

---

## Wyclif's Ecclesiology and Its Prague Context

---

**Vilém Herold**

*(Prague)*

The Council of Constance attested to the close connection between Hus and Wyclif in their teaching about the Church. It is well known that Hus was condemned primarily for his ecclesiology,<sup>1</sup> and that the verdict followed immediately the posthumous condemnation of Wyclif's ecclesiastical teaching by the council on 4 May 1415.<sup>2</sup> Wyclif was sentenced largely on the basis of forty-five articles (or propositions), which were extracted from his writings. Initially, a commission of four theologians, which the Council named for that purpose under the chairmanship of William Gray, vice-chancellor of Oxford University,<sup>3</sup> on 17 April, took as a basis for its judgment 260 sentences from Wyclif's works, apparently deviating from the common teaching of the Church. In the end, however, once again 45 articles were condemned which more or less coincided with the 45 propositions proscribed earlier.

The originally condemned articles consisted of twenty-four, which were censured by a London Synod under Archbishop Courtenay in 1382, and augmented to forty-five at the University of Prague on 28 May 1403, on the initiative of Jan Hübner, a German-speaking Silesian and member of the Polish university nation. The Czech members of the Bohemian nation firmly opposed the move, including not only Mikuláš of Litomyšl but then also Štěpán of Páleč and Stanislav of Znojmo, the last of whom publicly rejected the view that the articles were heretical. Nevertheless, under the leadership of Walter Harasser, rector and member of the Bavarian nation, a majority from the non-Bohemian university nations overcame the Bohemian opposition and adopted a resolution "quod nullus dogmatiset, praedicet vel asserat, publice vel occulto, supradictos articulos."<sup>4</sup>

The task of the above-mentioned Commission at Constance was not only to deal with Wyclif, but also to advance the legal proceedings against Hus "usque ad sentenciam definitivam." Jiří Kejř correctly notes that "this linkage of the two tasks was a bad omen for Hus."<sup>5</sup> Johann Loserth, the editor of Wyclif's treatise *De ecclesia*,<sup>6</sup> has complained that Hus's treatise of the same name<sup>7</sup> was "a meager

---

<sup>1</sup> S. Harrison Thomson summarized the reasons in his introduction to Jan Hus, *Tractatus de ecclesia* (Prague, 1958) xxii-xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Jiří Kejř, *Husův proces* (Prague, 2000) 148, correctly notes that this condemnation, indeed, represented a preparatory step for the planned condemnation of Hus.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 159. Concerning the identification of the teacher Vilém Cory, named here, with the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, William Gray, see Herbert B. Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church* 2 vv. (Hamden, 1966<sup>2</sup>) 2:319; [first ed. Oxford, 1926].

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion of that academic gathering see, for instance, Václav Novotný and Vlastimil Kybal, *M. Jan Hus, Život a učení*, 2 vv. in 5 pts. (Prague, 1919-1931) 1; Václav Novotný, *Život a dílo*, 2 pts. (Prague, 1919-1921) 1:108 ff. The public notary's record of the condemnation of Wyclif's forty-five articles was published by František Palacký in *Documenta* 327-331.

<sup>5</sup> Kejř, *Husův proces* 159.

<sup>6</sup> John Wyclif, *Tractatus de ecclesia*, ed. Johann Loserth (London 1886).

abridgement" of Wyclif's work, and that the intellectual Parnassus of contemporary Europe, gathered in Constance, would have been astonished, if it had known the original instead of Hus's "feeble imitation."<sup>8</sup> Loserth was both inconsistent and not entirely correct. He was tireless in trying to demonstrate Hus's complete textual dependence on Wyclif and, moreover, Wyclif's own teaching was actually present at Constance and indeed condemned on the basis of the earlier mentioned articles.

It is also well known that the Council interrogated Hus concerning these articles and that he, in many instances, denied holding at present or in the past the specific propositions ascribed to Wyclif. It is likewise known that the Council fathers often doubted the trustworthiness or sincerity of Hus's responses.<sup>9</sup> It is important from our point of view that a majority of Wyclif's condemned articles concerned problems of ecclesiology.

