
Introduction

The 2012 and 2014 Symposia

Over fifty people participated in the Tenth Symposium of the Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice held from 20–22 June 2012 and over sixty at the Eleventh Symposium held from 18–20 June 2014. There were twenty-eight papers presented during the tenth symposium and thirty-two at the eleventh. Each provided for three very full days of reflection and animated discussion. During the Business Meeting of the 2014 Symposium, it was agreed that we change our editorial policy so that all BRRP papers submitted by a fixed deadline would be considered for publication in the next volume. Thus, this volume contains papers from two symposia (2012 and 2014). The next volume will contain papers from both 2014 and 2016. The hope is that this will see papers published more quickly. As has become our tradition, the Symposium was held under the auspices of the Collegium Europaeum which is, itself, jointly sponsored by the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University. Both symposia were held in the Academic Conference Centre located in the heart of the Old Town of Prague which provides a pleasant and comfortable work environment. David Holeton and Zdeněk David organised the symposia once again with the support of Petr Hlaváček, Coordinator of the Collegium Europaeum, and his colleague Ota Pavlíček, who was responsible for much of the administration.

This volume contains twenty of the papers selected from those presented during the 2012 and 2014 symposia. Many of the authors will be familiar to readers of these pages, while others are by scholars who presented at BRRP for the first time. Again, Zdeněk David translated texts submitted in Czech into English. David Holeton continued as principal editor and was joined by Phillip Haberkern and Martin Dekarli as Assistant Editors. Ota Pavlíček continued to coordinate the administration of the editorial process. Without the hard work of our editorial team, this volume would not have seen the light of day and all members deserve our grateful thanks.

BRRP is interested in finding new participants in its symposia and is always glad to have new young scholars willing to offer the fruits of their research.

We also welcome “aspirants” interested in participating in the sessions of the symposium. We hope that the day will soon come when their research and writing has arrived at the stage when they feel prepared to share their work with their colleagues at BRRP. There they will always find themselves both welcome and encouraged in their academic efforts.

Because 2015 marks the six hundredth anniversary of the death of Jan Hus at Constance, during the 2014 symposium it was suggested that authors consider focusing their papers more specifically than has been our custom on the life and work of Jan Hus, and those associated with him, and his heritage in Bohemia and in the world over the ensuing centuries. From the titles of the papers proposed, it is clear that this wish was fulfilled. It is hoped that all who delve into these pages will find the offerings worthy of the occasion.

Keeping in the tradition of BRRP we have asked one of our regular participants, Pavel Soukup, to write a short contribution to the Introduction in which he has addressed the broader topic of the present anniversary within the context of modern historiography and current trends in contemporary research.

Hus research on the anniversary

2015 marked the 600th anniversary of Jan Hus’s death. The public in the Czech Republic (and, to some extent, also in other countries, above all in Germany) had the opportunity to remember the Bethlehem preacher. Many of the commemorative events may have had ephemeral effect on most people. Even the more successful ones will soon be superseded by events celebrating the 700th birthday of Charles IV, coming less than a year after Hus’s anniversary. Rightly so, one is tempted to say: jubilees are ephemeral by definition and fade away as soon as the last digit of the year count turns from zero to one. Do anniversaries, however, have an impact on historical research? They certainly do, as far as conferences, publications and historical exhibitions are concerned. From this vantage point, Jan Hus’s anniversary was as rich as it was fragmentary. A number of Hus exhibitions were organised separately by institutions holding exhibits connected to the hero of the day. Some museums displayed their precious originals: the Jena Codex was to be seen at the National Museum in Prague, and panel paintings depicting Saint Jan Hus were to be seen at the Hussite Museum in Tábor. Yet more institutions were urged to come with a Hus Expo – Charles University, the National Library, the National Archives, and certainly many more.

