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# Memory, Politics and Holy Relics: Catholic Tactics amidst the Bohemian Reformation

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In the Middle Ages holy relics were important vehicles of public memory. Their religious significance stemmed from their specific spiritual and material substance present on earth but with links to heaven<sup>1</sup> and their miraculous effects. Holy relics are both transferable and attached to places, capable of creating a topographic network of places and rituals resulting in sacralisation of time and geography.

The Emperor Charles IV († 1378) was among the most important collectors of relics in the Late Middle Ages. He fostered public manifestation of the cult of relics and anchored it in his concept of government. Through a range of iconographic subjects, he promoted his relics in various art media,<sup>2</sup> housing them in a variety of religious structures.<sup>3</sup> By establishing the Feast of the Holy Lance, and two major Prague relic displays, he brought the saintly intercessors close to the faithful, and helped to build a common memory of these value-laden material objects that was shared by the citizens of Prague. His passion for relics provided important items for the metropolitan treasury of St. Vitus and other Prague church treasuries. Along with a number of monasteries, Charles's policy also covered the parish churches of Prague, some of which received important relics of their patrons, as well as elaborate and valuable reliquaries to house them, documented, for instance, in the 1390 "Inventory of St. Gallus (Havel) in Prague",<sup>4</sup> These sites became part of the city's religious topography, woven around major churches. As late as in 1471, the Utraquist king George of Poděbrady was urged by his mentor, Pavel Žídek, to return to the Prague tradition of showing relics, enumerating their benefits: for the economy, protection and sanctification of the land, and

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<sup>1</sup> Anton Legner, *Reliquien in Kunst und Kult. Zwischen Antike und Aufklärung* [Relics in Art and Cult between Antiquity and the Enlightenment] (Darmstadt, 1995) 7.

<sup>2</sup> Karel Otavský, "K relikviím vlastněným císařem Karlem IV, k jejich uctívání a jejich schránkám," [To the Relics owned by the Emperor Charles IV, their veneration and reliquaries] in Jiří Fajt ed., *Court Chapels of the High and Late Middle Ages and their Artistic Decoration* (Prague, 2003) 396.

<sup>3</sup> Vojtěch Birnbaum, *Karel IV jako sběratel a Praha. Listy z dějin umění* [Charles IV as collector and Prague. Papers from art history] ed. Alžběta Birnbaumová (Prague, 1947).

<sup>4</sup> Klement Borový, *Libri erectionum archidieocesis Pragensis saeculo XIV. et XV.* vol. 4.1 (Prague, 1883) 1.

greater glory of the royal dynasty, for safe-guarding the morals of the people, and keeping kings on a righteous path.<sup>5</sup>

Many examples of Charles's grand building programme have survived in Prague; his policy of making Prague a pilgrimage centre became a model, a remembered golden age. Charles's son, Sigismund of Luxembourg, and his ally, Bishop Philibert of Coutances, first utilised the memory of Charles's policy in 1436–1439 with the aim of returning Utraquist Prague to Roman Catholicism. This text looks at one aspect of Philibert's confessional policy to promote a return to Roman Catholic religious practices in an Utraquist Prague, and particularly at his manipulation of historical memory through material relics.

After the unsuccessful war years, long negotiations, under a peace treaty of the *Compactata* of 1434–6, the Emperor and the Council representatives were reluctant to continue their military pressure, but did not give up the idea of a Roman Catholic restoration. Once their return was accepted by the Utraquists in the city, they resorted to “soft propaganda,” a pressure translated into the public language of Roman Catholic piety and ritual, which became a means of Roman Catholic restoration of pastoral care within the limits of the treaty.<sup>6</sup> The expressions of Roman Catholic piety appealed to the collective memory of Prague citizens, reminiscences of which were still in the minds of the older pre-Revolutionary generation. The use of such means of conversion was eased by the fact that – although their theologians decisively rejected more excessive forms of Roman Catholic piety – more conservative Utraquists were far from Taborite radicalism in the sphere of religious practice and were more open in their acceptance of traditional forms of mediaeval western Christian piety.

