

---

## The Utraquist Church and the Visual Arts Before Luther

---

Milena Bartlová

(Prague)

This paper treats a subject that is, heretofore, little explored. Except for a few isolated studies, historical research has not yet formulated this type of question. The reasons for this anaemic state of affairs are clear. First, the history of the Utraquist Church during the last two thirds of the fifteenth century tended to be generally marginalized by the heroic epoch of the wars of the Bohemian Reformation. Second, a conviction dominated the field of art history and maintained that the initial period of iconoclasm within the Bohemian Reformation persisted as a lasting characteristic of Utraquism at least into the early sixteenth century. Under these circumstances a systematic presentation of my subject is as yet impossible. At present, I can only sketch the outlines, inventory the open questions, and call attention to the problems of methodology.

When the Bohemian Reformation is characterized as “The First Reformation”, we should not be surprised by the imputation of hostility toward religious visual arts. The anachronistic projection of Calvinist traits into fifteenth-century Bohemia, however, jeopardizes the understanding of authentic historical reality. Let us briefly review the well-known facts. The sharpest critique of images stemmed from the disciples of Matěj of Janov toward the end of the fourteenth century, and from the defenders of lay chalice following Jan Hus’s death. Hus himself held a fairly standard view on the function of religious art,<sup>1</sup> and his reservations did not exceed the critique current in the ecclesiastical tradition. First, it aimed at the problem of the veracity of art works, inasmuch as art could be clearly dangerous in cases of an inadequate ability to represent truthfully sacred persons, and particularly Jesus Christ. Second, it censured as illegitimate the adoration of images, as though they were the sacred persons themselves, and not lifeless objects produced by human hands. It is my opinion that the early Utraquist theology focused so ardently on the issue of images because of its deep interest in the question of transubstantiation, that is, the question of depiction, representation, and replacement of a material object, and the putative reality which it denotes or symbolizes. An active iconoclasm – the removal and destruction of art works with religious subjects – began in Prague probably as early as 1417,<sup>2</sup> culminated during popular riots in 1419-1420, and remained a component of Žižka’s warfare and of his followers’ “magnificent rides” after his death.

From a theological point of view, the iconoclasm of the Bohemian Reformation characteristically tended to follow the Old Testament texts in an

---

<sup>1</sup> Jan Royt, “Hussiten und ihre Verhältnis zur Kunst,” in Ferdinand Seibt, ed., *Jan Hus zwischen Zeiten, Völker und Konfessionen* (Munich, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Štěpán of Dolany wrote in early 1418 that Hus’s followers “destroyed many images and paintings in several churches, as if they were idols.” See Jana Nechutová, “Polemika Štěpána z Dolan s husitskou ikonofobií,” in Jaroslav Pánek and others, eds., *Husitství—reformace—renesance: Sborník k 60. narozeninám Františka Šmahela*, 3 vv. (Prague, 1994) 1:396.

eschatologically inspired way of life. The destruction of images, above all, demonstrated the purification of the temple as a holy place, the model of which could be found in the history of the Maccabees.<sup>3</sup> This view of iconoclasm as a purificatory process, followed by an all-consuming fiery sacrifice, was expressed when Žižka's host burnt all artistic treasures, and retained only cash, horses, and foodstuffs.<sup>4</sup> As early as 1428 Jakoubek of Stříbro cited iconoclasm as an example of the unreasonable application of his own ideas by the Taborites who would perpetuate their allergic aversion to religious images into the mid-fifteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

The treatises of all current genres habitually combined the issues of religious visual arts with the issues of liturgical practice, such as vestments, the linguistic and other aspects of the mass, the blessing of the faithful, and the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the other saints. In this context, Jan Rokycana considered as a "lighter" matter [*lehčejší věc*] the question of images and sculptured crucifixes when he negotiated with the legates of the Council of Basel.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it was hardly surprising that the Articles, which were adopted in the same year as implementing the *Compactata* agreements, should have contained a provision that churches ought to be equipped with images to serve the edification of the faithful, but they must not be objects of adoration.<sup>7</sup> The Roman side could accept such a formulation because in principle the Roman Curia had never recognized or supported the actually existing tendency toward adoration, which bordered on idolatry and, at times, had become idolatry's facsimile. The Utraquists apparently were willing to make concessions on an issue, which the legates did not consider marginal, and save their radical stands for matters of greater significance. Moreover, it may be presumed that they connected outright iconoclasm with the adventists and chiliasts of the Bohemian Reformation's warring phase and, hence, were leery of its application or endorsement.

