Hus's excommunication into an explicit – and for Hus therefore more dangerous – heretical context. This meant that theoretically Hus could be

<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Wachter, *General-Personal-Schematismus des Erzdiözese Bamberg* (Bamberg, 1908) 280.

<sup>10</sup> On Konhofer as a papal auditor see, for instance, Thomas A. Fudge, *The Trial of Jan Hus. Medieval heresy and criminal procedure* (Oxford and New York, 2013) 175–176, 202, 350. As “apostolici palatii causarum auditorem” is Konhofer designated by Sanctus de Reate, penitentiary of John XXIII, who issued a confirmation in Rome on 8 December 1412 that he absolved Konhofer of all sins, see Karl Heinrich Lang, *Regesta sive Rerum Boicarum Authographa* XII (Monaci, 1849) 128.

brought before the papal tribunal even by force.<sup>11</sup> From what was said, it follows that in 1413 and 1414 it was precisely Konhofer, who was one of the key actors in the escalation of Hus's case. Hus was clearly conscious of this new canonical status of his case and latently reacted to it in his *Booklets against the Priest, Master Chef* [Knížky proti knězi Kuchmistrovi]. He explains, why he hesitated to depart for the papal curia and referred to Christ's case, when he also had to be brought involuntarily before the high priest Caiaphas. Konhofer's intervention against Hus had its echoes still at the Council of Constance. Michael de Causis, the next day after Hus's arrival in Constance (4 November 1414), attached to the gates of the local cathedral Konhofer's text with a large inscription, referring to Hus's heresy. When the Council decided to arrest Hus and begin to deal with his case, it was again de Causis, who supplied the conciliar procurators all the prior documentation of Hus's case, crowned by the text of Konhofer's judicial intervention of 1413. De Causis arranged everything as though Hus's case was connected with heresy from the very beginning, and his main instrument for the retrospective interpretation of Hus's case was precisely Konhofer's text. Thus Konhofer played a fundamental role in the Council's argumentation and significantly contributed to Hus's subsequent conviction.<sup>12</sup>

Konhofer also participated personally in the Council of Constance; it even seems that he moved in the immediate circle of Cardinal Colonna, who soon was to become Pope Martin V. It so happened that in 1418 he appeared as the Pope's personal chaplain and auditor in Rome, where he also received in 1419 the so-called *tabellionat*, that is, a papal commission to exercise the function of a public notary. He then was active in Rome for several years. Later he frequently returned to the Eternal City as an emissary of the town of Nuremberg, and it was there that he induced Pope Martin V to issue the bull *Quemadmodum magis* of 31 December 1424, which definitely confirmed the transfer of the sacred imperial jewels from Prague to Nuremberg and also their permanent deposition in the local Hospital of the Holy Spirit.<sup>13</sup> Another of Konhofer's important achievements was the issue of the bull of canonisation

<sup>11</sup> *Documenta* 199–204, here 203: “Fuit per honorabilem virum D. Conradum Konhofer, utriusque juris doctorem et sacri palatii apostolici causarum auditorem, vigore certae commissionis sibi factae, brachium seculare contra eundem M. Joannem Hus decretum et concessum.”

<sup>12</sup> Novotný, I. *Zivot a dílo*, Part 2, 332, 346, 363, 378. On Konhofer's important role in Hus's trial, see also Jiří Kejíř, *Husův proces* (Prague, 2000) 120, 192.

<sup>13</sup> On Konhofer's role, see the recent Franz Machilek, “Die Nürnberger Heiltumsweisungen,” in Klaus Arnold (ed.), *Wallfahrten in Nürnberg um 1500* (Wiesbaden, 2002) 9–52, here 32–35; summarily on the so-called imperial jewels and Konhofer, see especially Martin Weigel, “Dr. Conrad Konhofer (gest. 1452), Ein Beitrag zur Kirchengeschichte Nürnbergs,” *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 29 (1928) 179–187; Hartmut Kühne, *Ostensio reliquiarum: Untersuchungen über Entstehung, Ausbreitung, Gestalt und Funktion der Heiltumsweisungen im römisch-deutschen Regnum* (Berlin, 2000) 133–142.