The central figure in this story, the French Bishop Philibert of Monjeu, Bishop of Coutances, was an interesting personality and important political figure who became a legate to Bohemia for the Council of Basel.<sup>7</sup> In 1433, he was charged with the unenviable task of reconciling the schismatic Czechs with the Roman Church. After studying the situation and in agreement with Emperor Sigismund's aims, Philibert chose moderate pressure as a means to his end and promoted peaceful reconciliation with the Czechs. His actions were documented in the diary of his secretary, Master Jean de Tornis, who recorded his moves around Prague, important meetings and political decisions.<sup>8</sup> In the first phase of his mission, between 1433 and 1436, he led several

<sup>5</sup> Zdeněk Tobolka, ed., *M. Pavla Židka Správovna* [Handbook on Governing by Master Pavel Židek] (Prague, 1908) 21–22.

<sup>6</sup> František Kavka, *Poslední Lucemburk na českém trůně* [The Last Luxembourg on the Bohemian Throne] (Prague, 1998) 229.

<sup>7</sup> Christian Kleinert, *Philibert de Montjeu (ca. 1374–1439): Ein Bischof im Zeitalter der Reformkonzilien und des Hundertjährigen Krieges* (Ostfildern, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Blanka Zilýnská, “Biskup Filibert a české země,” [Bishop Philibert and the Bohemian Lands] in Dana Nováková, Karel Křesadlo, and Eva Nedbalová, eds., *Jihlava a Basilejská kompaktáta*

delegations that were sent to negotiate with the Czechs. As a result of his mission, the Reform party made concessions to the Council of Basel, which in effect resulted in Czech Utraquists returning to traditional Catholic rituals.<sup>9</sup>

The second period of Philibert's mission, from the summer of 1436 until his death in 1439, led him directly to Utraquist Prague. From his arrival on 21 August 1436, his stay was marked by great efforts to isolate the radical opposition and return the city to the Roman obedience. He participated in the staging of the arrival of the Emperor Sigismund of Luxemburg to Prague two days later,<sup>10</sup> he crowned the Empress Barbara of Celje on 11 February 1437, and probably helped organise the last *ostensio reliquiarum* (display of relics) in its original place at the Corpus Christi chapel in the New Town's Cattle Market (now Charles Square) in 1437. These relics had last been shown on the Feast of the Holy Lance in 1417, before the Utraquists achieved hegemony. What gave this event a specific political flavour was the fact that the showing exhibited not only the imperial and royal relics housed in the royal castle of Karlštejn, southwest of Prague, but it also included the official presentation of the stone tablets engraved with the Basel *Compactata* in four languages.

To promote his cause, Philibert turned to conventional Catholic ceremonies and public appearances in his role as a bishop during his time in Prague. Between September 1436 and April 1438, he reintroduced monastic orders to Prague (Zilynska<sup>11</sup> counted fifteen of them before his death – a move not welcomed by the Utraquists), selectively ordained priests (sub una as well as sub utraque),<sup>12</sup> and held pontifical services in the cathedral. In addition, he also celebrated pontifical masses in at least five other important Prague churches. Jan de Tornis, Philibert's secretary, recorded the churches that acted as stages for Philibert's activity: he held four masses on 9 September 1436 at St. Michael's in the Old Town, on 30 September 1436 at the Emmaus Monastery, on 8 November 1436 in the Church of Our Lady before Týn, on 14 March 1437 at St. James's church, and on May 5, 1437 at Sts. Henry and Cunigunde's church.

It appears that Philibert concentrated on strategically important Prague churches – either those associated with the recent Hussite revolt or other significant parishes. To an extent these two criteria overlapped. Among

[The Jihlava and Basil *Compactata*] (Jihlava, 1992) 56, 60; Ernst Birk, ed., *Monumenta Conciliorum Generalium Saeculi decimi quinti, Concilium Basileense*, Scriptorum t. I. (Vienna, 1857) 787–867.

<sup>9</sup> František Palacký, ed., "Artikulové smlouvení na držení kompaktát v Čechách 10.3. 1437," AČ 3 (1844) 453–455.

<sup>10</sup> Milena Bartlová, "Sigismundus Rex Bohemiae: Royal Representation after the Revolution," in: *Kunst als Herrschaftsinstrument unter den Luxemburgen*, eds. Jiří Fajt and Andrea Langer, (Berlin and Munich, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Zilynská, "Biskup Filibert," 91. Philibert only ordained those candidates *sub utraque* who had been recommended by four conservative Utraquist parish priests.