Written sources inform us only fragmentarily and indirectly about the attitude toward religious art "from below", that is on the part of the faithful. As mentioned earlier, the Taborites retained their distaste for religious images, but after the mid-fifteenth century an outright negative attitude persisted only in the Unity of Brethren. In mainline Utraquism, the presence of ecclesiastical paintings and statues did not create any problems in the period of the *Compactata*. Evidence from both written documents and existing works of art support this view. In order to understand the condition of docile acceptance, it is, however, necessary to challenge the dominant presumption that medieval art works had served an exclusively religious function. The placid acceptance of religious art by the Utraquists would seem highly improbable if precious objects and edifices connected with religious life and liturgy had expressed only religious feelings, or had only served a theologically grounded edification of the faithful. If around 1420 solely theological reasons had led to the

<sup>3</sup> Compare, for music, František Holeček, "Makkabäische Interpretation des hussitischen Chorals 'Ktož jsú Boží bojovníci'," in Miloslav Polívka and František Šmahel, eds. *In memoriam Josefa Macka, 1922-1991* (Prague, 1996) 111-115.

<sup>4</sup> Such was the disposal of property stored in the castle of Rábí, according to Vavřinec of Březová, *Husitská kronika*, FRB 5 (1893) 364.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Rokycana's account of Jakoubek's Advent sermon of 1428 in the Bethlehem Chapel is in Jan Sedlák, "Liturgie u Husa a husitů," *Studie a texty k náboženským dějinám českým*, 2, 2 (1915) 144.

<sup>6</sup> See Jan Chlíbač, "K vývoji názorů Jana Rokycany na umělecké dílo," HT 8 (1985) 41.

<sup>7</sup> *Archiv český* 3 (1844) 453-455.

destruction of paintings and statues, then their renewed presence in churches could not have become a matter of indifference. In my opinion, the puzzle derives exactly from our too-rigid identification of the social function of visual art objects. The centuries-long course of Christians' relationship to religious images involved theological speculation, on the one hand, and religious practice, on the other hand. It is clear that the two spheres in their mutual relationship did not form an identity, but that they often touched each other just superficially. In my opinion, it is not appropriate to determine medieval society's relationship to religious art merely through an interpretation of texts devoted to this issue, even if we run the risk that otherwise we may find ourselves outside the firm ground of written sources. Although today it is overwhelmingly religious art that we find preserved from the Middle Ages, it is certain that originally at the turn of the fourteenth century art earmarked for profane purposes formed an equally valuable and certainly an equally numerous group. During the following centuries, however, the latter type of art succumbed more easily to changes of function and taste than did works of religious art, which, after all, despite the various changes exhibit greater duration and continuity in retaining their original function.

Even the objects created to serve religious inspiration and liturgical purposes, however, had certain functions in medieval society which relate only marginally, or not at all, to our present-day concept of Christian faith and visual art. First of all, it is necessary to mention the function of hoarding material wealth in a work of art. While this function also exists today, of course, it had a somewhat different character in the Middle Ages in the sense that the removal of financial means from economic circulation for the acquisition of a work of art was related to the piety of a society, which still regarded the presentation of a gift as one of the essential social acts and values. The donation of a precious, and obviously expensive, work of art to God or to a saint was an important public act of establishing a direct link between an individual, a family, or a corporation and the transcendental. The second function, which was of importance, was that of social legitimization by means of a work of art. Most often it was performed by publicly accessible monumental works of art which pointed to the authority that could bestow legitimacy. In the Middle Ages, it was above all the authority of phenomena or institutions which were anchored in the past. Often it was expressed by an endeavour to manifest that a municipality, a social stratum, or a religious group, which took over power and significance from a previously dominant entity, also took over the predecessor's manner of self-representation through a work of art. This endeavor is not only a basic component of the not infrequent occurrence in the history of visual arts, namely the retrospective or historicizing formal orientation, but we can also see in it a very important impulse for transferring inventions of style from one place to another.