It is indisputable that the tradition of a certain intellectual linkage between Wyclif and Hus, or more precisely between Wyclif and the Wyclite and Lollard teaching at Oxford and in England generally, on the one side, and the University of Prague or its Czech professors adhering to Hus and his teaching, on the other side, had its actual basis and its roots as far back as the late fourteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Already at that time copies of Wyclif's work, which originated in England, streamed through diverse channels to Prague, where further copies were made and disseminated. Hus himself copied four of Wyclif's philosophical treatises in Prague in 1398. It is also known that Hus's younger colleague and friend, Jerome of Prague, during his stay at Oxford also copied Wyclif's *Dialogus* (which was somewhat later translated into Czech by Jakoubek of Stříbro), and *Triialogus* as well, and possibly other writings.<sup>11</sup>

As far as Wyclif's treatise *De ecclesia* is concerned, its popularity was considerable in Bohemia. This can be demonstrated by the preservation of mediaeval manuscripts of this work. Paradoxically, the treatise was not preserved in its entirety in the author's homeland. Of the twenty-three chapters of the work, two original English manuscripts offer only the relatively independent Seventh Chapter, *De captivo Hispanensi*, to which we will refer again later. Similarly the presently available Wolfenbüttel Codex, perhaps of German origin, is incomplete, being interrupted before the end of Chapter Three. The entire treatise is available in three manuscripts, which are of Bohemian origin, and which Loserth also used for his edition. If it were not for the Bohemian manuscripts, Wyclif's pivotal *De ecclesia* would not be fully known today.<sup>12</sup>

Present-day MS. 1294 in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek was produced in Oxford by Mikuláš Faulfiš and Jiří of Kněhnice, two students and younger friends of Hus. Šimon of Tišnov, another of Hus's young followers, apparently owned the manuscript for a certain time. Another manuscript held in Vienna (ÖNB 3929), not produced before 1415, is also – in view of its anti-German

<sup>7</sup> Loserth maintains that "the treatise of Hus is almost valueless." *Ibid.* xxvii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* iii.

<sup>9</sup> Jan Hus, "Responsiones ad articulos Johannis Wiclef," in Jan Sedlák, *M. Jan Hus* (Prague, 1915) 305\*-310\*.

<sup>10</sup> Vilém Herold, *Pražská univerzita a Wyclif* (Prague, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> František Šmahel, *Jeroným Pražský* (Prague, 1966). Jakoubek's translation of the *Dialog* has survived, see Milan Svoboda, ed., *Mistra Jakoubka ze Stříbra překlad Víklofova Dialogu* (Prague, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Williel R. Thomson, *The Latin Writings of John Wyclif* (Toronto, 1983) 58-60.

glosses – undoubtedly of Bohemian origin. Finally, MS Prague NK X D 11, which likewise contains Wyclif's entire work, used to belong to Petr of Sepekov, yet another follower of Hus.<sup>13</sup>

As for the tempting direct textual comparison of Wyclif's and Hus's *De ecclesia*, several attempts have been made. One was by Johann Loserth himself in his edition of Wyclif's work of 1886, in the introduction to which he inserted the quoted opinion that Hus's *De ecclesia* was “a meagre abridgement” of the Oxford scholar's work. Two years earlier, on the occasion of the quincentenary the German savant published his work, *Hus und Wyclif: Zur Genesis der hussitischen Lehre* in which he carried on a mechanical comparison of the two treatises on the Church, as well as other works of the two theologians in order to prove Hus's complete dependence on the Oxford model, and thus also the total derivativeness and lack of originality of his teaching. This imputation of unoriginality he then applied to the Bohemian Reformation as a whole, to its programs and objectives.<sup>14</sup>

In response, Jan Sedlák, a Roman Catholic priest and scholar, who remarkably advanced Bohemian Reformation research in the early twentieth century, substantially challenged Loserth's view. In particular he argued that ultimately it did not matter how much material Hus derived from Wyclif (and he estimated about one eighth of the text), but to what extent he offered independent interpretations.<sup>15</sup> Additional challenges to the German critic came from Václav Novotný, Vlastimil Kybal, and František Michálek Bartoš, who pointed to the domestic Bohemian roots of Hus's teaching.<sup>16</sup>

Research on Hus advanced significantly in the extensive work of Paul De Vooght, a Belgian Benedictine, first published in two volumes in Louvain in 1960. The author also concentrates his attention on Hus's ecclesiology in both its Prague and European contexts and determines certain substantial differences between the concepts of Hus and Wyclif.<sup>17</sup>

As far as the quantitative aspect is concerned, subsequently the translators and editors of the Czech version of Hus's *O církvi [De ecclesia]* with meticulous care determined that of the 6,964 lines of Hus's *De ecclesia* (in the edition by S. Harrison Thomson) 1,602 were clearly from Wyclif, constituting twenty-three per cent of the entire work. At the same time, however, Josef Hrabák in the introduction to the Czech translation emphasizes that “it is not crucial how much Hus adopted from

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* and introduction by J. Loserth to Wyclif, *De ecclesia* xvii-xxi.

<sup>14</sup> Johann Loserth, *Hus und Wyclif, zur Genesis der hussitischen Lehre* (Prague and Leipzig, 1884); (Munich, 1925<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>15</sup> Jan Sedlák, “Husův traktát *De ecclesia*,” *Studie a texty* 2 (1915) 478-527.