<sup>12</sup> Blanka Zilynská, "Svěcení kněžstva biskupem Filibertem v Praze v letech 1437–39," [Ordinations of clergy by bishop Philibert in 1437–39] *Documenta Pragensia* 9,2 (1991) 361–371.

them, the church of Our Lady before Týn was one of the most important parish churches in Prague<sup>13</sup> in which the Utraquist Archbishop-elect Jan Rokycana had preached and a church also dedicated to Corpus Christi; and St. Michael-in-the-OldTown which was one of the first churches in which the restored chalice was given to the laity. Philibert also consecrated several altars in St. Michael's, possibly at the invitation of a conservative Utraquist priest Master Křišťan of Prachatice. The church of St. Henry and Cunigunde, founded by Charles IV, was an important parish church with an imperial and dynastic tradition. Philibert also consecrated the chapel of Corpus Christi in the Cattle Market, where the display of relics took place, and a chapel at the university.<sup>14</sup> Finally, he consecrated St. James's church, originally a monastic church of the Franciscans, for those who communicated *sub una*.

In mid-June 1437, Jan Rokycana left Prague with the priest of St. Stephen's church; the absence of the priest might have played a role in Philibert's calculations. On 19 April 1438, Philibert of Coutances consecrated an altar or altars in this important parish church (of St. Stephen), located in the eastern part of the New Town of Prague, although this consecration was not recorded in de Tornis' diary. This church was considered one of the most important of the New Town parish churches, and was known as a place of Hussite radical excesses in the early stages of the Hussite movement. The patronage rights to this ancient church belonged to the Czech hospital order of the Knights of the Cross with a Red Star. During the reign of Charles IV, ninety years earlier, the parish had been enlarged to the extent that it was considered a new foundation by some sources.<sup>15</sup> Following its enlargement, a new church was built on the same location and endowed; a silver gilt bust, in the possession of the church in 1379–80, might have come from the imperial endowment.<sup>16</sup> Charles IV, who held St. Stephen in special esteem, brought his relics from Rome to Prague in 1355 and donated them to St. Vitus's cathedral.<sup>17</sup> It might well have been Charles who initiated an annual procession from the cathedral treasury of St. Vitus to St. Stephen's in which the bust reliquary of St. Stephen the Protomartyr and a stone from his stoning were carried,<sup>18</sup> both relics then being displayed in the church on the saint's feast day. The church had been the site of two violent episodes during the early phase of the Hussite revolution. First, a priest was attacked in 1410

<sup>13</sup> František Eckert, *Posvátná místa král. hl. města Prahy. Dějiny a popsání* [Sacred places in the royal capital city of Prague] 2 vv. (Prague, 1884) 293.

<sup>14</sup> Zilynská, "Biskup Filibert," 90.

<sup>15</sup> Eckert, *Posvátná místa*, 105.

<sup>16</sup> Ivan Hlaváček and Zdeňka Hledíková, eds., *Protocolum visitationis archidiaconatus Pragensis annis 1379–1382 per Paulum de Janowicz archidiaconum pragensem factae* (Prague, 1973) 62.

<sup>17</sup> Antonín Podlaha and Eduard Šittler, eds. *Chrámový poklad u sv. Víta, jeho dějiny a popis* [The church treasury of St. Vitus, its history and description] (Prague, 1903) IV, XII, XXVII, XXXI.

<sup>18</sup> Eckert, *Posvátná místa*, 105–106.

when announcing an interdict against Jan Hus; later, in 1419, the radical priest Jan Želivský led an attack on the church which ended in the pillaging of the church and parsonage.<sup>19</sup>

Philibert's consecration of altars in St. Stephen's in 1438 most clearly reveals the strategy behind his activities in Prague. It aimed at the collective public memory of important relics as testimonies to Prague's glorious past as a pilgrimage centre, and reminded the Utraquists of their Catholic heritage. A written record of Philibert's relics, offered to the church, is preserved in the archive of the Karlov Augustinian monastery. The consecration took place on the Second Sunday after Easter and the parish church was given truly important relics for the consecration.