for a local patron of Nuremberg, St. Sebald, dated 26 March 1425.<sup>14</sup> Having returned from Rome, he was appointed city attorney (*Rechtskonsulent*) in Nuremberg and he performed this function conscientiously from 1426/1427 until 1434. At that time, Konhofer participated in Imperial Diets as an official representative of the free imperial city of Nuremberg; he treated on behalf of the city with the Bishop of Bamberg, with the Dukes of Bavaria, and with the Elector of Brandenburg. He undertook another mission to Rome in 1429; in Anagni he dealt with Pope Martin V; as a lawyer and diplomat he solved the problems of the so-called Bohemian Question, including the infiltration of the "Hussite heresy" into the surroundings of Nuremberg; and worked on the agenda of the Council of Basel.<sup>15</sup> At the Imperial Diet in Nuremberg in 1431 his eloquence impressed the Roman King Sigismund of Luxembourg so much that he was chosen as the King's companion for further dealings in the Bishopric of Bamberg and for the disputation with the representatives of Bohemian reformers ("Hussites") in Cheb.<sup>16</sup> As early as 1432, he is documented serving as an emissary of Nuremberg in Venice.<sup>17</sup> At the Imperial Diet in Nuremberg in 1438 Konhofer also dealt with the delegation of the Council of Basel, headed by the sharp theologian of conciliarism, Juan de Segovia.<sup>18</sup>

From 1438 on, he served as the parson in the prominent Nuremberg Church of St. Lawrence, while at the same time remaining Provost of the cathedral chapter in Regensburg, and continuing to act as an adviser (*conciliaris*) of the town council of Nuremberg.<sup>19</sup> Konhofer initiated the construction

<sup>14</sup> Weigel, "Dr. Conrad Konhofer (gest. 1452)," 207–219. On St. Sebald as a patron saint of Nuremberg, see Hans Falkenberg, *Sebaldus. Der Mann, der Nürnberg war oder: Wie die Nürnberger sich ihren Stadtheiligen selber machten, ihn sehr liebten und fast völlig vergaßen. Eine Kulturgeschichte um den Volksheiligen und Ratsbüttel, Viehbeschützer und Ehestifter* (Nürnberg, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> See Helmut G. Walther, "Zur Rolle der Kanonistik in der Consilia der Nürnberger Ratsjuristen zum Reichsrecht," in Uta-Renate Blumenthal, Kenneth Pennington, and Atria A. Larson (eds.), *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of Medieval Canon Law* (Vatican City, 2008) 447–488, here 449–450, 466. The office of Nuremberg City Attorney was held by remarkable individuals on the Central European intellectual stage, after Konhofer, for instance, Gregor Heimburg and Martin Mair, famous actors in Czech history, see Morimichi Watanabe, "Imperial Reform in the Mid-Fifteenth Century: Gregor Heimburg and Martin Mair," in idem, *Concord and Reform, Nicholas of Cusa and Legal and Political Thought in the Fifteenth Century* (Aldershot, 2001) 301–326.

<sup>16</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten unter Kaiser Sigmund*, 3. Abteilung (1427–1431), ed. Dietrich Kerler (Gotha, 1887), 606; *Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städte – Nürnberg* (Leipzig, 1862) I: 380–381. In 1432 Konhofer appeared for the second time in Cheb as a Nuremberg emissary to participate in another round of negotiations with the Czechs. On the basis of the Nuremberg book of accounts, attention is called to this by Weigel, "Dr. Conrad Konhofer (gest. 1452)," 227.

<sup>17</sup> Henry Simonsfeld, *Der Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venedig und die deutsch-venetianischen Handelsbeziehungen*, (Stuttgart, 1887) I: 208–209.

<sup>18</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten – König Albrecht II.*, 1. Abteilung, 2. Hälfte (1438), ed. Gustav Beckmann (Gotha, 1916) 644, 893

<sup>19</sup> *Die Chroniken der fränkischen Städte – Nürnberg* (Leipzig, 1862) I: 399–400, 457–459 (contains the documents concerning Konhofer's appointment as priest of St. Lawrence's Church).

of the new eastern choir of the church with the festive consecration of the foundation stone on 28 October 1439, that is on the feast of Sts. Simon and Jude. Around 1440 he also undertook the reconstruction of the parish court, in the refectory of which he placed (now lost) paintings with the coat of arms of three Bishops of Bamberg from the period of so-called Hussite Wars with an allegorical depiction of a battle of humans with devils and various other fantastic monsters. These recalled the recent military and theological conflict with the Bohemian “heretics”.<sup>20</sup> In 1440 Konhofer represented the town of Nuremberg at the Council of Basel and there he gained permission to use all the income of the church of St. Lawrence for the erection of the choir.<sup>21</sup> From 1448 on, he remained a pastor in Nuremberg until his death in 1452.<sup>22</sup> He died on 7 or 8 July 1452 during a visit to Regensburg, from where his remains were translated to Nuremberg and there buried with great solemnity in St. Martha’s chapel in the hitherto unfinished choir of the Church of St. Lawrence<sup>23</sup>

On the basis of the life experiences of Dr. Konrad Konhofer it can be concluded that he, indeed, represented an ideal personage, who would be assuredly able to deal with the essentially private revelations of the uneducated shepherd and turn them into an appropriate tool for the benefit of the Diocese of Bamberg and the Cistercians of Langheim. They would become useful not only as instruments of religious renewal and as a barrier of Catholic orthodoxy against Christian non-conformism – in the form of Waldensianism and the

<sup>20</sup> The original parish court at St. Lawrence church was destroyed toward the end of the nineteenth century; a description of the unique painting, however, can be found in Carl Heidenloff, *Die Ornamentik des Mittelalters. Eine Sammlung auserwählter Verzierungen und Profile byzantinischer und deutscher Architectur* (Nuremberg, 1852) XII. Heft, 23–24; XIII. Heft, s. 3–4.