From this point of view the Utraquists' actual relation to visual art, including the religious, appears less unambiguous than if we consider only the straightforward formulation of the existing texts, which were written, and must be understood, in the context of the theological tradition. In real life, the visual arts had more social functions than those which this tradition would allow. The destruction of art works was inspired not only by a theologically based repugnance, but also by other motives. Factors that entered into play included: a hatred of objects visibly connected with prominent opponents of the Bohemian Reformation; the common folks' distaste for the subtle or virtually esoteric, and thus incomprehensible,

thematic content of many such works; resistance to an excessively realistic character of the most recent monuments which awakened the dormant fears of magic; and, last but not least, an occasional desire to recover the marketable value hoarded in the art works.<sup>8</sup>

Another issue, which deserves a fresh examination, is the question of whether iconoclasm during the wars of the Bohemian Reformation was actually as drastic, as depicted in the written sources. Aside from Karel Stejskal's complete denial of an iconoclasm, there is a view that the Reformers actually spared, even in Prague, a number of publicly accessible art works, the esthetic value of which they respected. In my opinion, neither of these two views is correct. First of all, the objections against images were always limited to their adoration and to their lack of veracity. If publicly displayed works neither enjoyed adoration nor symbolized hated persons or symbols of the old regime, there was no reason for their destruction as, for instance, was the case with house signs or the decorations on the bridge towers of Prague. The foundation of the skewed views among art historians has been the tendency to push back the origin of all artistically valuable works to dates prior to 1420 with the justification that, particularly in Prague, "at a later time, conditions did not exist for quality art production."<sup>9</sup> With one exception, the existing Bohemian specimens of monumental art from the first half of the fifteenth century – that is excluding illuminated manuscripts – lack reliable dates, which would support the derivation of a local development of style. Therefore, it may be more legitimate to consider, whether some of these works did not, in fact, originate after the mid-1430s, when the painters' brotherhood renewed its activity in Prague, and the noted amplification of the *Compactata* had opened the door once more to images and statues in the churches of both those *sub utraque* and *sub una*.

Another crucial issue is how the accord about the ecclesiastical images was implemented. Hitherto art historians have assumed that the reappearance of images occurred only in churches *sub una*, and that it involved only paintings and statues, which had been hidden for safe keeping against the rampaging religious radicals. It is, however, necessary to consider the likelihood that the pledges connected with the *Compactata* were viewed as obligatory from the 1430s till 1462 not only for the *sub una*, but also for the *sub utraque* in both Bohemia and Moravia. Information about Prague painters, who could fully renew their production between 1430 and 1438, also indicates that new art works were ordered to furnish the churches. The earliest report about a new piece of Utraquist ecclesiastical art dates to 1434, when a resident of the Lesser Town of Prague, Beneš, who lived near the Strahov Gate, bequeathed a relatively large sum of three hundred groschen for the erection of an altar in the local church of St. Nicholas. The altar was to be adorned by a painting of the crucified Christ and a chalice with the host dipped in the Saviour's blood.<sup>10</sup> A monumental sculptural group of the Calvary, preserved to this day, was erected in

---

<sup>8</sup> The last motive of liquidation had, of course, inspired others beside the iconoclasts of the Bohemian Reformation, in particular earlier Bohemian monarchs. The process then raised the question whether the art work was more the property of a donor, rather than belonging to the saint, or the church, to which it was originally given. One could hardly expect an unbiased answer to this question from the representatives of the ecclesiastical institutions.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, Albert Kutal, "Gotické sochařství," in *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění*, 4v. (Prague, 1984-2001) 1:278.

<sup>10</sup> Tomek, *Dějepis* 8:27.

the church of Our Lady Before the Týn [henceforth the Týn Church] in 1439, and approximately at that time a statue of the Madonna enthroned with the Christ Child was created for the same church and apparently placed on the main altar.<sup>11</sup> Stylistically both sculptural groups were closely related to the characteristics of Prague sculptural art as it had existed prior to the wars of the Bohemian Reformation. Aside from a few clearly advanced formal features, the sculptures of the 1430s – in distinction from the preceding beautiful style – were endowed by expressions of deeply felt gravity, which were reflected not only in the figures of St. John and the Virgin at the foot of the cross, but also in the Christ Child seated on Mary's lap. The visual arts of *Compactata* Utraquism (to use Josef Válka's term) will certainly yield interesting results through further exploration. Major obstacles, however, will stand in the way, as long as art historians lack the resolutions of an entire series of long neglected issues: What were the concrete ramifications of legitimacy and property rights of ecclesiastical administration at the parish level? What were the concrete forms of Utraquist liturgy in this period? How to explain that the Prague residents' testaments occasionally left legacies to institutions of both *sub utraque* and *sub una*? What was the degree of awareness in the two parties concerning the differences in religious practices of various types?