<sup>16</sup> Novotný and Kybal, *M. Jan Hus: Život a učení*, see n. 4 above; Vlastimil Kybal, *M. Matěj z Janova, Jeho život a učení*, (Prague, 1905) reprint (Brno, 2000); František Michálek Bartoš, *Čechy v době Husově*, (Prague, 1947). These three works cite many references to Hus's Bohemian sources. Let me quote at least Kybal's conclusion from his work on Matěj of Janov: “It is my firm conviction that Matěj's reformatory ideas were fully developed, and relatively independent and original, and that they exercised a formative and crucial influence on the Bohemian reformers of the Hussite period. The view that *Hussitism* was no more than an artificially transplanted Wyclifism is to me a *nonsense* on both logical and historical grounds.” Kybal, *M. Matěj z Janova* 318.

<sup>17</sup> Paul De Vooght, *L'hérésie de Jean Huss* (Louvain, 1960); *idem*, *Hussiana*, (Louvain 1960); combined 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. of both volumes, *idem*, *L'hérésie de Jean Huss* (Louvain, 1975). The first edition elicited the response of Milan Machovec, *Bude katolická církev rehabilitovat Jana Husa?* (Prague, 1963).

Wyclif, but what he borrowed and how he treated the borrowings.” Hrabák even advances a bold thesis that “thanks to Hus, Wyclif’s ideas not only spread, but also attained a European-wide significance,” and on this basis he further opines that “without Hus, Wyclif would have remained a purely local phenomenon.”<sup>18</sup> In the year immediately following the appearance of the Czech translation of Hus’s treatise, Matthew Spinka published in the United States a monograph, in which he dealt in detail with issues concerning the Bohemian reformer’s ecclesiology, as well as concerning Wyclif’s influence and the trial at Constance. Like the Czech translation, the volume was intended to commemorate the five hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Hus’s death. Spinka included the texts of Wyclif’s forty-five articles and the thirty Articles extracted from Hus’s *De ecclesia*, together with the Bohemian reformer’s responses to both documents.<sup>19</sup>

Anne Hudson, the well-known researcher and editor of English Wyclifite writings, also paid great attention in her book on the premature reformation to Wyclif’s influence on the formation of reformed ecclesiology.<sup>20</sup>

In the late 1980s Alexander Patschovsky pointed out, in his thorough study of Hus’s ecclesiology, a whole series of additional, hitherto unregistered, textual coincidences between Hus’s treatise and Wyclif’s writings. Further Patchovsky plausibly predicted that many more coincidences would be discovered when the use of computers and the availability of truly critical editions enabled systematic comparisons. At the same time, the German scholar briefly reviewed the course of historians’ debates about the relationship between Wyclif and Hus, and credited the Evangelical Doctor with greater influence on the Bohemian reformer than the cited Czech scholars or, above all, Paul De Vooght would be willing to concede. As the bottom line, however, he viewed the entire debate about Hus’s originality as misguided, a position which can be heartily endorsed.<sup>21</sup>

It is impossible in this context not to mention František Šmahel’s extraordinarily valuable and rich research on the Bohemian Reformation, which at present has reached its apogee in the four-volume *Husitská revoluce* [The Hussite Revolution]. Šmahel’s magnum opus and his other writings contain focused explorations of the Hus-Wyclif relationship, as well as the effect of Wyclif’s teaching in Bohemia.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1990 Hus’s teaching about the Church received a substantial treatment from Stefan Swieżawski, the doyen of Polish historians of philosophy, who placed his subject within the broad context of European ecclesiology of the Late Middle Ages.<sup>23</sup> His monograph forms the beginning of a whole series of books dedicated to Hus’s thought during the last decade of the twentieth century. In 1991 E. Werner published a comprehensive volume on Hus, in which he expanded his earlier discussion of the ecclesiastical concept found in the teaching of Hus and of the

<sup>18</sup> Jan Hus, *O církvi*, tr. František M. Dobiáš and Amedeo Molnár, intro. Josef Hrabák (Prague, 1965).

<sup>19</sup> Matthew Spinka, *John Hus: Concept of the Church* (Princeton, 1966).

<sup>20</sup> Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation* (Oxford, 1988) 314-388.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Patschovsky, “Ekklesiologie bei Johannes Hus,” in: *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch Historische Klasse*, Dritte Folge, Nr. 179 (Göttingen 1989) 370-399.

<sup>22</sup> František Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, 4 vv. (Prague, 1993); (Prague, 1996<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>23</sup> Stefan Swieżawski, *Eklesjologia późnośredniowieczna na rozdrożu* (Cracow, 1990).