<sup>21</sup> Herbert Bauer, “Zwischen Andrang und Entfremdung. Der Lorenzer Hallenchor und die Erfahrung der Gemeinde”, in Herbert Bauer, Gerhard Hirschmann, and Georg Stolz (eds.), *500 Jahre Hallenchor St. Lorenz in Nürnberg 1477–1977* (Nuremberg, 1977) 22–24; Corine Schleif, *Donatio et Memoria, Stifter, Stiftungen und Motivationen an Beispielen aus der Lorenzkirche in Nürnberg* (Munich, 1990) 159. On the originality of Konhofer’s decorations in the Nuremberg Church of St. Lawrence, see also Paul Crossley, “The man from inner space: architecture and meditation in the choir of St. Laurence in Nuremberg”, in Gale R. Owen-Crocker and Timothy Graham (eds.), *Medieval Art. Recent Perspectives (A Memorial Tribute to C. R. Dodwell)* (Manchester, 1998) 165–182.

<sup>22</sup> Regretably, there is no modern biography of Konhofer, therefore in this article I cite several times the only more substantial study of his life with rich illustrations, see Weigel, “Dr. Conrad Konhofer (gest. 1452),” 170–297. Some important supplements can be found in Ursula Frenzel, “Conrad Konhofer (Kunhofer), Probst, Bauherr, Diplomat (1374–1452),” in Christoph Freiherr von Imhoff (ed.), *Berühmte Nürnberger aus neun Jahrhunderten* (Nuremberg, 1989) 25–27.

<sup>23</sup> *Nürnberg Denkwürdigkeiten des Konrad Herdegen, 1409–1479*, ed. Theodor von Kern (Erlangen, 1874) 183–184: “Anno 1452 post festum S. Kiliani obiit Dominus Cunradus Cunhofer, doctor etc. Obiit enim Ratisbonae et huc adductus est cum magna solemnitate et processione. Defunctus susceptus est et in capella S. Marthae prope S. Claram expectatus et in choro novo adhuc non tecto ibidem sepultus.”

Bohemian Reformation – but also as an impulse toward improvement of the financial situation of the two involved ecclesiastical institutions. Remarkably, Konhofer was an alumnus of all the four university faculties. Above all, as an educated theologian and lawyer, he was familiar with the practices of the papal chancery and of the conciliar sessions in Constance and in Basel. Thus he was also fully aware of contemporary reformist theological currents. Moreover, as the town attorney of Nuremberg he derived bounteous experiences from the canonisation process of St. Sebald, as well as from the functioning of the trade with indulgences. Likewise, he had at his disposal fresh information about the poor financial and disciplinary situation in the Bamberg diocese,<sup>24</sup> as well as about the infiltration of Waldensian and Hussite preachers.

Konhofer's affinity for the Christocentric cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers can be illustrated by additional examples. In 1446, that is in the year of the presumed first approbation of the so-called Frankenthal apparitions, Konhofer erected an altar of the Fourteen Holy Helpers "pey dem sacrament" in the Nuremberg Church of St. Lawrence, where he was the pastor. The patrocinium of the altar was, so to say, multiple, because the new altar was consecrated – simultaneously and quite understandably – "in der ere des heiligen bischofs sand conrads vnd sand cristoff, der XIII nothelfer, sand achacien mit seiner geselschafft, sand crispin vnd crispinian, sand cecilien." Nominally the principal patron of the altar was the Bishop of Constance St. Konrad, the namesake and personal protector of Konhofer; in addition to the Fourteen Holy Helpers, other saints are explicitly mentioned, above all, St. Christopher and St. Achatius, who are sometimes named as the leaders of this saintly band. Nor is the presence of otherwise well-liked ancient martyrs St. Crispian, St. Crispinian, and St. Cecilia particularly surprising in the case of this reform-inclined priest. Moreover, the deed of consecration also mentions the relics of saints, which were inserted into the altar, namely, in the first place, St. Konrad, and then other male and female saints, such as St. Christopher, St. George, St. Nicholas, St. Linhart, St. Sebastian, St. Erasmus, St. Sigismund, St. Giles, St. Achatius, St. Margaret, St. Catherine, and St. Barbara – all them routinely included in the assembly of the Fourteen Holy Helpers.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> For instance, in 1443 he was asked to help resolve the financial problems of the cathedral chapter in Bamberg; Weigel, "Dr. Conrad Konhofer (gest. 1452)," 249.

