

The Eucharist in the Writings of Heinrich of Bitterfeld

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Several times in the scholarly literature during the past century, there have appeared regrets that the figure of Heinrich of Bitterfeld has not received more attention. It is true that there exists the relatively sizable work of Evžen Stein that appeared in the *Český časopis historický* in 1933,¹ but the present-day reader tends to hesitate about Stein's methodology which the author calls psychological. Four years after the Second World War, the Dominican, Vladimír J. Koudelka, devoted an entire dissertation to his confrere Bitterfeld.² The work never appeared in its entirety, but Koudelka did publish a sixty-page summary in 1953³ that has served as the primary source of information for subsequent authors, who – with some exceptions – have used and passed on Koudelka's data. The most notable of these exceptions is an edition of Bitterfeld's text, *Determinatio de audientia confessionum*, published by Waclaw Bucichowski in 1992.⁴ I shall, therefore, tend to relate my study, above all, to Koudelka's findings.

His Life

I shall touch only briefly on the available biographical information concerning Bitterfeld. His most probable birthplace was the town of Bitterfeld in Saxony. Nothing is known about his youth. We do not even know whether he obtained his degree in liberal arts at a university or whether he first entered the Dominican Order which provided philosophical courses for its novices. It is peculiar that he chose the Polish Province for his entry into the Order and, within it, the monastery of Brieg.⁵ The evidence for this fact is the list of Dominican authors which probably originated in Prague in the early fifteenth century. Heinrich of Bitterfeld is called there: *frater Heynricus Bitterfeld, de conventu Bregensi*.⁶ There is every indication that Heinrich did not enter the Polish Province accidentally, and that he had a reason to join an, on the whole, insignificant Silesian

- 1 Evžen Stein, „Mistr Jindřich z Bitterfeldu,“ [Master Heinrich of Bitterfeld], *ČČH* 39 (1933) 36–56, 259–296, 473–504.
- 2 Vladimír J. Koudelka, *Heinrich von Bitterfeld O. P. (gest. um 1405), Universitätsprofessor und Regens in Prag*, Ph. D. Thesis, Freiburg University (Freiburg in der Schweiz, 1949).
- 3 Vladimír J. Koudelka, “Heinrich von Bitterfeld O. P. (gest. um 1405), Professor an der Universität Prag,” *AFP* 23 (1953) 5–65.
- 4 “Henryka Bitterfelda z Brzegu *Determinatio de audientia confessionum*,” ed. Waclaw Bucichowski in: *Przegląd Tomistyczny: filozofia, teologia, kultura duchowa średnowiecza* 5 (Warsaw, 1992) 83–119.
- 5 The monastery was destroyed in 1546; see Gustav Sommerfeldt, “Heinrich von Bitterfeld: Nachtrag,” *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, 29 (1905) 605 n. 1.
- 6 See *Ein neuaugefundener Katalog der dominikaner Schriftsteller*, ed. P. Auer (Paris, 1933) 102–103.

monastery. A reasonable explanation is that his entire family moved to Silesia at least before Heinrich's entry into the Dominican Order, but probably already during Heinrich's childhood or early youth. In Silesian convents we find random evidence of his presence, and he himself dedicated his largest work, *De vita contemplativa et activa*, to the Polish Queen, Hedwig, considering himself her subject. He allegedly also composed the biography of Hedwig, the patron saint of Silesia, but a copy of the text has yet to be discovered.

We do not know where he pursued the studies required by the Order, but it is not out of the question that he was sent to Prague where the nearest *studium generale* of the Order was to be found. In any case, Heinrich began his academic career at the University of Prague. The first evidence of his activity there may be his signature on the resolution which representatives of the Prague Theological Faculty adopted on 3 February 1386 concerning the five disputed propositions of Johann Müntzinger of Ulm.⁷ One of the four undersigned Dominicans was *Henricus Praesentatus*. His identification with Heinrich of Bitterfeld is, on the whole, considered likely, at times it is even assumed to be entirely certain. It is important, however, to caution that this certainty is not absolute.