While one can regret that unique original items were not concentrated in one exhibition hall to form an ultimate Jan Hus exhibition, in the case of conferences, a certain distribution may be an advantage, for smaller or middle-sized meetings oftentimes facilitate a more intensive scholarly exchange

than gigantic congresses. Here again, a remarkable number of events on Jan Hus took place. Well ahead of the anniversary, the BRRP symposium held in June 2014 featured Hus as a special strand in its programme. Colloquia and conferences seem to be milestones of research into Hus in recent times. This has been the case since at least the 550th anniversary of Hus's death and the attendant 1965 Symposium *Hussianum Pragense*, although its proceedings were not published in a volume. For sure it applies to the decade following the fall of the Iron Curtain. The 1993 conference in Bayreuth provided historians from both sides of the former demarcation line with an opportunity to meet and discuss freely. The Lateran symposium of 1999 apparently created a conciliatory, historic atmosphere that absorbed participants regardless of their confession. The special colour of these events may have impacted on their proceedings (published in 1997 and 2001 respectively). Especially in the Bayreuth case, many participants used the opportunity to present the results of their long-term research in a succinct form; they avoided too detailed analyses and presented papers encapsulating important topics in a kind of substantial overview.

We still have to wait for the proceedings of this year's conferences. But beforehand only optimists would expect edited volumes that would shift our knowledge of Hus to a qualitatively new level. New insights are stimulated by extensive research, not by calls for papers. While there certainly are authors whom the anniversary reached in a mature stage of serious study specifically on Jan Hus, they probably did not form the majority of 2015 conference speakers. And how does this compare with monographs, which are not as easily subject to scholarly conjunctures as conference papers are? Book-length publications concerning Jan Hus printed between 2013–2015 amount to a two-digit number. New publications in English, Czech and German by academic authors provide both biographies of Jan Hus and theological reflections of his thought. More comprehensive treatments of Hus's posthumous reputation, so important in the popular discourse of the jubilee year, have not yet appeared, but this may soon change. The monographs published so far mostly summarise the present state of knowledge. Some provide new solutions to, or interpretations of, partial problems. None the less, the ground-breaking monographs brought to light at the previous centenary have not been replaced even one hundred years later. The book of Jan Sedlák (1915) retains its value as the first treatment based on large edited and manuscript evidence, and the biography by Václav Novotný (1919–1921) still is an unrivalled handbook of Hus's career (although it is more than that).

There is no doubt that a new, probably multi-volume work on Hus which would replace Novotný's is needed. It would have to be more than an update based on new editions and those few sources that have surfaced since Novotný. Rather, it would have to be a complete critical revision of Hus's life, literary work and position in late medieval Europe. No conference can achieve this. A specialist would have to consecrate many years to

such a task—a specialist, for this is hardly a job for a team of researchers. In most recent times, editing Hus’s writings has been undertaken by a team, and with success. Yet the bulk of Hus’s writings available in critical editions still remain the result of the focused, long-term effort of individuals such as Jiří Daňhelka and Anežka Vidmanová. Undoubtedly, any progress in Hus studies must be based on comparative study. What we need the most is a comparison between Hus and his (widely defined) contemporaries both in Bohemia and abroad. The problem is that Jan Hus is the best researched and, which is even more fatal, best edited of his Bohemian peers. We do not know enough about commentary literature at Prague University, about the writings of German-speaking reformists of the generation just before Hus, or about sermons penned by preachers other than Hus. Given the tempo of critical editing nowadays, a heretical question intrudes: what if we lay aside the most stringent philological standards for a while and resort to making a massive amount of texts available in a variety of forms? This is not to say we should give up critical editing; it must continue. This is a consideration of an alternative, parallel enterprise. The 221 volumes of the *Patrologia Latina* edited within a space of twenty-two years, by way of comparison, is a horror to critical philologists as far as editorial standards are concerned, but is an impressive achievement and crucial resource for anyone who needs a text as a starting point. In times of on-line publishing of electronic, easily corrigible texts, making preliminary transcriptions available for search should not be difficult. Any specialist would be aware of risks inherent to using such a text, and bound to go to sources before employing it in an argument; but he would appreciate being pointed to that source. The question, then, is if the future of Hus study requires the return to the history and prehistory of this study – to solitary work of savants and publishing non-critical texts?

Pavel Soukup

The Twelfth Symposium of BRRP will take place at the Academic Conference Centre of the Czech Academy of Sciences from 15–17 June 2016.

Zdeněk V. David
Woodrow Wilson Centre
Washington, D.C.

David R. Holetton
Charles University
Prague

Co-organisers of the Symposium

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