<sup>25</sup> Wilhelm Deinhardt (ed.), *Dedicaciones Bambergenses. Weihenotizen und -Urkunden aus dem mittelalterlichen Bistum Bamberg* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1936), Nr. 148b (the deed of consecration): "Item der alltar pey dem sacrament ist geweicht in der ere des heiligen bischofs sand conrads vnd sand cristoff, der XIII nothelfer, sand achacien mit seiner geselschafft, sand crispin vnd crispinian, sand cecilien. Das sind die stück heilingtums behaltten in disem alltar sand conrads, sand cristoffs, sand görgen, sand niclas, sand leonhard, sand sebastian, sand erasem, sand sigmund, sand gilg, sand achacien, sand cecilia, sand ursell, sand margaretha, sand katherina, sand barbara, von den aynlftawsent mayden [den 10 000 Jungfrauen]." The erection of the altar is discussed, on the basis of additional sources, also by Andreas Würfel, *Diptycha Ecclesiae Laurentianae* (Nuremberg, 1756) 13 (also the burgher of Nuremberg Hannß donated special incomes to this altar in the same year).



Let us then sum up that precisely in 1446, the altar of St. Konrad and the Fourteen Holy Helpers was established by our expert on construction of the correct – and for ecclesiastical authorities acceptable – version of the so-called Frankenthal events. This surely was not accidental and it can be assumed that the establishment happened as a consequence of his experience with the whole canonisation affair. The extraordinary importance of the year 1446 for Konhofer is further confirmed by another foundation in the same year for the same Nuremberg Church of St. Lawrence. He then also established an altar of St. Jerome, or, as the case may be, of the Four Holy Doctors – Sts. Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, and Ambrose.<sup>26</sup> By this act, Konhofer adhered publically not only to the contemporary ecclesiastical intellectual elite, but also to the endeavours for church reform through a return to the models of ancient Christianity. Whenever Konhofer dwelt in Nuremberg, he personally prayed the canonical hours at the altar of the Four Holy Doctors, also known as the altar of St. Jerome.<sup>27</sup> At the same time in 1446, he established a fund to provide for illumination of the church and its altars on feast days and other festivities.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, in his Nuremberg last will and testament, dated 27 March 1452, he ostentatiously refers to the two altars when he expresses the wish that “apud duo altaria [...] per me erecta” forever remained the silver altar extensions (“duae tabulae argenteae”), donated by him.<sup>29</sup> On the basis of the same testament, endowments for chaplains at the two altars were created, and confirmed after Konhofer’s death by Bishop of Bamberg, Anton of Rotenhan, in a letter, dated 15 June 1454.<sup>30</sup>

The principal evidence of Konhofer’s involvement in the Frankenthal matters is, however, another extraordinary endowment for the Nuremberg parish Church of St. Lawrence. I am, of course, referring to the famous so-called Konhofer’s window above the altar of St. Konrad and the Fourteen Holy Helpers, which – according to an iconographic concept in his (now lost) 1452 last will from Regensburg – is considered a kind of testament,<sup>31</sup> representing the core of his personal spirituality. The completion and the installation of this monumental artefact – namely, of the illuminated window panes, which

<sup>26</sup> Weigel, “Dr. Conrad Konhofer (gest. 1452),” 252–253. See also Corine Schleif, *Donatio et Memoria. Stifter, Stiftungen und Motivationen an Beispielen aus der Lorenzkirche in Nürnberg* (Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien 58) (Munich, 1990) 11–12.

<sup>27</sup> Weigel, “Dr. Conrad Konhofer (gest. 1452),” 290.

<sup>28</sup> Andreas Würfel, *Diptycha Ecclesiae Laurentianae* (Nuremberg, 1756) 13.

<sup>29</sup> Weigel, “Dr. Conrad Konhofer (gest. 1452),” 290 (on pp. 289–291 is a complete version of the testament).

<sup>30</sup> Erich Freiherr von Guttenberg and Alfred Wendehorst, *Das Bistum Bamberg, 2. Teil, Die Pfarreiorganisation* (Berlin, 1966) 298.

<sup>31</sup> On this regrettably no longer extant and just fragmentarily described testament, see Albert Gumbel, “Rechnungen und Aktenstücke zur Geschichte des Chorbaus von St. Lorenz in Nürnberg unter der Leitung Konrad Heinzelmans,” *Repertorien für Kunstwissenschaft* 32 (1909) 1–30, 132–159, here 158.