The Utraquist churches of Prague, headed by the Týn Church, and most likely also Utraquist churches elsewhere in Bohemia, were filled with ecclesiastical ornaments, by the time King George of Poděbrady had died. These decorations deviated only in part from the current standards of religious art in Central Europe. Certain iconographic themes represented the most distinct differences. Aside from the solo depictions of the chalice (often held by an angel), these were most definitely portraits of the martyrs and witnesses of the Bohemian Reformation, placed on the same level as the martyred saints of the early church. As far as we can judge from later visual and literary sources, the individuals so honored were, in addition to Hus, Jerome of Prague, the three youths executed in Prague for denouncing indulgences, two students beheaded in Olomouc, and the massacred miners of Kutná Hora. A more detailed knowledge of contemporary Utraquist liturgy would help to clarify many features here. Hus's iconography consisted in particular of the Passion cycle, aside from his painted portraits, which probably dated from as early as the second quarter of the fifteenth century. The Passion cycle was Christomorphic in style and hence depicted his deeds, especially the sermons and the pleading of his defense at Constance, and his passion proper – his death at the stake. The cycle of antithetical images of Christ and Antichrist remains an open question for further research as to its descent in artistic practice and siting, as well as to its artistic execution and function. It is hardly surprising that monumental works of this type could survive only under the most exceptional circumstances, and just a few were preserved even in illuminated books, which could be more easily concealed. Incidentally, the prevalence of manuscript bibles among the preserved illuminated books of the period is not necessarily a mark of intentional biblicism. It may also reflect the fact that liturgical books of the early Bohemian Reformation had lost their usefulness as early as the sixteenth century, while the status of the Bibles remained unaffected.

---

<sup>11</sup> See Jaromír Homolka, Jan Chlíbač, and Milena Štefanová-Bartlová, "Mistr Týnské Kalvárie," *Katalog Národní galerie* (Prague, 1990). My extensive study will include a chronological reconsideration and re-analysis of this subject with respect to the Central European context *Mistr Týnské kalvárie - revize po deseti letech* (forthcoming).

Other art works were protected by their lack of confessional specificity. A notable example is the survival without any alteration of the panel painting of the eucharistic Christ in the Týn Church. Because of its ideological openness and confessional fuzziness the image withstood the storm of Tridentinization during the Counter Reformation. As Zuzana Všeťčková has shown, instances of this type could be multiplied, particularly those involving the eucharistic Christ. Another major example of acceptable Utraquist iconography is the Crucifixion. Above all, the sculptural group of the Calvary, which was mentioned before, forms to this day a part of the artistic décor of the Týn Church, standing on an altar erected in the 1720s. It has escaped suppression by Roman censors, although the sculpture – in an undeniably Utraquist manner – highlights the symbol of Christ's blood which is depicted as bunches of red grapes growing out of the Saviour's wounded hands and side.

A significant mark of the distinctiveness of Utraquist religious art is the external appearance of the earlier mentioned sculptural group of the enthroned Madonna with the Christ Child, which is also located in the Týn Church. The ensemble was created without a polychrome glaze so that it would appear wooden or, as the Germans would say, *holzsichtig*.<sup>12</sup> If this Madonna were sculpted sometime around 1440, it would belong among the very first examples of this style in late Gothic sculpture. Contemporary and artistically parallel phenomena are the virtually monochromatically painted images produced within the milieu of the Benedictine monastic reform which centered on Melk in Austria. As such extra-Bohemian examples indicate, these images reflected a reformist tendency, which tried to purge the art works of the appearance of an ostentatious luxury. Hence their colourless or monochromatic character, which also visibly signaled a departure from the excessively "artful", or esthetically oriented, production of the beautiful style in its earlier stage. We do not know whether the Madonna of the Týn Church remained an isolated Bohemian specimen. A similar intent – the rejection of an ostentatious luxury – however, is reflected in the simplicity and sobriety of epitaphs and tombstones. Such modesty was abandoned only in the necrological monuments of outstanding Utraquist leaders, for instance, Jakoubek, buried in the Bethlehem Chapel, and Jan Rokycana, buried in the Týn Church, to say nothing of George of Poděbrady who was interred in St. Vitus' Cathedral, but whose intestines were deposited in the Týn Church.<sup>13</sup> It is certain that this period also produced liturgical implements in the proper sense, like chalices, patens, crosses, and monstrances. Is it legitimate to interpret the distinctly simple décor of the monstrances as a sign of their Utraquist origin? Did the Utraquists use embroidered and preciously decorated chasubles and other liturgical vestments?