The inventory is written in four parts, possibly denoting the altars where they were to be kept. First of all, they included pieces of: the true Cross, the column where Christ was flagellated, and the Stone which held the Cross on Golgotha. Relics of the most important saints of Christianity followed, starting with the patron, St. Stephen the Protomartyr, followed by St. Peter, the blood of St. Paul, and the apostles Sts. Simon and Jude. All of these relics were placed in the first altar. In the second group, the principal patron of Bohemia, St. Wenceslaus, was placed together with the early martyrs Lawrence, Mauritius, and the confessor pope, St. Clement. In the third altar, the bones from the Eleven Thousand Virgins and St. Catherine were all deposited. In the last group were the female saints Margaret, Ursula, Sabina, (?) and Elisabeth.<sup>20</sup>

Such a collection of consecration relics is surprising for a parish church in Prague, albeit an important one. In accordance with the Christian hierarchy of saints and the tradition of Charles IV, the accent was placed on relics of the Passion and the apostles. The choice is impressive and – in this ambivalent confessional environment – avoided being too controversial. The Passion relics echoed the centrality of Christ's person and his sacramental

<sup>19</sup> Eckert, *Posvátná místa*, 107.

<sup>20</sup> Inventory of relics in the church of St. Stephen in Rybníček (1438). National Archive, section Dissolved Monasteries, AZK ŘA Karlov, Spisy (unsorted administrative material), inv. no. 2535 fasc. 11. (Holinka no. 1111). Year 1438, appended to the sermon for the Second Sunday after Easter (Dominica Secunda post Pascha) *Ira enim viri justitiam Dei non operatur*, seventeenth century copy. On 19 April 1438, (being the second Sunday after the Easter) this church was consecrated by Philibert, Bishop of Coutance, Legate of the Holy Council of Basel to the province of Bohemia, accordingly the following relics were brought there: [a fragment] of the Wood of the Holy Cross, [a fragment] from the Column where Christ was flagellated, [a fragment] from the Stone in which the cross was positioned, a relic of Stephen the Protomartyr, [a relic] of St. Peter, [a relic of] the Blood of St. Paul, [relics of] Sts. Simon and Jude the Apostles...for the first [altar]. Relics of St. Wenceslaus the Martyr, St. Lawrence the Martyr, St. Mauritius the Martyr, St. Clement the Pope and Confessor, St. Hilaria (Hilarius? Ms unclear) the Martyr...for the second [altar]. The bones of the holy Eleven Thousand Virgin Martyrs, St. Catherine the Virgin and Martyr...for the third [altar]. St. Margaret the Virgin and Martyr, St. Ursula the Virgin and Martyr, St. Sabina (?) the Virgin and Martyr and, [St.] Elisabeth the Widow in the fourth (altar). The titular dedication is to the name of St. Stephen the Protomartyr.

presence (Corpus Christi) in Utraquism. There were no relics of the Virgin which can be explained as a concession by Philibert to those Utraquists at the time who questioned the place to be given the Virgin Mary. The composition also aimed at the careful promotion of saints whose cults or relics were closely associated with Rome (SS. Lawrence, Stephen, Peter, and Paul) and papal authority; two uncontroversial sainted popes – St. Peter and St. Clement – were included. Churches had been dedicated to St. Clement since Christianity arrived in Bohemia and his cult resonated with Czech-Slavonic feelings. His were the first relics that consecrated churches in Bohemia, as SS. Cyril and Methodius had brought them to Great Moravia in the ninth century and from there to Prague; later, this saint's relics were included in the annual Prague showing of relics begun by Charles IV.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the reason for the use of St. Wenceslaus's relics is clear. The principal patron saint of Bohemia was there to remind the Utraquists of the martyrs of their past and their own sacred tradition.