According to Koudelka, Heinrich also stayed occasionally in Paris during the years 1380-1388. His stay in the French capital is documented by a Marian sermon which notes that *illum sermonem predicavit magister Henricus Bitterfeld ordinis predicatorum Parisye in capella pape*.⁸ Even so, he could participate in the excitement of contemporary events in Prague. In this period, he composed the treatise *De formacione et reformatione Ordinis Praedicatorum*, the contents of which were undoubtedly influenced – among other reform-minded fellow Dominicans – by Raymond of Capua, who frequently stayed in Prague. In the years 1388 – 1390 he was involved in disputes over how frequently the laity should receive Holy Communion.

Heinrich waited a relatively long time for the master's degree, which he eventually obtained, not from the university, but from the papal curia. Apparently thanks to the intercession of Archbishop Jan Jenštejn, Pope Boniface IX ordered on 5 March 1391 that Heinrich, son of Wenzl, of Bitterfeld, member of the order of preachers, be awarded the degree of master of theology.⁹ Bitterfeld thus

7 This surname appears in secondary literature in three different forms: Müntzinger, Münzinger, and Müntzinger. The most extensive study uses the third variant, which I also adopt. See Albert Lang, "Johann Müntzinger, ein schwäbischer Theologe und Schulmeister am Ende des 14. Jahrhunderts," in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters: Texte und Untersuchungen*, ed. Martin Grabmann, Supplementum III, 2. Halbband (Münster, 1935) 1200–1230.

8 See Koudelka, "*Heinrich von Bitterfeld O. P. (gest. um 1405)*," 22, where the author refers to a manuscript held by Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, sign. Hs Theol. 126, f. 143a.

9 The reference is to Register L 17 133v (L designates Registra Lateranensia). Heinrich is here cited as *Henricus Wenczeslai Venken de Bichervelt ordinis Praedicatorum*, whom the Pope "mandat pro-

became a *magister bullatus*.¹⁰ The adjective *bullatus* was not merely an objective description, how the given person had acquired his degree, but also a pejorative designation of the first professors of the University of Prague, who were appointed on the basis of papal bulls.¹¹

On his return, Heinrich resumed his struggle for the institution of daily communion. In the 1390s he sided with the archbishop against the king's misuse of jubilee indulgences for the enrichment of his own treasury. Probably in this connection, he wrote the treatise *De anno iubileo* (1394) which is sometimes called *De largitate et virtute indulgentiarum anni iubilei*. Under the influence of ideas disseminated by the Augustinians of Roudnice, he became concerned with the contemplative and the active life and prepared his major work dedicated to the Queen of Poland, as noted above.

Another field of activity opened up for Bitterfeld with his appointment – thanks to Jenštejn – as professor of theology in the cathedral school. According to the records of the Prague Consistory, he already taught there in 1394. As early as 1396, his name also appears as one of the professors of theology in the Dominican monastery of St. Clement. Bitterfeld's writings of this period fall into the area which nowadays would be called pastoral theology.¹²

After the death of the Vicar General, Jan of Pomuk, the political and the ecclesiastical situation in Prague turned distinctly more tense. Bitterfeld's sermon of 2 July 1393 indicates that Jenštejn, in the time of tribulations, did not want to lack his friend and took him along as a consultant on a journey to Perugia, the current seat of the papal curia.

In 1396, Heinrich in his treatise, *De audientia confessionum*, defends the right of mendicant friars to hear confessions in their own and in other churches, and also offers a kind of manual for confessors.¹³ At the same time,

movere in honorem magisterii in sacra theologia 5. martii 1391." See *Repertorium Germanicum: Verzeichnis der in den päpstlichen Registern und Kameralakten vorkommenden Personen, Kirchen und Orte des Deutschen Reiches, seiner Diözesen und Territorien vom Beginn des Schismas bis zur Reformation*, hrsg. vom Deutschen Historischen Institut in Rom, Band II: Urban VI., Bonifaz IX., Innozenz VII., 1378–1415 (Berlin, 1961 [= 1933–1938]) 487.