During our entire period there was no need to erect new Utraquist churches, inasmuch as ecclesiastical edifices were plentiful following the construction boom of the fourteenth century. Nevertheless, disputes and conflicts occurred concerning individual churches. A sensible solution of building new ones – as would occur in the

<sup>12</sup> An unambiguous confirmation is the restorer's testimony in the catalogue, *Mojmír Hamsík a restaurátorský atelier Národní galerie v Praze* (Prague, 1985) Supplement, 19-21.

<sup>13</sup> On this subject see Jan Chlíbač, "K vývoji názorů Jana Rokycany na umělecké dílo," HT 8 (1985) 39-57; *idem*, "Názory Girolama Savonaroly na výtvarné dílo a jejich vztah k české reformaci," *Umění* 47 (1999) 286. Also Milena Bartlová, "Chrám Matky Boží před Týnem v 15. století," *Marginalia historica* 4 (2001) 111-136.

post-1781 period of toleration – was precluded by the fact that a church was not merely a building and its furnishings, but also an entity with legal property rights, and the late medieval period could not imagine their mutual separation. We know that in the Utraquist period churches were not only being repaired, but certain unfinished constructions were also completed. We can assume that churches were likewise subject to partial reconstructions to make them suitable for new liturgical requirements. More precise knowledge of the forms of the Utraquist liturgy in the later fifteenth century would help to interpret the character of such architectural alterations. It would be useful to answer questions, such as: how were services at side altars and multiple simultaneous masses performed; how did preaching fit into the framework of divine services; were the choirs assigned to specially designated spaces or not; were there liturgical processions; and were wedding rites performed in a public area? All such considerations would have a determining effect on the arrangement of the liturgical space. We can assume the removal of choir benches where a monastic or chapter church was converted into a parish one, but would choir partitions also be necessarily removed? Did the liturgy require a circling of the altar, which would affect the siting of the altar? Where was the depository for the hosts and the wine for periods between the divine services?

Aside from the above questions, which I as an art historian pose to my colleagues in other branches of historical scholarship, further research in the proper sphere of art history would likewise be greatly illuminating. Hitherto art-historical research has done very little to determine the original provenance of the individual existing works of art and, if relevant, to determine their possible relationship to the Utraquist patron or purchaser. It is similarly possible to anticipate with interest the results of assigning the preserved art works to the workshops of individual masters, who worked in the various towns and regions of Bohemia. While in Bohemia and Moravia, outside of Prague, written sources normally establish the names of only two or three artists, the capital city represented for most of the fifteenth century, with a large number of resident painters and sculptors, a real artistic centre still comparable with other metropolises of Central Europe. In 1462, one Prague painter employed several journeymen from Vienna, Lauf, Zittau, and Meissen,<sup>14</sup> which shows that the Prague school of painting enjoyed considerable prestige in the neighboring countries, and contradicts the hitherto dominant opinion of Bohemian art historians about the utter lack of quality art and sculpture production in Bohemia's capital. The brotherhood, or the guild, of painters had its own altar in the all-important Týn Church and its members, as befitted the burghers of the Prague Old Town, were Utraquist communicants, except for a few mentioned by name toward the end of our period.<sup>15</sup> The character of the relevant art, which must have been largely designed for Utraquist patrons, is difficult to identify because of the fragmentary preservation of art works. On the basis of existing research, it is possible to conjecture that the art was intentionally conservative and sober, while its authors were not entirely unreceptive to artistic trends from the neighbouring lands. From this point of view, it will be most instructive to explore the reception of stimuli

---

<sup>14</sup> Hana Pátková, ed., *Liber societatis pictorum pragensium* (Prague, 1996) 15-16.

<sup>15</sup> I disagree with the suggestion that the recorded Utraquist painters were performing merely decorative work, while the preserved paintings and statues were created by artists *sub una*, who were not members of the brotherhood. In my opinion, such an interpretation distorts the data in the sources.

from the spheres of both the Italian and the Transalpine Renaissance of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which were rather distinctly identified with the Court of Buda, the merchants of Augsburg, and the southerly oriented *sub una*.