Philibert's activity aimed at restoration was not limited to solemn pontifical masses, processions with relics, and episcopal ritual acts. Another opportunity for public promotion of traditional forms of Catholic piety was provided by the practice of inserting relics into images or statues, known from Charles IV's Karlštejn decoration, designed by Master Theodoric. In Karlštejn, the images had relics inserted in their frames – this authenticated the visual representation in the painting through the physical touch of the saint's relic. This practice then became popular with images of the Virgin Mary during Wenceslaus IV's reign.<sup>22</sup> On 11 March 1439, important Passion relics were inserted into the head of the sculpture of Christ in the famous Calvary that stood in the triumphal arch between the choir and the nave of the Church of the Our Lady before Týn, carved by the master for which this church was named.<sup>23</sup> Either the parish priest, Master Jan Papoušek (Parrot), Philibert's adherent who had been confirmed as priest of the church by Philibert earlier (on 24 April 1437)<sup>24</sup> or Philibert himself initiated this consecration of the sculpture in clear reference to a fourteenth-century practice.

The relics inserted in the Týn Christ's head read as follows:

... of the Passion of Christ, first of the wood of the Holy Cross, of the stone, on which stood the Cross, of the column, at which he was flagedellated, of the veil of the Christ, with which his nakedness was covered,

<sup>21</sup> Kateřina Kubínová, *Imitatio Romae* (Prague, 2006) 291–4.

<sup>22</sup> Michal Šroněk, "Karel IV, Jan Rokycana a šlojír nejistý" [Charles IV, Jan Rokycana and the "uncertain veil"] in: Martin Nodl, ed., *Zbožnost středověku* [Piety in the Middle Ages], *Colloquia Medievals Pragensia* 6 (2007), 84–5.

<sup>23</sup> Milena Bartlová, *Mistr Týnské kalvárie. Český sochař doby husitské* [Master of the Týn Calvary. Czech sculptor of the Hussite Era] (Prague, 2004) 23–5.

<sup>24</sup> Zilynská, "Biskup Filibert," 90.

of the stone, where Christ preached, and other relics of the deeds of mercy are here inserted in 1439.<sup>25</sup>

This time, relics of Christ's Passion were used exclusively, and again, they ranked among the most venerated tokens of Christianity. Interestingly, the first three relics are identical with those used in the consecration of St. Stephen's. The *pannum*, the Virgin Mary's veil, with which Mary covered Christ's nakedness on the Cross, was an ingenious choice – it was a venerated relic in St. Vitus's Cathedral and, simultaneously, a relic referring to Christ's Passion and to the Virgin.

Considering Philibert's fostering of traditional Catholic piety, it is notable that two images of the Virgin dating from the second third of the fifteenth century originated from two of the churches with which Philibert was associated (the Our Lady before Týn and St. Stephen's). In the Týn Church, the panel painting of the Virgin was of the *Beata* type<sup>26</sup> that closely followed the St. Vitus prototype; Bartlová dates the painting to before the mid-fifteenth century. Another panel painting of the Virgin, this time of the Vyšší Brod type, was created for St. Stephen's church. Both are late, conservative examples of the Beautiful Style, copying famous Bohemian prototypes.<sup>27</sup> The Týn Church had its own Catholic-oriented decoration programme in sculpture by the Master of the Týn Calvary, designed in the late 1430s to 1440s, whose iconography promoted the most important relics in Prague church treasuries.<sup>28</sup>

Another church where Philibert is known to have been active is St. Henry and Cunigunde's, which he had consecrated the day before he consecrated an altar or altars at St. Stephen's (i.e. on 18 April 1438).<sup>29</sup> The act was commemorated by a Baroque inscription based on an older text naming Philibert as consecrator and enumerating the consecration relics used: St. Luke, St. Mark, St. Matthias, St. Bartholomew, St. James the Less, St. Andrew, St. John the Baptist, St. Paul and other Apostles, as well as the relics of the wood of the Holy Cross, and Christ's sepulchre. Typically we meet here again the Passion and Apostles' relics which ranked among the most important Christian cult objects. A crucifix by the workshop of the same Master of the Týn Calvary was still in this church until our own day<sup>30</sup> although it is unsure if this crucifix

<sup>25</sup> ...Passionis Christi, primo de ligno domini, de petra in qua stetit crux, de statua circa quam flagellatus est, de panno domini, de lapide ubi Christus predicavit, de operibus misericordiae aliae reliquie his recondite a.d. MCCCCXXXIX m. XI ma.

<sup>26</sup> Milena Bartlová, *Poctivé obrazy* [Truthful images] (Prague, 2005) 389–90.