Bohemian Reformation.<sup>24</sup> The same year witnessed the appearance of the first volume of W. Brandmüller's massive work on the Council of Constance, with the second volume following in 1997.<sup>25</sup> A plethora of additional studies was inspired by the symposium on Hus, held in Bayreuth in 1993,<sup>26</sup> and by the parallel work of the scholarly ecumenical Commission on Hus of the Czech Bishops' Conference. The latter's labours culminated in a scholarly gathering, *Convegno internazionale su Giovanni Hus*, held in December 1999 within the precincts of the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome or, more properly, an extra-territorial part of the Vatican.<sup>27</sup> The series legitimately includes also J. Kejř's detailed treatment of Hus's trial.<sup>28</sup>

Conscious both of the enormous complexity of the problem, and the extensive scholarship already devoted to it, let us nevertheless attempt to cast a new light from another point of view on at least some aspects of Wyclif's teaching on the Church in relation to Hus's ecclesiology and within the context of the learned milieu of the incipient Bohemian Reformation, as well as from the viewpoint of Hus's trial at Constance. This examination will involve: 1) a brief comparison of the time and circumstances of origin, the structure, and the central idea of the two treatises *De ecclesia*, one by Wyclif, the other by Hus; 2) an evaluation of the theological and philosophical sources of these treatises, and of the historical context of what – following De Vooght – might be called the Prague ecclesiology; 3) an attempt to answer finally the question how and why Hus's treatise, *De ecclesia*, was used against him at his trial.

## I

Let us turn now to the first point. Wyclif's treatise, *De ecclesia*, written in 1378-1379 and considered a part of his *summa theologica*, does not form an integral whole. Early on, Loserth, as editor, noted that while the first six chapters covered the basic definition and concept of the Church, chapter seven had a distinct character. Appearing in some medieval manuscripts as an independent work under the title *De captivo hispanensi*, it was devoted to the specific issue of the king's action against Spanish captives, who had sought shelter on the ecclesiastical ground of the Westminster Abbey. At the royal behest, Wyclif personally presented this text in parliament. According to Loserth, the following chapters (eight through sixteen) brought together the arguments, used by Wyclif in the parliamentary debate.

Wyclif examined the question of privileges and donations, which the church was receiving and had received. He considered legitimate only those which had a

<sup>24</sup> Ernst Werner, *Jan Hus* (Weimar, 1991); Ernst Werner, *Der Kirchenbegriff bei Jan Hus*, Jakoubek von Mies, *Jan Želivský und den Linken Taboriten* (Berlin, 1967).

<sup>25</sup> Walter Brandmüller, *Das Konzil von Konstanz 1414-1418*, 2 vv. (Paderborn, 1999<sup>2</sup>, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> *Jan Hus, Zwischen Zeiten, Völkern, Konfessionen*, Vorträge des Internationalen Symposiums in Bayreuth 1993, ed. Ferdinand Seibt (Munich, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> For an overview of these proceedings see Jaroslav Pánek and Miloslav Polívka, *Jan Hus in the Vatican*, The International Discourse on a Czech Reformer of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and his Reception on the Eve of the Third Millennium (Prague, 2000). A Czech version of the symposium's proceedings appeared as *Jan Hus na přelomu tisíciletí*, eds. Miloš Drda, František J. Holeček, and Zdeněk Vybíral, [*Husitský Tábor – Supplementum 1*] (Tábor, 2001) and an Italian version is to follow. The symposium included several presentations concerning Hus's ecclesiology, for instance, by Mario Fois, Vilém Herold, Krzysztof Moskal, Alexander Patschovsky a Zofia Włodek.

<sup>28</sup> See n. 2 above, as well as the presentation by Jiří Kejř at the symposium, *Jan Hus in the Vatican*.

spiritual character and could be confirmed from Scripture. Others, those which granted immunities, property and ownership, external honours and worldly dominion, were ruining the church and, according to Wyclif, represented Satanical snares. Scripture, for instance, did not indicate that the emperor should be crowned by the pope, and Wyclif objected that the pope and *totum genus sacerdotum* should exercise temporal power *super singulos reges terre*. There can hardly be any doubts about the expediency of these chapters. They served primarily the political (and economic) objectives of the English crown. Only the remaining chapters (seventeen through twenty-three) returned to properly ecclesiological issues.<sup>29</sup>

Hus's treatise, *De ecclesia*, it is true, had also twenty-three chapters, but this was merely an accidental coincidence. Their contents, of course, did not coincide with Wyclif's. The treatise dates to the spring of 1413 when, because of the interdict, Hus no longer lived in Prague. It was thus written in a tense atmosphere which was unfavourable, even hostile to Hus, and this fact was reflected in its polemical tone. Presumably, when Hus wrote the first ten chapters, he was as yet unfamiliar with the text of the so-called *Consilium*, a document produced by eight doctors of theology at the Prague University, and promulgated at the archbishop's court on 6 February of that year.<sup>30</sup> However, Hus's following chapters (eleven through twenty-three) represented a consistent commentary on, and a polemic with, with the text of the eight doctors. They were probably written at Kozí Hrádek and completed between the end of April and mid-May 1413. Hus's text was then read, or possibly dictated, to some eighty listeners in the Bethlehem Chapel of Prague. Evidently its copies were produced at that time. The reading ended on 8 June 1413.<sup>31</sup>