Let us now return into the 1480s, which offer two direct, and one indirect, sources of information relevant to our discussion. First of all, there is the treatise by Václav Koranda the Younger, *De imaginibus*, some time ago analyzed by Noemi Rejchrtová.<sup>16</sup> It strikes us as a revival of the diverse reservations about the use and misuse of images, which had been voiced by the early Bohemian Reformation. At the same time, we have from this very decade a monumental work of painting, which is the only document of its kind – the altar panels from the St. Wenceslaus Church in Roudníky, a village near Chabařovice in the district of Ústí nad Labem. The plates survived under repainting, because they were used as doors during a reconstruction of the altar in 1607, that is a few years after the village was purchased by a noble *sub una*, Radslav Vchynský of Vchynice.<sup>17</sup> Hus is here represented as a colleague of the early Christian martyrs, Saints James, Sebastian and, in particular, Lawrence, who was compared to Hus already in the relatively early liturgical composition, *Passio Johannis Hus secundum Johannem Barbatum*, with the words: “Therefore we may properly sing the song of the outstanding witness and martyr Lawrence – You have tested me with fire, but unrighteousness was not found in me.”<sup>18</sup> In my opinion, the altar can be reconstructed as an Utraquist ark, that is an altar tabernacle, which was closed by the painted panels and in the centre of which was the symbol of the eucharist, either presented in an exhibited monstrance, or represented by the traditional image of the Man of Sorrows. Despite the intentional simplicity of the artistic design, evident especially on the exterior sides, the paintings on the inner panels fit well into the Bohemian (or Prague) tradition of late Gothic painting. A third, this time indirect, piece of information from the 1480s. In 1483, when the rioting Utraquists of Prague wished to demonstrate their religious identity, their objects of destruction were limited to the décor of the monastic churches *sub una*, those of St. James and St. Ambrose. It must be admitted that the significance of the painting of Roudníky may appear greater – thanks to its present-day singularity – than it was originally. Nevertheless, it is evident, in my opinion, that Koranda’s strictures against religious art should be taken with a grain of salt, more as an expression of loyalty to early Bohemian Reformation than as a reflection of contemporary practice.

The revulsion against visual religious art remained typical for the Unity of Brethren, while in the case of mainline Utraquism it might be characterized only as a latent tendency. Therefore, it was possible that Luther’s early adherents would manifest their receptivity of the German Reformation – despite Luther’s overt respect for Hus – by denouncing, and even destroying, Utraquist images, as reflected in the activities of Priest Jan Poduška and the “Picard Priest” Václav in the Týn Church in 1519-1520.<sup>19</sup> For the time being, we do not know, whether these were more than isolated instances, but it is possible that Czech Lutherans, in fact, did not consider Utraquist ecclesiastical art as acceptable. Only continued targeted research will tell

<sup>16</sup> Noemi Rejchrtová, “Obrazoborecké tendence utrakvistické mentality jagellonského období a jejich dosah,” HT 8 (1985) 59-68.

<sup>17</sup> According to the information in August Sedláček, *Místopisný slovník historický Království českého*. Reprint (Prague, 1998) 774.

<sup>18</sup> FRB 8:22.

<sup>19</sup> Josef Teige, *Základy starého místopisu pražského* (Prague, 1910) 1:480-481 (nn. 75 and 78).



us more. In my opinion, rather than a rejection of Utraquism as such, the desire – on the part of the Lutherans – to remove the old art indicated a drive toward a more unambiguous confessional self-definition, which would also involve the employment of art works of a distinctly newer and more modern appearance and expression, or – as we would say nowadays – which would be in the style of the Renaissance. A lapse of almost a century between the issuance of the *Compactata* and the Lutheran Reformation affected the concept of the ecclesiastical self-representation. While the Utraquists wished to symbolize their continued adherence to the traditional Catholic Church (as defined by them against the Roman Curia), the Lutherans were more interested in demonstrating the radical novelty of their stance. In addition, the difference in the attitude toward the visual religious arts must be assessed in the light of the fact that it was exactly this hundred-year period that witnessed a fundamental turning point in the paradigms of European artistic culture. This momentous event was the Renaissance, which, among others, ushered in the concept of art as we understand it today. Therefore, it was only then that Luther could enunciate his liberating and epochal characteristic of religious art: Ultimately one could live with it or leave it alone; after all, it was *mere art* and, what really needed to be reformed, were the idols in the hearts of men.

Translated from the Czech by Zdeněk V. David