<sup>27</sup> Bartlová, *Poctivé obrazy*, 389–90, pl. 148. Antonín Matějček, *Česká malba gotická. Deskové malířství 1350–1450* [Czech Gothic painting. Panel painting 1350–1450] (Prague, 1940) 154, pl. 254–5.

<sup>28</sup> Kateřina Horníčková, "Eucharistický Kristus mezi anděly z Týna," [The eucharistic Christ between angels from the Týn church] in: Kateřina Horníčková and Michal Šroněk, (eds.), *Žena ve člunu* [Woman in a barque] (Prague, 2007) 223–225.

<sup>29</sup> Eckert, *Posvátná místa*, 2: 7.

<sup>30</sup> Milena Bartlová, *Mistr Týnské kalvárie*, 54, 131, pl. 19.

originates from the church as older inventories recorded two crucifixes among the church's property.

Master Prokop of Plzeň, a conservative Utraquist and ally of Philibert in the reconciliation between Utraquists and the Roman Catholic hierarchy, was inducted into this parish by Philibert on 5 May 1437.<sup>31</sup> Probably soon after that date, but before 1448,<sup>32</sup> he wrote a tractate: *De Adoratione reliquiarum et de processionibus* [On the veneration of relics and processions] in which he defended traditional Catholic forms of piety, especially the public veneration of relics and their related processions. Arguing from the ancient Bohemian use of the practice (the translation of the body of St. Ludmila), Prokop reminded readers of Charles IV's annual displays of Karlštejn relics and defended the relics of the Virgin Mary.<sup>33</sup> In his sermons delivered in St. Henry's in 1437 or 1438, that is, before Philibert's death and possibly under his aegis, he defended the traditional Catholic rites before the Prague public; in the outlines for his sermons he promoted the veneration of saints and their images, ceremonies, feasts, and pilgrimages, sacraments, prayers to the saints, and argued against iconoclasm, destruction of sacred places and vessels, and serving mass outside of churches.<sup>34</sup>

A carved Crucifix from the workshop of the same Master Prokop of Plzeň comes from yet another Prague church, the church of St. Giles (Jiljí/Eligius). Here, in April 1437, Philibert confirmed and inducted Master Jan of Příbram, another of his conservative Utraquist allies. All four Utraquist Masters, Prokop of Plzeň, Jan Papoušek, Křišťan of Prachatice, and Jan Příbram were apparently regarded as reliable supporters of Philibert's cause as all of them consequently backed those few Utraquist candidates for clerical office who were ordained by Philibert in 1437–8.<sup>35</sup> The sculptures of the Crucified Christ by the Master of the Týn Calvary were ordered for three of their four churches. This suggests an interesting link between the sculptures produced by this workshop and the bishop's activity in Prague, and gives support to the claim by Aeneas Silvio Piccolomini that Philibert "returned images of saints back" to the churches.<sup>36</sup>

At least four of the churches either consecrated by Philibert or in which he celebrated pontifical masses (the Týn Church, St. Henry and Cunigunde's, St. Stephen's, and the Emmaus monastery) already had their own historical reminiscences of Charles IV and his successful effort to make Prague

<sup>31</sup> Zilynská, "Biskup Filibert," 90.

<sup>32</sup> Jaroslav Prokeš, *M. Prokop z Plzně. Příspěvek k vývoji konzervativní strany husitské* [Master Prokop of Plzeň. Contribution to the evolution of Conservative Hussite party] (Prague, 1927) 144.

<sup>33</sup> Prokeš, *M. Prokop z Plzně*, 153, 183, 259, n 845.

<sup>34</sup> Prokeš, *M. Prokop z Plzně*, 237–8, n. 628–638.

<sup>35</sup> Zilynská, "Svěcení kněžstva biskupem Filibertem," 366–7.

<sup>36</sup> Alena Hadravová, Dana Martinková and Jiří Matl, eds. *Aeneae Silvii Historia Bohemica / Aeneas Silvii Historie česká* [History of the Czechs by Aeneas Silvius] (Prague, 1998) 169.



a pilgrimage centre. The forms Philibert used to foster Catholic piety influenced the common memory of the people of Prague in support of the contemporary revival of Charles IV-style veneration of relics, especially of Passion relics. Prague's forgotten treasures – the most important relics of Western Christianity – were called on to help at a time of need, when the Catholic case was under threat. Philibert calculated on the unifying potential and possibly patrimonial value of Christ's relics, which, on the one hand, had strong persuasive capacity as the most venerated of relics and, on the other hand, seem to have been less controversial for the Utraquists than those of the Virgin would have been.