Konhofer ordered from the workshop of the renowned Michael Wolgemut – were realized only by Wolgemut's successor Hans Pleydenwurff and, at that, after the completion of the construction – begun by Konhofer – of the choir of the Church of St. Lawrence in 1477.<sup>32</sup>

The painted window panes as a whole form an illusory Gothic-style architecture with tracery windows and pinnacles which, thanks to the verticality of the window, even more underscored the monumentality and the dynamic tension of the entire iconographically complex scene. At the apex of this perpendicular arch of this late Gothic so-called Konhofer's window – also called the window of the Holy Helpers (*Nothelferfenster*) – we see the Risen Christ, as the Judge at the end of times; on the right the Virgin Mary stands as an intercessor, while St. John the Evangelist stands on the left. Six rows of window panes then follow downwards, each with six tablets, mainly depicting saints, marked by descriptions on ribbons. In the first row from top we see on the left St. Christopher and St. Sixtus, and on the right side St. Nicholas. Three remaining tablets between these saints – located directly under the depiction of the Risen Christ/Last Judgment – represent precisely the Frankenthal apparition of the Infant Jesus and the Fourteen Holy Helpers, in which case there can be no doubt that Konhofer – within the framework of a Christologically demanding conception – here had painted a scene which he considered the most significant event of his time.

On the first tablet we see a shepherd (an adult beardless man or a youth), around whom sheep are grazing – it is certainly Hermann Leicht, the visionary of Frankenthal. In this portrait he is dressed in a blue smock and a white cloak, leaning on a staff and gazing directly at the Divine Infant, who sits at a rock and is raising his right arm toward him. The second tablet depicts the shepherd and the Divine Infant in the same pose, but the Infant now sits on a pair of burning gold candlesticks. The left corner contains an ecclesiastical edifice, which probably should evoke the Cistercian Abby of Langheim. The third tablet depicts the very apparition of the Infant Jesus and the Fourteen Holy Helpers. It consists of a group of standing figures of children: in the back row the children are dressed in red shirts, in the front row in white ones. The Divine Infant sits in front of the Holy Helpers and

<sup>32</sup> The author of this article knows Konhofer's window from his own photographs. A good quality reproduction (albeit incomplete) can be also found in Heinrich Fürst, *Die Vierzehn Nothelfer. Unsere Freunde (Ihre Verehrung von den Anfängen bis zum Dreißigjährigen Krieg)* (Petersberg, 2008) 67; or (complete) on the web pages Deutsches Dokumentationszentrum für Kunstgeschichte – Bildarchiv Foto Marburg. See also Veit Funk, *Glasfensterkunst in St. Lorenz* (Nuremberg, 1995) 162; Hartmut Scholz, "Aktuelle Forschung zur Glasmalerei in St. Lorenz," in Christian Schmidt and Georg Stolz (eds.), *Hundert Jahre Verein zur Erhaltung der St. Lorenzkirche 1903–2003* (Nuremberg, 2004), 59. Generally on the question of Konhofer's endowments in the church of St. Lawrence, see Anne Simon, *The Cult of Saint Katherine of Alexandria in Late-Medieval Nuremberg, Saint and the City* (Burlington, 2012) 220–230, *passim*.

gesticulates toward the shepherd Leicht, with whom he conducts a lively conversation. The shepherd continues to lean on his staff, although his right hand with two raised fingers reveals the gesture of an oath.

Additional male and female saints are painted in the following rows, representing those more or less routinely counted in the so-called classic (Regensburg) or Nuremberg group of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, including St. Giles, St. Sebastian, St. Vitus, St. Eustace, St. Barbara; further St. Margaret and St. Katherine. The Virgin Mary with the Infant Jesus is painted in the centre of the entire window. Images of St. George, St. Linhart, St. Pancras, St. Erasmus follow, as well as the Church Fathers – Sts. Augustine, Gregory, Jerome, and Ambrose. Around the four doctors, angels with musical instruments incline from every side. All the way down, that is in the sixth row, there are tablets with St. Deochar and St. Sebald, whose canonisation Konhofer had promoted. These principal Nuremberg patrons are followed by St. Konrad, the patron of the donor of the painted window; next to him Konhofer himself is depicted, and still following him Sts. Lawrence and Stephen. The kneeling donor Konhofer is clad in a white cope such as is used, for instance, in processions for the feast of Corpus Christi. He is in a prayerful posture conversing with the saints. A German memorial inscription above him sums up Konhofer's intellectual and ecclesiastical career:

Nach cristi gepurt M °CCCC°LII° An sant Wilbolts tag verschid der erwirdig vnd hochgelert herr Conrat Kunhofer doctor aller faculteten thumpropst zu regensburg vnd pfarer hye zu sant lorentzen dem got gnedig sei.<sup>33</sup>

Thus Kornhofer's education ("highly [...] learned doctor of all the faculties") and his connections with Regensburg and Nuremberg are mentioned here for the sake of eternal memory. There was a certain intent also in what was painted on the window panes, running from Konhofer upward to the apex of the window: first of all, St. Jerome then invoked as a patron of humanistic scholars and ecclesiastical reformers, further St. Katherine, the patroness of savants and knights, then the Frankenthal shepherd Hermann Leicht and, above it all, the Risen Christ as Judge.

Not counting the Virgin Mary, altogether twenty-three saints are thus depicted here, namely the non-traditional (combined Regensburg-Nuremberg) phalanx of the Fourteen Holy Helpers (certainly according to the personal preference of Konhofer himself), to whom St. Konrad and two more saints are added, as well as the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church (Augustine,

<sup>33</sup> The inscription is reproduced, for instance, in Corine Schleif, *Donatio et Memoria, Stifter, Stiftungen und Motivationen an Beispielen aus der Lorenzkirche in Nürnberg* (Munich, 1990) 163; here emended according to my own photograph from the church of St. Lawrence in Nuremberg.

Gregory, Jerome, and Ambrose), and finally Sts. Deochar and Sebaldus, the holy protectors of the imperial city of Nuremberg. This painted window in the church of St. Lawrence is thus the key and very explicit evidence of Konhofer's personal spirituality and, above all, of his exceptional relationship to the events around the Upper Franconian *Vierzehnheiligen*. Properly speaking, we can consider it as direct proof for the correctness of our earlier outlined hypothesis.

However, an entirely legitimate, albeit banal, question remains, namely what exactly attracted Konhofer so much to the Fourteen Holy Helpers. Is that pane of Konhofer's window a mere expression of the donor's personal piety? Should we, in this peculiar work, seek some ostentatious – albeit for us now not entirely clear – demonstration of Konhofer's preferences in ecclesiastical politics? Why – for his eternal memory in one of the principal Nuremberg churches – did he not choose, for instance, St. Sebaldus, whose canonization he had personally promoted in Rome? Thus far the iconographic meaning of Konhofer's window has been interpreted merely from the viewpoint of art history that is in isolation and without attempting to explain the relationship of pastor Konhofer specifically to the cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers. In order to at least attempt such a new interpretation, we need to, above all, reconstruct some key moments of Konhofer's life. With his life experience, Konhofer was, so to say, almost perfectly pre-positioned – like other humanistically educated priests of the Franconian-Bavarian cultural ambiance – to welcome the deepening of the Christocentric dimension of the cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers. As it happened, he himself belonged to the group of reformist clergy, striving for a renewal of Christ's church, while at the same time retaining a distinct scepticism toward the specifics of the Bohemian Reformation, for him the "Hussite heresy." The main reason was here, however, his immediate, and evidently very intense, personal experience.

The Frankenthal apparitions, depicted on the so-called Konhofer window can be considered a kind of epitaph, through which the donor, the foremost intellectual of his times, manifested ostentatiously his spiritual preferences, as well as his preferences in ecclesiastical politics. Was Konhofer merely a recipient of the cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers after the Frankenthal events somehow touched him personally? Or can we really – as mentioned earlier – entertain the hypothesis that he played some active role in the Christocentric transformation of the cult? It so happened that the Frankenthal events of 1445–1446 were from the beginning an object of attention of the leading ecclesiastical personages, and thus one cannot talk simply about a symptom of some "popular piety", which somehow spontaneously mutated into the emergence of a new pilgrimage site. It was necessary for somebody theologically and juridically trained to take charge of the image of the Frankenthal apparitions, as well as to anchor – in theology and in ecclesiastical politics – the transformed cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers and of the evolving pilgrimage

site *Vierzehnheiligen*. And such a personality, a leading member of a kind of “Frankenthal Commission,” certainly could be nobody other than Konhofer.

