

Introduction

The 1998 Bratislava Symposium

The Symposium on the Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice held at the 1998 SVU World Congress in Bratislava saw the number of its participants grow once again from its last meeting in Brno two years earlier. Papers presented covered the breadth of the Bohemian reform movement from its intellectual (W. Herold) and pastoral (S. Bylina and P. Morée) roots in the fourteenth century to its less explored later phases on the eve of Bílá Hora (Z. David) and the exile thereafter (D. Neval). Along the way, there were studies on the origins and development of Utraquist eucharistic belief and practice (O. Marin, H. Krmíčková, and D. Holeton), and the arts (Z. Všetěčková, B. Graham). Studies on Mikuláš of Pelhřimov (T. Fudge) and the Orebite priest Ambrož (J. Lášek) provided material on figures from the radical wing of the reform movement not otherwise available in English. The complex relationships between Utraquism and the churches on either side of the religious spectrum (in what was the most religiously pluralistic society of the time) are central to two studies (P. Hlaváček and Z. David).

In these collected papers, the reader is once again afforded the occasion to read on subjects for which there is little or no literature available outside the Czech language as well as studies on aspects of the Bohemian Reformation that explore matters never before treated in print. Once again, the reader will be left richer for what has been made available through the research of scholars from a wide variety of disciplines who came together in Bratislava for several days to share the fruit of their works. At the same time, it will quickly become clear that there are many questions still begging to be answered.

The Hus Commission

The interval between the Bratislava Congress and the present has been a significant one for those interested in Jan Hus and the Bohemian Reformation. From 15-18 December 1999 an International Symposium on Jan Hus was held in Rome. This meeting brought to an end one phase of the work of the Commission for the Study of the Person, the Life and the Work of Master Jan Hus attached to the Czech Bishops' Conference which has been meeting since 1993 under the presidency of Miloslav Cardinal Vlk.¹

The results of the commission and the Roman meeting were mixed. Some of the optimism expressed four years ago at the Brno meeting of the BRRP by Fr. František Holeček, the Commission's Secretary, was not fully realised. This, perhaps, is best understood in the context of present Vatican politics rather than in any personal ill-will of Pope John Paul II. To apologise for events of the past, when it is clear that wrong has been done, seems to be beyond the stamina of many curial officials who, at present, appear to be the final redactors of papal speeches. Still, the pope's observation that Hus "was an important reformer for the life of all the churches" does give Hus a status, albeit obliquely, heretofore unattained in Roman circles. For an heretic, *ipso facto*, cannot reform the church.

Terminology and the Bohemian Reformation

Once again, this brings us to the question of terminology which we touched on in the introduction to the last number of this journal. In this year 2000, when

churches around the world celebrate the Great Jubilee, language is a question which continues to demand our attention. "Heretic" and "Hussite" have much to do with the scab which continues to disfigure the Czech religious soul. While many European cultures bear the scars of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century, with the exception of Ireland, religious memories are not as fresh or as easily provoked as they are in the Czech Republic. This is particularly remarkable in a country in which at least 60% of the population claims no religious belief. While there are many reasons for this phenomenon, religious "name calling" continues to play a not unimportant role in assuring the flames of religious intolerance are never extinguished. Scholars, by slowly transforming the language used of Hus and the Bohemian Reformation can make a significant difference to this situation.

"Heretic" and "heresy" as applied to Hus and the Utraquist movement is an appellation that has survived only because there are no actual members of the movement alive to raise objections. In sixteenth century eyes, Luther or Cranmer, for example, were certainly no less "heretical" than was Hus. Luther's "heresies" were condemned repeatedly in the acts of the Council of Trent and Cranmer was tried, condemned, degraded and burned as "an heretic". Yet no ecclesiastic, let alone scholar, would write about them today as if this was a simple, uncontested matter of fact. The present Lutheran-Roman Catholic and Anglican-Roman Catholic bilateral dialogues (both international and national) could never take place unless they were premised on the accepted reality that each party constitutes a genuine ecclesial communion freely engaging in dialogue with the other. Perhaps, on the cusp of a new millennium, scholars need to reflect on the role they can play in relegating alternative forms of Christianity to the world of "heresy".

"Hussite" raises similar issues. The conventional use of the terms "Hussite Church" and "Hussitism" raises the issue of appropriateness for Bohemian ecclesiastical history. Jan Hus was in one respect much more than the Bohemian church, in another respect much less. As the champion of human rights on a world stage, he belongs to all ages and to all peoples. As a participant in the Bohemian reform movement, he shared with his fellow reformers the search for no more (and no less) than a renewed Western church. His untimely death at Constance served as the catalyst for reforms that went well beyond his wildest imaginings. While it venerated "St. Jan Hus" among the Bohemian saints, the Utraquist Church never attributed to Hus the status of "founder" or even of "principal theologian".