10 In Koudelka's dissertation we find a designation *doctor bullatus*; nevertheless in the above-mentioned Register we find only a reference to master of theology. Therefore, I consider the designation *magister bullatus* as more correct. See *ibid.* 19 and note above. We find, however, also the designation of *professor bullatus*; see Eduard Winter, "Frühhumanismus," in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte des religiösen und wissenschaftlichen Denkens*, eds. E. Winter and H. Mohr, Band 3 (Berlin, 1964) 119.

11 See František Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce* [Hussite Revolution] 4 vv. (Prague, 19952) 2:185.

12 The practical orientation of Bitterfeld's theological interest is noted, for instance, by Willehad Paul Eckert, "Heinrich von Bitterfeld," in: *Neue deutsche Biographie*, ed. by Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd. 8 (Berlin, 1969) 406.

13 This was a theme of current interest, as attested also by Iva Adámková, "Rukopis 114 Svatojakubské knihovny," [Ms. 114 in St. James Library], in: *Brno v minulosti a dnes. Sborník příspěvků k dějinám a výstavbě Brna 14* (2000) 73–78.

he contemplates a reform the Bohemian Dominican Province and, apparently, he advocates the establishment of a monastery of Strict Dominican Observance amidst of the forests of Roudnice.¹⁴ Jenštejn himself supported this project with a donation from the archiepiscopal estates, and requested Rome's approval for the new monastery. Further conflicts between the archbishop and the king, however, caused the scheme to collapse. Nothing, of course, affected the friendship between the archbishop – soon to become an emeritus – and the Dominican Heinrich. In that respect, Jenštejn's biographer records the following event: during a stay at the castle of Helfenburk, the archbishop awaited a Dominican professor of theology, by the name of Heinrich, so impatiently that he left the castle before finishing his prayers, and suffered a dangerous – albeit not fatal – fall from the bridge.¹⁵ It is rather significant that this event is placed toward the end of chapter 12 of the archbishop's biography, which has the title *De frequentatione sacramenti eucharistie, eius efficacia salutari*. It no longer deals with the extraordinary relation of the archbishop to frequent communion or about its salutary effects in his life, but rather with the dangers and punishments encountered by Jenštejn, when he failed to show an adequate awe for the sacrament of the altar, or when he was lax about his prayers. Probably the first person to attempt an identification of the story's Dominican was Josef Dobrovský. It is hardly surprising that in "Master Heinrich" he saw Heinrich of Bitterfeld.¹⁶ It is most improbable that it could be another person when we consider the references to the name, the religious order, and the professorial rank. To the evident identification marks, an additional indirect mark may be added – hitherto missed by scholarly literature – and that is the location of the mention of Bitterfeld in a chapter about frequent communion, a practice of which he was an ardent advocate together with Jenštejn. Hence, there is little space for a doubt that the story concerned Heinrich of Bitterfeld who, even after Jenštejn's resignation, remained his close friend.

Jenštejn died in Rome on 17 July 1400, and in the following years Bitterfeld continued to teach as a professor in the cathedral school. In May 1404, he once more takes up the cudgels in a cause against the rather widespread malpractice of simony. The exact date of his death remains unknown. It falls between 22

14 This intention is considered outright as Bitterfeld's plan by F. J. Worstbrock, "Heinrich von Bitterfeld," in: *Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Kurt Ruh, Bd. 3, (Berlin and New York, 1981) col. 700. Heinrich's influence on Raymund of Capua's preparation of the reforms of the Dominican Order is assumed by Raphaël-Louis Oechsen, "Frères Prêcheurs en Europe centrale et orientale," in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 5 (Paris, 1964) col. 1511.

15 FRB 1 (1873) 457.

16 The cited reference in FRB in n. 1 states: "Dobrovský assumes that master Heinrich, who is here mentioned, is the same person, whom Balbín treats in his: *Bohemia docta* II, 173."

May 1404, when he makes a declaration against simony, and 28 August 1406 that is a date *post quem non* according to the sources.¹⁷

His Eucharistic Writings

Bitterfeld's writings include two devoted to eucharistic issues: the lectures, *De institutione sacramenti eukaristie*, and a *determinacio*, *De crebra communione*. Both extant manuscripts of *De institutione sacramenti eukaristie* are held by the National Library in Prague,¹⁸ one of which does not contain the entire text. Evžen Stein pointed to another manuscript that in his opinion contained the work, *De institutione*,¹ but already before him Josef Truhlář considered it doubtful.² Having examined the manuscript personally, I am certain that it is not one of Bitterfeld's works. Apparently, the source of the error is a confusion between Bitterfeld and another Dominican, Jindřich of Budějovice.