This is indicated by an entire series of incontrovertible indexes. Konhofer enjoyed close links with Regensburg diocese and with the city of Regensburg itself, which was – already in the first half of the fourteenth century – the principal centre of the cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers in Central Europe. As a native of the Franconian-Bavarian cultural region, moving among Regensburg, Nuremberg, and Würzburg, he must have known this cult well. Moreover as a direct participant in the Roman canonisation process of the Nuremberg patron St. Sebaldus he gained experience with the canonical and theological procedures required for the approbation of the new, or the newly transformed, cults. What, however, could have been Konhofer’s motivation to become involved in the Frankenthal case? Concerning this issue we also have a likely answer. It so happened that Konhofer, serving many years as the Vicar General of the diocese of Bamberg, surely must have been aware of the theological and military danger, which threatened the Roman Church from the side of the Bohemian Reformation, and especially from the Taborite and Orphan field armies. The thrust of the “heretical Bohemians” toward Bamberg in 1429 must still have been alive in his memory. At the same time, just like his other contemporaries, he sought an effective instrument, with which to confront the crisis of the church as well as the mighty assault of Bohemian Reformation. In addition, it was to serve as a means by which to support religious education (internal Christianisation) of the broad public.

Such an almost ideal instrument could be the Christocentric settlement of the theologically transformed cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers in the new pilgrimage site *Vierzehnheiligen* near Bamberg. After all, we find a resounding response to the cult and pilgrimages among a number of contemporary prominent personalities. These included the Bishop of Bamberg, Anton of Rotenhan, with whom Konrad was in contact and who de facto sanctioned the transformed cult by his consecration of the new pilgrimage chapel as early as 1448. Another such personage was the humanist scholar, Papal Legate and Cardinal, Nicholas of Cusa, who in 1451 presided over the priests’ synod of the Bamberg Diocese, and on that occasion he might well have met the ageing Konhofer, who as a respected Nuremberg pastor surely would have participated in that clerical gathering. Moreover, Cusa and Konhofer shared an interest in the Bohemian issue of ecclesiastical politics, which both of them knew well and which they considered the greatest current threat to the unity of Christ’s church.<sup>34</sup> Konhofer’s friendship with Bishop Anton of Rotenhan was clearly manifest in the last will of this “Nuremberg doctor” in 1452, when “reverendo patri, domino meo ab antiquissimo tempore, gracioso domino

<sup>34</sup> On contacts of Nicholas of Cusa with the Bohemian milieu see, for instance, František Šmahel, *Husitské Čechy, Struktury, procesy, ideje* [Ultraquist Bohemia: Structures, Processes, Ideas] (Prague, 2001) 457–458.

episcopo Bambergensi” he bequeathed one of his silver jewels (“unum cledonidium argenteum”).<sup>35</sup>

Konhofer’s intellectual world and his personal spirituality are reflected in his deed of 23 August 1443 by which he donated to the town council of Nuremberg one hundred fifty-one volumes of biblical, theological, legal, and medical literature, probably the large part of his private library, whereby properly speaking he became the founder of the famous Nuremberg *Ratsbibliothek*. The deed describes individual books (indicating their authors and subjects) and attests both to Konhofer’s interests and to his erudition, as well as to his fondness for the classics and scholastics, and to his humanist and reformist tendencies.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the works of Nicholas of Lyra, Thomas Aquinas, and Konrad of Soltau (once the Rector of the University of Prague), we find here mystical and eschatological treatises of Joachim de Fiore and Heinrich Suso.

Three codexes recorded sequentially are of special interest, since they relate to Bohemia. The first one is “Tractatus diversi de communione sub utraque specie, collecti contra errores Hussitarum,” a collection of treatises directed against the liturgical practice of the Bohemian Utraquist church. When and where Konhofer acquired this collection is unknown, because regrettably not one of the three germane items has survived in the library of the Nuremberg town council. Most likely these texts originated within the framework of polemics with the Bohemian embassy at the Council of Basel. In any case, they attest to Konhofer’s continuing (negative) interest in the Bohemian Reformation. The next two items, of course, are even more surprising; the first one is recorded as “Postilla Mellicii super ewangelia dominicalia per circulum anni,” the second one as “Sermones Mellicii de sanctis cum pluribus aliis.” This “Mellicius,” who is designated as their author is, of course, nobody else but Milíč of Kroměříž, later known as the “Father of the Bohemian Reformation.”

Our Konhofer thus owned Milíč’s *Latin Sunday Homiliary*, as well as a collection of Milíč’s sermons.<sup>37</sup> How did he acquire these items and why did he, properly speaking, acquire them and permanently kept them in his library?

<sup>35</sup> Weigel, “Dr. Conrad Konhofer (gest. 1452),” 290. Already in his earlier testaments from 1429/1430 he remembered “his” Bishop Friedrich III. of Aufseß, to whom he bequeathed his own mass chalice, see Johann Petz, “Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bücherei des Nürnberger Rates, 1429–1538,” *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 6 (1886) 129, 132.

<sup>36</sup> On the of the *Ratsbibliothek* see the detailed account of Johann Petz, “Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bücherei des Nürnberger Rates, 1429–1538,” *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 6 (1886) 123–174; for the text of the deed of donation from 1443 with a complete list of books, see 137–144.