Hus's first ten chapters responded critically to two treatises of his earlier allies, now opponents, namely *De Romana ecclesia* by Stanislav of Znojmo, his former teacher,<sup>32</sup> and *De aequivocatione nominis ecclesia* by Štěpán of Páleč, his former pupil, and both now professors of the Prague Theological Faculty.<sup>33</sup> This polemic would continue. Hus produced three pieces with titles, *Contra Stephanum Palecz*, *Contra Stanislaum de Znoyma*, and *Contra octo doctores*.<sup>34</sup> Their editor, Jaroslav Eršil, justly commented that the three treatises together with *De ecclesia* represented an exquisite tetraptych.<sup>35</sup> Stanislav responded in 1413-1414 with *Alma*

<sup>29</sup> See: "non licet clero insistere circa privilegia terrena cuiusmodi videntur esse exēmiones prerogative, proprietates et seculares dominaciones, cum videntur repugnare privilegiis Christi. ... Unde inter omnes cautelas diaboli mundana preeminēcia est prima sagena diaboli." Wyclif, *De ecclesia*, cap. IX:184-185. "Nec video quomodo fundabitur pure ex fide Scripture quod oportet imperatorem accipere imperium a suo pontifice. ... Si tamen papa haberet dominacionem illam immediate a Christo et non ex titulo elemosine cesaris, non video quin oporteret concedere quod papa et totum genus sacerdotum dominaretur seculariter super singulos reges terre." *Ibid.* cap. XIV:324-325.

<sup>30</sup> Loserth unconvincingly argued that the identical number of chapters in Hus's and Wyclif's treatises further confirmed Hus's dependence on his Oxford model; see Loserth's introduction to his edition of Wyclif, *De ecclesia* xxvii. "Consilium doctorum facultatis theologicae studii Pragensis" was published, together with a translation into Old Czech in *Documenta* 475-485.

<sup>31</sup> See introduction to the Czech translation of Hus, *O církvi* 9.

<sup>32</sup> Stanislav of Znojmo, "Tractatus de Romana ecclesia," ed. Jan Sedlák in: Jan Sedlák, *Miscellanea husitica* (Prague, 1996); first published in *Hlídka* 16 (1911) 61-81.

<sup>33</sup> Jan Sedlák, ed., „De aeqivocatiofne nominis ecclesia,” in: Sedlák, *Miscellanea husitica* 356-363; the bibliographic data for the first edition are not given in this volume.

<sup>34</sup> Jaroslav Eršil, ed., *Jan Hus Polemica* (Prague, 1966), 233-488.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 16.

*et venerabilis*, and *De ecclesia*, or *Contra dogmata Iohannis Hus*.<sup>36</sup> Štěpán's contribution included *Contra quiddamistas*,<sup>37</sup> and in 1414 the significantly titled, *Antihus*.<sup>38</sup> His polemic with Hus would culminate tragically at Constance in 1415 while in between Stanislav will have died on his way to Constance in Jindřichův Hradec in December 1414.

Comparing Hus's and Wyclif's treatises, *De ecclesia*, it is impossible not only to deny considerable textual coincidences, but also to overlook notable coincidences of ideas, as far as the concept of the Church was concerned. According to both Hus and Wyclif, the Church was formed by all those predestined. Christ (not the pope) was its head. It was the body, or the bride, of Christ.<sup>39</sup> It had existed since creation and would last until the end of the ages, until the Last Judgment.<sup>40</sup> It consisted of *ecclesia militans* on earth, *ecclesia dormiens* in purgatory, and *ecclesia triumphans* in heaven. In all these cases, its sole members were those predestined, *praedestinati*, past, present, and future.<sup>41</sup>

This fundamental concept of the Church stood – with both Wyclif and Hus – in a sharp contrast to its institutional concept. As noted by Gordon Leff with reference to Wyclif, the Church had thus lost its tangible identity and found itself in its archetypal, unchangeable and eternal form outside space and time.<sup>42</sup> Even so is the coincidence between Hus and Wyclif so absolute, or can one still find certain modifications in the approaches and interpretations of the two thinkers?