At the very beginning of *De institutione*, we read that the work consists of *reportata in leccionibus Magistri Henrici, sacre theologie professoris*.²¹ It is, therefore, a matter of recording a university lecture. The text does not reveal the identity of the recorder. Both manuscripts, containing Bitterfeld's treatise about the institution of the most holy sacrament, originate from the fifteenth century. Therefore, they represent copies and it is not possible to state, whether they are based directly on Bitterfeld's lectures, or whether they reflect an intermediate written record. It is likewise impossible to determine – either from the text itself or from related documents – whether Master Heinrich had authorized the text of the lecture reports.

In his dissertation Koudelka cites the reasons why he dates the origin of the work, *De crebra communione*, to the year 1391. On that basis he assumes that the treatise *De institutione* originated in the years 1388-1390. Likewise, František M. Bartoš assigns the origin of this text to the year 1389, although he does not exclude the possibility of its composition after the Synod of June 1391,

17 František M. Bartoš established this dating. He noted that an anonymous work *De devolutionibus* mentions a *bone memorie magister Henricus, lector ecclesie Pragensis*, who according to Bartoš could be no one else but Heinrich of Bitterfeld. The same work refers to *magister Stephanus, Boleslaviensis archidiaconus*, that is Štěpán of Kolín, who died on 28 August 1406. Štěpán is named as living, Bitterfeld therefore died earlier than he. Subsequent literature retains this dating. See František M. Bartoš, "Ještě jednou Husovi učitelé a kolegové na bohoslovecké fakultě University Karlovy," [Once More: Hus's Teachers and Colleagues at the Theological Faculty of the Prague University], *JSH* 14 (1941) 105.

18 See Josef Truhlář, *Catalogus codicum manu scriptorum Latinorum qui in c. r. bibliotheca publica atque Universitatis Pragensis asservantur I* (Prague, 1905) 334.

19 See Evžen Stein, "Mistr Mikuláš Biceps, jeho osobnost historická a literární, doba, prostředí, význam," [Master Mikuláš Biceps, His Historical and Literary Character, Times, Milieu, Significance] *VKČSN* 4 (1928) 47.

20 Truhlář, *Catalogus codicum manu scriptorum I*:341-342.

21 See Jindřich z Bitterfeldu, "De institutione," idem, *Eucharistické texty* [Eucharistic Texts] ed. Pavel Černuška (Brno, 2006) 139, 2-3.

which permitted frequent communion.²² Although the treatise is a commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, Bitterfeld's intent to deal with the question of frequent communion for the laity is quite obvious. At the same time, it is an issue that was treated by the Synod of 1388 and that Matěj of Janov had to take up at a Synod a year later. If we assume that Heinrich of Bitterfeld was identical with Henricus Praesentus – mentioned a few years earlier in connection with the case of Johann Müntzinger of Ulm – which Stein considers possible, Koudelka does not exclude, and subsequent literature accepts, then we could agree with Koudelka²³ that Bitterfeld had composed his commentary on Lombard's *Sentences* prior to 1388-1390, and therefore that he had probably chosen his theme exactly for its contemporary relevance.²⁴ Because he had done so after the decision of the Synod of 1388, he aroused opposition to which he responded in the treatise *De crebra communione*.²⁵ Subsequent scholars have not responded to this consideration and accept Koudelka's dating of the treatise *De institutione* as reliable.²⁶

The text of the treatise *De crebra communione* was originally preserved in five manuscripts. Two of them are deposited in the Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Gdańsk. A third one was deposited in the Library of the University of Kaliningrad (Königsberg) and seen by Stein in 1933²⁷; however, it disappeared after the end of World War II. Two more manuscripts are deposited in the Library of the University of Wrocław.²⁸