<sup>37</sup> Johann Petz, “Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Bücherei des Nürnberger Rates,” 140–141. The contents of Konhofer’s library are noted also by František M. Bartoš, *Husitika a bohemika několika knihoven německých a švýcarských* [Hussitica and Bohemica of Several German and Swiss Libraries] (Prague, 1932) 1–2.

Their acquisition undoubtedly dates to Konhofer's stay at the University of Prague. Did this later opponent of Hus acquire them merely by accident? Or from interest? Was he perhaps in some closer contact with the circle of Matěj of Janov, in which Milíč's texts were kept and read? Or did he even sympathise with some of Milíč's ideas? Did Konhofer's private library also contain Milíč's treatise about the Antichrist? We do not know. However, we are well informed about the reaction of the Bohemian reformist milieu to the cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, propagated by Konhofer. The cult aroused interest in the Utraquist ambiance, even in the capital city of Prague, which is attested by the early critique of Jan Rokycana, the Utraquist Archbishop of Prague. Rokycana's *Postilla* – the final redaction of which dates probably to around 1460 – contains, for instance, this invective against pilgrimages:

Learn that the dear Lord God has the power and can forgive your sins anywhere, even at home in your chamber; there is no reason to wander to Rome or to the Fourteen Helpers! He can bestow on you his many gifts and forgive sins at home, as anywhere else, because he himself has promised, saying "Who loves me, keeps my commandments, and my Father will love him and come to him and we shall be dwelling with him." Indeed, he also wishes to come to you into your chamber; just obey his commandments.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, Oldřich Kalenice of Kalenice in his satirical *List Luciperův* [Lucifer's Letter] of 1478 criticizes Observant Franciscans, because "they absolve you, and with a watering can take it away from you, and send you on a pilgrimage [...] to the Fourteen Holy Helpers," that is to the Franciscans' pilgrimage site in the northwest Bohemian Kadaň.<sup>39</sup>

In any case, Konhofer, a former fellow student of Hus, appears to us as an intellectual with an interest in the current theological movements, especially the reformist ones; as a distinctive personality not only in the

<sup>38</sup> *Postilla Jana Rokycany*, vol. II, ed. Josef Šimek (Prague, 1929), 607–608: "Naučiz se tomu, že ti milý Pán Buoh má moc a muož tobě tvé hřichy odpustiti všudy, i doma i v tvé komoře; nic ti se jest netřeba túlati do Říma ani ke Čtrnácti pomocníkům! Doma ti on tobě muož tak mnoho daruov dáti a hřichy odpustiti jako kde jinde, neboť jest se sám zavázal řka: „Ktož miluje mne, řeč mú zachováá, a Otec muoj bude milovati jej a k němu přijdeme a přibýtek u něho učiníme! Ba i do tvé komory chce k tobě přijiti, jediné plň jeho řeč." (here there are also variant versions, according to other manuscripts, in which Rokycana also criticises pilgrimages, stating "it is not necessary to wander to Aachen or to Rome.")

<sup>39</sup> *Oldřicha Kalenice z Kalenic Satyrický list Luciperův ke Lvovi z Rožmitálu z roku 1478* [Oldřich Kalenice of Kalenice's Satirical Letter of Lucifer to Lev of Rožmitál from 1478], ed. Zdeněk Nejedlý (Prague, 1903) 24: "oni tě rozhřeší a kropáčem s tebe to sejmú a okázíj na pouť [...] k svatým čtrnácti pomocníkóm," On Kadaň in general see Petr Hlaváček, *Nový Jeruzalém? Příběh františkánského kláštera Čtrnácti sv. Pomocníků v Kadaňi* [A New Jerusalem? The Story of the Franciscan Monastery of the Fourteen Holy Helpers in Kadaň] (Kadaň, 2013).

Nuremberg-Franconian context, but also in the (Central) European one; as an all-around savant oscillating between traditional scholasticism and humanistic thrusts; as a patron of science, art, and students; and as a lover of books and music. At the same time, however, he is an example of an inconsistent personality, which – despite contact with the Prague reformist circles – he turned into an irreconcilable opponent of the Bohemian Reformation. Although (or perhaps exactly because) Konhofer later actively engaged in the process against his former fellow student Jan Hus – that culminated in Hus's death as a martyr – he remained until his own death an alert investigator of the so-called Bohemian Question, as well as an advocate of Christocentric spirituality, preparing the mighty thrust of the European reformations. Konhofer's motivation was – as was the case with the first Bohemian reformers – distinctly eschatological. This also incidentally belonged to the paradoxical constants of the dynamic religious and intellectual history of Central Europe in the Late Middle Ages.

Translated from the Czech by Zdeněk V. David