It is apropos to remember the circumstances around the origin of the two treatises. Wyclif's theological argumentation was intended to be directly of service to the English crown. Since his political part in the Bruges diplomatic mission of 1374, Wyclif gathered for his royal patrons arguments against papal fiscalism and against the worldly dominion of the church, which during the Avignon "captivity" stood under a strong influence of the French monarchy, and thus in the period of the Hundred Years War in a camp hostile to England. Wyclif's arguments provoked an

<sup>36</sup> The treatise *Alma et venerabilis* is sometimes also known as *Informacio contra errores et hereses Husonis et eorum complicum*; see Spunar 1:294, which also contains information concerning Loserth's edition. The other treatise was partially published by Sedlák, *Jan Hus 202\* -304\**, where it is, however, mistakenly attributed to Páleč; see Spunar 1:291-292.

<sup>37</sup> Johann Loserth, ed., "Beiträge zur Geschichte der hussitischen Bewegung," 4, *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 75 (1879) 344 ff.

<sup>38</sup> Sedlák, ed., *Miscellanea husitica* 366-514.

<sup>39</sup> Wyclif, *De ecclesia* 3: "ecclesia ... sumatur ad propositum pro famosiori, scilicet congregacione omnium predestinatorum, illa autem est sponsa Christi;" *ibid.* 5: "nullus vicarius Christi debet presumere asserere se esse caput ecclesie sancte catholice, ... quod soli Christo potest competere"; Hus, *De ecclesia* 7: "Sancta universalis ecclesia est numerus omnium predestinatorum et corpus Christi mysticum, cuius ipse est caput, et sponsa Christi".

<sup>40</sup> Wyclif, *De ecclesia* 390: "sequitur quod a mundi inicio fuit ecclesia;" Hus, *De ecclesia*, 2: "eadem ecclesia predestinatorum currebat ab mundi exordio usque ad apostolos, et ab hinc usque ad diem iudicii."

<sup>41</sup> Wyclif, *De ecclesia* 9: "sic non dicimus ecclesiam catholicam nisi que in se continet ista tria, partem in celo triumphantem, partem in purgatorio dormientem et partem in terris militantem;" Hus, *De ecclesia* 8: "sciendum est, quoa ipsa ecclesia tripartitur, scilicet in ecclesiam triumphantem, militantem et dormientem. Ecclesia militans est numerus predestinatorum dum hic viat ad patriam. ... Ecclesia dormiens est numerus predestinatorum in purgatorio paciens. ... Ecclesia triumphans est beati in patria quiescentes."

<sup>42</sup> Gordon Leff, "The Place of Metaphysics in Wyclif's Theology," in Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks, eds., *From Ockham to Wyclif* (Oxford, 1987) 225-226.

early hostile reaction from the church, and the English theologian further sharpened his view against the institutional church and the papacy during the Great Schism, when his *De ecclesia* began to take shape.<sup>43</sup>

Hus's treatise *De ecclesia* emerged in Bohemia and, despite the textual coincidences with Wyclif, related in many ways to the previous tradition of domestic thought. Parenthetically, of course, even that tradition did not stand outside the European intellectual development and, for instance, Matěj of Janov with his colleagues was affected, among others, by the ambiance of Parisian thought.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Hus was not as much of a royal servant as Wyclif had been. It is true that Hus and his associates gained Wenceslas IV's favour in the specific situation connected with the Decree of Kutná Hora, but they soon lost it because of the disturbances over indulgences. As M. Wilks, and later S. Swiezawski, have perceptively noted, the domesticated elements of Wyclif's ecclesiology benefited the king more than they did Hus himself.<sup>45</sup>

This not unimportant difference was rooted exactly in the aforementioned Prague tradition since the time of Charles IV when the crisis of the contemporary church and papal curia was worriedly followed and interpreted, and when the ways of rectification were avidly sought. For illustration one can mention in this connection the reformers Milíč of Kroměříž and Matěj of Janov, and the Prague archbishops Arnošt of Pardubice and Jan of Jenštejn.<sup>46</sup> Among other critics, who studied or worked in Prague, were Matthew of Cracow, author of *De (squaloribus) praxi Romanae curiae* and subsequently the bishop of Worms; Petr Wysz, author of the *Speculum aureum*, a work against simony, and the Bishop of Cracow and Poznań close to the Polish royal Court; finally, Stanisław of Skarbimierz, later rector of the Cracow University, and author of the *Sermones sapientiales*, containing themes reminiscent of Milíč. It was significant that the two first-named treatises were called heretical and harmful to the church not only by Jan Falkenberg, but also in Prague by certain individuals who were increasingly opposed to Wyclif and who saw a relationship between these writings and the English theologian's thought.<sup>47</sup>

Milíč had already placed an unusual emphasis on moral issues. Many Prague texts stressed strongly the ethical dimension, and clearly expressed a desire for reform and an amelioration of deplorable conditions. Briefly stated, the reform was to