The introduction to the treatise, *De crebra communione*, suggests that Bitterfeld's university lecture (known to us as the treatise, *De institutione sacramenti eukaristie*), which advocates not just frequent but daily communion, evidently evoked a rather sharp reaction. Bitterfeld, therefore, considers it necessary to respond to the objections, especially because some of them had been voiced in his absence. Once more Koudelka significantly contributed to the dating of this work.²⁹ It is important to note the words at the beginning of the treatise: *Determinacio magistri Henrici Bitterfeldt Prage ostendens, quod licite possit cottidie communicari laycus devotus*. The designation of the author as master is not merely an addition by a later copyist. It is substantiated by calling the text *determinacio*, which could be attributed only to a master. (A mere

22 František M. Bartoš, "Husův předchůdce doktor Jindřich Bitterfeld," [Hus's Precursor, Doctor Heinrich Bitterfeld] *JSH* 8 (1935) 29.

23 Koudelka, *Heinrich von Bitterfeld O. P. (gest. um 1405)* 83.

24 It is a problem how to assess the fact that Bitterfeld does not appear in Tříška's list of Prague *sententiarii*; see Josef Tříška, "Sententiarii Pragenses," *MPP* 13 (1968) 100–110.

25 Koudelka, *Heinrich von Bitterfeld O. P. (gest. um 1405)* 82–84.

26 Worstbrock, "Heinrich von Bitterfeld," col. 701.

27 Stein, "Mistr Jindřich z Bitterfeldu," 48, 288.

28 See *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1975) 184.

29 Koudelka, *Heinrich von Bitterfeld O. P. (gest. um 1405)* 79–84.

bachelor could produce only a *responsio*.) Inasmuch as the papal nomination of Heinrich of Bitterfeld as master occurred on 5 March 1391, the *determinacio* could not originate earlier.

If the *determinacio*, *De crebra communione*, could not be written prior to the year 1391, it seems probable that he had delivered its substance orally earlier in a periode when the prohibitions against frequent lay communion by the Synods of 1388 and 1389 still applied. After the permission for frequent communion was granted by a Synod held in Prague on 16 June 1391,³⁰ there would be no further reason for a university master to voice his views in this matter. Moreover, there would be no reason for Bitterfeld to feel uncertain about the outcome of the dispute, or to feel the need of dealing fairly sharply with his opponents: (*si quid erroris periculosi lateret aut appareret, utique gratanter recipiam instruccionis documenta, omnia corrigere et emendare paratus; si vero nichil horum, parcam latrantibus et infirmis*).³¹ If this argumentation is correct, the origin of the treatise *De crebra communione* can be dated between 5 March and 16 June 1391.

Even a more precise dating might be attempted with the utilisation of a reference which scholarship has hitherto ignored. At the very beginning of the *determinacio*, Bitterfeld also states the following: *Obmutescere faciatis imprudencium hominum ignorancias. Legitur 1 Petri II et nunc secundum cursum temporis recitatum*.³² If it could be ascertained, when the relevant passage from 1 Peter was read in 1391 in the Prague archdiocese, it would be, of course, possible to shift the *terminus ante quem non*. Another way of seeking a greater precision would be if we accepted Koudelka's supposition that Master Heinrich personally participated in the session of the Dominican general chapter which was held after Pentecost 1391 in Ferrara and where he received the degree which had been awarded by the pope in March. An indication that the *determinacio* was written after return from travels is given by Bitterfeld's observation that the attacks of his opponents occurred during his absence.³³

His Influence

Let us now consider the role which the eucharistic texts of Heinrich of Bitterfeld played in the events involving the prohibition, and subsequent permission,

30 Jaroslav V. Polc and Zdeňka Hledíková, *Pražské synody a koncily předhusitské doby* [Prague Synods and Councils of Pre-Hussite Times] (Prague, 2002) 254–255.

31 Jindřich z Bitterfeldu, *De crebra communione*, idem, *Eucharistické texty*, ed. Pavel Černuška (Brno, 2006) 199, 3–5.