Where did Philibert's relics come from? Although there is no direct source of information, judging by their composition it is probable that they originated from St. Vitus's cathedral which, thanks to Charles IV, held one of the most impressive collections of relics in Central Europe. It was a convenient resource for several reasons. First, it was an excellent collection, containing the most important Passion relics which had been gathered from all over Europe and many from Rome itself. Second, Philibert was able to exercise a certain influence over the Prague chapter as he paid their expenses with his own money after Sigismund had appropriated most of their resources and stopped paying them after he had left Prague.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the relics were actually present at that time in Prague for, in the spring of 1437, they had been brought to Prague from Karlštejn by imperial order for display on the feast of the Holy Lance to make a respectable setting for the Emperor Sigismund's claim to the Bohemian throne.

More than half a century after Charles's death and under different confessional conditions, Bishop Philibert, by imperial order or consent, embraced the memory of Charles IV's era and put it into the service of the Roman Catholic cause. Making direct reference to Prague's earlier religious history, Philibert employed powerful methods of persuasion: he deposited relics in the altars of important parish churches, made use of ceremonies and processions, and engaged the public by showing relics on special feast days. Philibert counted on a twofold effect. First, the public ceremony with a procession was a public ritual imbued with memory of the past. At the same time, these public appearances expressed a point in contemporary polemics on the format of church ritual – one of the key conflicting issues the radicals Hussites had had with the Roman Catholics and conservative Utraquists since the 1420s. Philibert might have counted on the emotional effect of these relics on Prague's burghers, who were more likely to tolerate donations and solemn ceremonies than the radical iconoclasts from the countryside. He might also have played on public resentment over the loss of the prime position of Prague among imperial cities as the seat of the Holy Roman Emperor following the war years of the Hussite revolution. One cannot be sure of the

<sup>37</sup> Zilynská, "Biskup Filibert," 67.

direct reaction of Prague's public to Philibert's effort, but the harking back to a glorious tradition and the fame of the relics themselves might have worked well together.

In any case, Philibert seems to have followed a deliberate plan, influenced not only by the adherence of certain parish priests, but by a well-thought-out programme. Behind Philibert's activities when he toured the city was his concept of "soft" Roman Catholic propaganda. His activities around Prague – thanks to their context – took on specific meanings in the minds of his contemporaries; these meanings corresponded to local memory.

Whose idea it was originally to employ this shrewd strategy to reverse the confessional balance in Prague in favour of Roman Catholicism, one can only guess. Philibert was well acquainted with the Prague political and religious situation and was able to use this knowledge in his favour. He was able to read the psychology of the people, which balanced between sympathy to the religious reforms and inclinations towards traditional forms of piety at a key moment when future development had not yet been decided, but which certainly threatened conflict. He opted for persuasion, a "peaceful" strategy, rather than more extreme action, but his calculations proved only partially correct. The rituals must have caused – and did cause – indignation among more radically oriented individuals, although no large-scale revolt occurred; in fact, his adversary, Jan Rokycana, fled Prague as a result of Philibert's policy. The burghers did not fail Philibert's hopes, and partially embraced – or tolerated – the return to what was clearly earlier Catholic use. This might have been meant as a concession; more likely, however, the conservative Utraquist party, which then stirred Prague, had no problem with traditional religious practices. Memory worked for the moment – albeit not for long. Sigismund died in December 1437, followed by Philibert two years later. Although Philibert's policy spawned followers who continued his work till 1457, Philibert's death of the plague on 19 June 1439 closed the first phase of "peaceful" efforts to return the Roman Catholics to power in Prague. George of Poděbrady's siege of Prague and the return of Jan Rokycana in 1448, the sudden death of young King Ladislav the Posthumus in 1457, and the one-sided cancellation of the *Compacta* by the papacy in 1462 put a final end to this late medieval confessional propaganda strategy until the Jagellonians took the throne in 1471.