<sup>43</sup> Wyclif's foremost biographer characterised his dominant orientation after 1374 as that of a politician; see Workman, *John Wyclif: A Study of the English Medieval Church*, v. 1, bk. 2 is entitled "The Politician," 209-324. The political engagement was markedly manifest also in Wyclif's *De ecclesia*. Chapter Seven, which tended to appear in mediaeval manuscripts independently as *De captivo hispanensi*, justified the monarch's proceedings against Spanish prisoners, who had sought asylum on the ecclesiastical soil of Westminster Abbey. At royal behest, Wyclif presented this apology in Parliament. Likewise the subsequent chapters (eight through sixteen) represented – according to the editor of Wyclif's *De ecclesia* – an ensemble of arguments, employed by Wyclif in the relevant Parliamentary discussion; see Wyclif, *De ecclesia*, and viii-xiv.

<sup>44</sup> Vilém Herold, "The University of Paris and the Foundation of the Bohemian Reformation," in BRRP 3 (2000) 15-24.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Wilks, "Reformatio regni: Wyclif and Hus as Leaders of Religious Protest Movement," *Studies in Church History* 9 (1972) 130; Swieżawski, *Eklezjologia* 141-142.

<sup>46</sup> Vilém Herold, "How Wycliffite was the Bohemian Reformation?" BRRP 2 (1998) 25-47; Jana Nechutová, "Matěj of Janov and His Work *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*," *ibid.* 15-24.

<sup>47</sup> Zofia Włodek "Krakovská eklesiologie v době kostnického a basilejského koncilu," *Jan Hus na přelomu tisíciletí* 169-184.

proceed “from below” on the initiative of preachers (as good shepherds), much less than “from above” on the royal initiative. The sharp criticism of bad priests, so daringly expressed by Milíč, was also found with Hus in his *Sermo de pace*, written for Constance.<sup>48</sup> By and large both use the same arguments, as well as the same citations from authorities, such as Gregory the Great and Bernard of Clairvaux. As Paul De Vooght has noted, Milíč was already suggesting such a degree of corruption in the contemporary church that many Christians considered as members of the church only the predestined ones.<sup>49</sup> According to Matěj of Janov, the “abomination of desolation” (*abominacio desolationis*) had reached such a level that for him the Church had shrunk to a gathering of saints who lived and were led by the spirit and the living example of Christ. This communion of saints formed an indivisible unity, the mystical body of Christ, the head of which was Jesus. According to Matěj, it excluded all sinners.<sup>50</sup>

It is necessary to keep in mind all the above, when weighing the quantitative and intellectual dependence of Hus’s *De ecclesia* on Wyclif’s treatise of the same name. Even if it is possible to agree with Patschovsky that spiritually Hus “slipped into Wyclif’s garment”, it is inappropriate to deny the authenticity of the “local colouration,” which Patschovsky does against De Vooght’s interpretation.<sup>51</sup> It was exactly the “colouration,” or rather the Prague tradition of ecclesiastical critique and the consequent ecclesiological thought, that enabled Hus to identify so closely with Wycliffe, or “slip into his garment”. It was as if Wyclif confirmed and formally summed up what Hus had already and intimately known from the intellectual ambiance at home. The identification with Wyclif, however, was not complete. Undoubtedly, there was a difference between Wyclif’s critique of the church, which was to be utilized externally by the power of the government, and the reformatory endeavors of Hus and his colleagues, which were to be realized internally by those within the church.

## II

Turning now the second of the earlier posed questions, the philosophical and theological starting points of Wyclif’s and Hus’s ecclesiology appeared to be, at the first sight, close to each other, even identical. Indisputably they were mainly indebted to the Christian Neoplatonism in the formulation of St. Augustine. The saint was also – after biblical texts – the most frequently cited authority in both Hus’s and Wyclif’s *De ecclesia*. Both late-mediaeval theologians agreed – often enthusiastically – with Augustine’s views on the Church, and these views served them as a confirmation of their own opinions. Likewise both held Augustine in the highest esteem. Hus’s own subject index to his *De ecclesia* contained a characteristic entry in that respect. It stated: “Augustinus plus profuit ecclesie quam multi pape.” The index entry referred to the following text in chapter fifteen of Hus’s treatise: “Therefore undoubtedly Blessed Augustine benefited the Church more than many of the popes, and in his teaching perhaps more than all the cardinals from the first to the last. It was because – instructed by Christ’s Scripture – he better understood the

---

<sup>48</sup> Jan Hus, *Sermo de pace*, eds. František M. Dobiáš and Amedeo Molnár, intro. František J. Holeček, (Prague, 1995<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>49</sup> De Vooght, *Hussiana* 102.