32 I did not succeed in ascertaining when, at that time in 1391, the relevant passage from Peter's Epistle was read.

33 *Ut eciam aliqui in vocem exprobracionis prorumpentes me coram quibusdam, sed absentem, erroneum et hereticum vocare presumpserunt...* See Jindřich z Bitterfeldu, *De crebra communione*, idem, *Eucharistické texty*, ed. Pavel Černuška (Brno, 2006) 198, 14–116.

of frequent communion by the laity. It is likely that the limitation of frequent communion was less a symptom of differing theological views, and more an effort to clarify a situation, in which the quest for daily communion was characteristic not only for erudite and pious churchmen, headed by Archbishop Jan Jenštejn, but also for persons, whose teaching and practice were at the boundary of orthodoxy and orthopraxis (and often beyond) and who were in contemporary texts called Beghards and Bequines.³⁴

There were, of course, also opponents of frequent communion, which is evident from the testimony of Matěj of Janov: *...surrexerunt quidam ... dissueserunt et retraxerunt plebem Christi Iesu a frequenti communione*.³⁵ If the Synod had acted primarily because of them, it would be apropos to ask, why it had not happened, for instance, a year earlier or a year later. Exactly the year 1388, when the limitation of frequent communion was proclaimed, however, can provide a clue to the principal motives of this step. For it is most probable that the archbishop was forced to a more decisive measure by the fact that in the spring of 1388 King Wenceslaus IV started acting on his own authority. (It was the matter of repressions against pious individuals, whom the monarch deprived of property on the pretext of defending the faith.)

The declaration limiting frequent lay communion could serve several purposes. If the persons, who moved in the “suspect” circles, submitted to this decree, it became clear that they respected the authority of the church and its teaching. Thereby they were protected against further possible repressions by Wenceslaus IV. If someone transgressed the new stipulation, it was likely that he did not share with the church the authority of its teaching. Moreover, this proof was publicly evident, because the proclamation of frequent communion and its practice occurred during the liturgy or in a liturgical space – that is, overtly. The transgressor did earn a punishment, but its executor was the archbishop of Prague, not the king.

Such an evident punishment was the temporary suspension of Matěj of Janov at the Synod of 18 October 1389. His case shows that misunderstandings occurred; after all, Jenštejn was also an ardent devotee of the Eucharist. It is arguable – although not supported by specific source evidence – that he tended toward the permission, or even an advocacy, of the lay chalice. To make overt his relationship to the Eucharist in the Synod of 18 October 1390, Jenštejn supplemented with his own indulgences the papal ones, concerning the adoration of the Eucharist and its reception. Thereby he paved the way toward the goal of a renewed permission of frequent communion that, in fact, occurred in the first article of the Synod, held 16 June 1391. A supplement to

34 I shall use these designations, although they are not entirely precise.

35 Polc and Hledíková, *Pražské synody a koncily předhusitské doby* 243.

this permission granted further indulgences for acts of eucharistic adoration. Thus, during not quite three years, the archbishop succeeded in accomplishing three major objectives. (1) Wenceslaus IV could no longer arbitrarily persecute pious (and above all wealthy) faithful under the pretext of struggle against heresy. (2) It became possible to distinguish those, who respected the church teaching, from those, who opposed it. (3) After initial difficulties, the synodal acts now included permission for frequent lay communion. This step must be considered of extraordinary significance, anticipating the future by several centuries.

What was the role of Heinrich of Bitterfeld's eucharistic texts in all these events? Assuming that archbishop Jenštejn favoured permitting frequent communion – despite unfavourable circumstances, but in accordance with his own experience of a sudden recovery – it can be further assumed that he asked one of his closest associates for a scholarly analysis of the issue. The treatise, *De institutione*, might then be viewed as an expert theological assessment, prepared within the university milieu. It is probable that a similar expert assessment is the treatise of Matthew of Cracow, *Dialogus rationis et consciencie de communione sive de celebracione misse* (1388). It is connected with Bitterfeld's text by the theme of frequent lay communion, by its origin in the university milieu in 1388 or shortly thereafter, and by the archbishop's trust in the author. These links are also supported by the fact that the Synod of 19 October 1388 asked for the opinions of both the Theological and the Law Faculties.