Other than Jakoubek of Stříbro, Hus's friend and successor as a preacher at the Bethlehem Chapel, few Utraquists show much interest even in defending Hus's theological writings for which he was specifically condemned. Later sixteenth-century Utraquist theologians, such as Bohuslav Bílejovský and Pavel Bydžovský, cited Hus among other classics of Utraquism (Jan Milíč of Kroměříž, Matěj of Janov, Jakoubek of Stříbro, Martin Lupáč, Jan Rokycana, and Václav Koranda, Jr.) not as an doctrinal innovator, but in support of traditional doctrines where his work was placed alongside the Greek and Latin Fathers, the medieval doctors of the Church, and canon law.ⁱⁱ Thus, while Hus was by no means ignored in Utraquist theological discourse, the fundamental compendium of documents on Utraquism's operation and doctrine, *Akta konsistore utrakvistické* (1520-1564), contains only four references to him, all of marginal nature.ⁱⁱⁱ

Like Anglicans, the other claimants to a reformation which professes unbroken continuity with the medieval church (albeit reformed), Utraquists would find the emphasis on a personal reformer an embarrassment rather than an asset. Hence it is not surprising that the term Hussite was never adopted by the Utraquists themselves, but was pejoratively applied to them by their enemies.^{iv} Similarly, the term "Hussite" was not used for self-identification even by the more radical Bohemian reformers, be they the Tábórites, the Orebités, or the subsequent Unity of Brethern.^v

Naming ecclesial communities after a founder other than Jesus Christ is an early step in the process in which a majority church (or the remnants of a majority church) sets out to declare an emerging ecclesial community "non-church". Hence Hussite, Lutheran, and Calvinist all began as terms of opprobrium defining the constituent members followers of a modern founder rather than of Christ. It is probably a happy accident that the Church of England and the Anglican Communion were never known as the "Cranmerian Church" and its adherents "Cranmerians". In the lands of their origins, "Evangelish" and "Reformée" are the official titles of the churches of Luther and Calvin respectively. Perhaps it is best to let ecclesial communities find their own titles. Hence, the only Hussites are those who belong to the Czechoslovak Hussite Church; those who were a part of the majority church in Bohemia from the death of Hus until Bílá Hora were Utraquists.

The challenge to scholars of the Bohemian Reformation

Unlike the work currently being done on the joint commission studying the life and work of Martin Luther, the Hus Commission did not make a point of commissioning new studies on Hus but, generally reviewed scholarly work already done. With only fifteen years until the 600th anniversary of Hus's death at Constance, it is to be earnestly hoped that the Commission will be able to continue its work calling on scholars from both within the Czech Republic and from abroad to continue in its assigned task until a full picture of the Bohemian reformer and the context in which he lived and worked is drawn.

In a somewhat different mode, that process will continue when a larger number of scholars than ever before meet for another symposium of the Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice to be held at the Vila Lanna in Prague from 26-28 June 2000. For the first time the symposium will meet as a self-standing event under the sponsorship of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (AV ČR) and the Center for Mediaeval Studies (Centrum medievistických studií). This augurs well for the future of the symposium as well as for an irenic way forward in the ongoing study of the Bohemian Reformation and its religious practice.

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i) Background to this commission can be found in František J. Holeček, O.M. "The Problems of the Person, the Life and the Work of Jan Hus: The Significance and the Task of a Commission of the Czech Bishops' Conference," BRRP 2 (1996) 39-47.

ii) Pavel Bydžovský, *Knižky o přijímání Těla a Krve Pána našeho Ježíše Krista pod obojí způsobou* (N.P. [Prague], 1538-39) ff. 19r-26r.

iii) *Jednání a dopisy konsistore katolické a utrakvistické*, ed. Klement Borový (Prague, 1868) 1:174 (complaint about derisive books about him), 1:61, 230, 264 (concerning celebration of his feast day).

iv) "Hussiti" seemed to be a term of opprobrium favored by the curia, see *Die Hauptinstruktionen Clemens' VIII. für die Nuntien und Legaten an den europäischen Fürstenhöfen, 1592-1605*, ed. Klaus Jaitner (Tübingen, 1984) 1:59, 2:10; *Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland, nebst ergänzenden Aktenstücken*, Abt. 2, 1560-1572, viii, ed. Johann Rainer (Graz, 1967) 46-7; Abt. 3, 1572-1585, vi, ed. Helmut Goetz (Tübingen, 1982) 154, 365, 369; Abt. 3, vii, ed. Almut Bues (Tübingen, 1990) 49, 88. The courteous designation was 'communicantes sub utraque', see *ibid.* Abt. 3, vi. 467; Abt. 3, vii. 98, 376. A more neutral unofficial designation was 'Calixtini', used, for instance, by Bishop John Dubravius in 1544; see his *Ad collegium Pragense de ecclesiae oeconomia epistola* printed in *Ioanis, Dei gratia episcopi Olomucensis, In psalmum ordine quintum ecclesiae deprecantis typum gerentem, cuius initium est: Verba mea auribus percipe, Domine, enarratio...* (Prostějov, 1549) 3.

v) Ferdinand Seibt, " 'Hussiten' als historischer Begriff," in his *Hussitica: Zur Struktur einer Revolution* (Cologne, 1965) 10-15.