The next question is how did Bitterfeld escape a similar punishment that was meted out to Matěj of Janov: after all, he also argued in favour of frequent communion in the years 1388-1390? To find the answer, it is necessary to read carefully Matěj's notes about the Synod: it was forbidden to preach to lay people about frequent communion, to urge it on them, or to offer it to them.³⁶ Bitterfeld, however, lectures about frequent communion at the university and, moreover, the request of the Synod authorises him to do so. His lecture may be linked with the preparation of the Theological Faculty's position, which the Synod requested.

As mentioned earlier, although Master Heinrich had not violated the decree of the Synod of October 1388, he did meet with opposition. He, therefore, laid out his viewpoints in the *determinacio*, *De crebra communione*. It is certain that it originated before the Synod of 16 October 1391, which gave permission for

36 ...predicatores et sacerdotes multa valde passi sunt publice et notorie non tantum a communibus, sed eciam ab ecclesia et prelati illi, qui sanctis et devotis personis laycis utriusque sexus sacramentum Christi corporis cottidie vel alias frequenter ministrabant, et solum ob id sunt passi et quod christianos sancte viventes ad crebram communionem sacramenti invitabant et hortabantur. Ibid.

frequent lay communion, because subsequently Bitterfeld's view coincided with the official stance.

It is therefore, most likely that the two texts of Bitterfeld played a significant role in the restoration of frequent, even daily, communion.

Heinrich of Bitterfeld and Matěj of Janov

In referring to the relationship of theologians to the Prague Synods, I have already juxtaposed the figures of Bitterfeld and Janov. One is naturally led to pose the question about the connection between the strivings and writings of the two men in Prague in the late 1380s and the early 1390s. It is well known that eucharistic practice is one of the main leitmotifs of Janov's *Regulae*. Their fifth book, in fact, bears the title, *De corpore Cristi*, and at great length deals with frequent lay communion. Dating is of crucial importance for the determination of a relationship. It is assumed that the fifth book of the *Regulae* was written in 1388, but that it acquired its definite form only after revisions in 1393. It would be, therefore, extremely difficult to establish in cases of textual coincidences the direction of the adoption of the text. Happily, no such textual coincidences between Matěj's *Regulae* and Bitterfeld's treatises are known, and none are likely to be discovered in the future.

Another matter is the doctrinal relatedness of the two authors. It is legitimate to maintain that they are very close to each other in their views. Both of them entertain an unusual reverence for the sacrament of the altar, both of them refer to the practice of daily communion in the primitive church, both of them consider the sacramental life of Christian lay people as the best way to a spiritual growth of the individual, as well as to the reform and saving of the world, in which the Christians of that time were passing through an extraordinarily difficult period. In a period of decline, quite a few of the old certainties seemed unreliable, but one nevertheless persisted. That was, of course, the Eucharist as a living certainty, guaranteed not merely by human instruments (or inventions – as Matěj was fond of saying), but by God himself.

What then are the differences between the Parisian Master and Master Heinrich? They rest, above all, in the approach to the text and, therefore, also in the form of the emerging text. Matěj deals with his subject extensively, in a long-winded way, he does not skip over any conceivably relevant detail, and he does not worry about exhausting his reader. As far as we can judge from the recordings of his lecture, Bitterfeld strives to select the most salient issues and his explication advances rather expeditiously. He lacked the preconditions, or even the interest, for an exhaustive elaboration of a single theme. When we assess the writings which are attributed to him, we gain the impression that Bitterfeld always addressed the issues that were most acute at a given time, be it a reform of the Dominican Order, next the frequent lay communion, and later the mis-

use of indulgences, or an apologia for the mendicant friars. He is not superficial in any of these cases, but – in distinction from Matěj of Janov – he is not the author of a single theme, of one monumental work.

During the twentieth century, voices were raised, calling for a deeper study of the career of Master Heinrich of Bitterfeld. As an edition of Bitterfeld's eucharistically oriented treatises that I have prepared is now available,³⁷ these voices may well find responses in the studies of Bohemian colleagues who specialise in the history of theology and spirituality.

Translated from the Czech by Zdeněk V. David.

³⁷ See n. 21 above.