<sup>50</sup> Kybal, *Matěj z Janova*, (Brno, 2000<sup>2</sup>) 154 ff.

<sup>51</sup> Patschovsky, “Ekklesiologie,” 377-378.

ecclesiastical administration, and better defined the substance of faith, as well as purified and corrected the Church from heretical errors.”<sup>52</sup>

Hus persisted in his admiration of St. Augustine even at Constance in 1415 when he explained his stand vis à vis Wyclif’s forty-five articles. Article forty-four ascribed to Wyclif, among others, the (hardly credible) opinion that Saints Augustine, Benedict, and Bernard were (or would be) condemned because they had owned property, unless they had done penance. Speaking for himself, Hus emphatically denied holding, or having held, such an opinion, and stressed that he highly esteemed the three saints, and in particular he considered Augustine a great and holy doctor of the Church.<sup>53</sup>

Paul De Vooght traced in detail the influence of Augustine’s teaching on Hus’s treatise, and he also pointed out Wyclif’s mediating role in the transmission of certain ideas. It was particularly Augustine’s scriptural exegeses which were susceptible to antipapal interpretation that Hus willingly adopted in an atmosphere, which De Vooght characterized as “poisoned by the thirty years of the Great Schism.”<sup>54</sup>

The effect of Augustine’s interpretation of the Church on Wyclif and Hus was quite recently examined by the Czech theologian, Karel Skalický, who in turn relied on the research of Vladimír Boublík, a Czech Roman theologian. Concerning the definition of the Church as an ensemble of all those predestined, he wrote: “If Augustine’s concept of predestination is theologically correct and true, then also Wyclif’s and Hus’s definition of the Church as an ensemble of all the predestined is theologically correct and true, and the Council of Constance had no business condemning it. If on the contrary, however, the rejection of Wyclif’s and Hus’s definition of the Church is theologically correct and true, then a logical consequence should also be a rejection of Augustine’s theology of predestination. Following Boublík’s work on predestination, Skalický concluded that “Wyclif’s and Hus’s definition of the Church is unacceptable, because Augustine’s teaching on predestination is likewise unacceptable.”<sup>55</sup>

Did, however, Hus in fact adopt as strict a predestinarian model of the Church as had Wyclif? In my opinion, the answer to this question is not unambiguous. Wyclif was in philosophy an advocate of extreme determinism, and he transferred this determinism into his theological speculation, so much more so because he was accustomed to link closely philosophy with theology. Wyclif’s favourite proposition “omnia de necessitate absoluta eveniunt” [everything occurs with absolute inevitability], appeared also in his *De ecclesia* in the following form: “Videtur, quod omnia futura de necessitate evenient, et quod nihil anichilari potest.”<sup>56</sup> The consequences for Wyclif’s view of the Church for the predestined (as well as, of course, for his concept of the eucharist) are evident.

---

<sup>52</sup> Hus, *De ecclesia* 121; 246.

<sup>53</sup> Jan Hus, “Responsiones ad articulos Johannis Wiclef,” ed. Jan Sedlák, *Jan Hus* 309\*-310\*: “ymmo habeo ... specialiter beatum Augustinum pro magno et sancto doctore ecclesie.”

<sup>54</sup> De Vooght, “La part de saint Augustin dans le *De ecclesia* de Huss,” *Hussiana* 66-92, 95.

<sup>55</sup> Karel Skalický, “Predestinace jako tajemství spásy v teologii Vladimíra Boublíka,” in Česko-římský teolog Vladimír Boublík (České Budějovice, 1999) 26-27.

<sup>56</sup> Wyclif, *De ecclesia* 107.

In Hus's case, in my opinion, it is possible to identify a certain ambiguity of approach, rooted exactly in the philosophical starting point. Hus explicitly rejected strict determinism. Responding to the twenty-seventh of Wyclif's forty-nine condemned articles, which contained the proposition "omnia de necessitate absoluta eveniunt," he stated in Constance: "Non tenui, nec teneo" [I have neither held it, nor do I hold it now].<sup>57</sup> There was another reason for his energetic embracing the thesis about the Church as an assembly of the predestined. His treatise and the related polemical tracts reacted against the ecclesiological formulations of Štěpán of Páleč and Stanislav of Znojmo, who viewed the Church institutionally as a theocratic power structure.

For Stanislav of Znojmo, the Catholic Church, which possessed the fullness of ecclesiastical power in the world, had the pope for its head, and the college of cardinals for its body.<sup>58</sup> Štěpán of Páleč successively considered six meanings of the term "church". The first three were the temple, the church of the wicked [*ecclesia malignatum*], and – interestingly – the church as a General Council. Nevertheless, his favourite was the fourth meaning, with which he fully identified. In this case, church equaled the ecclesiastical superiors, such as the pope and his cardinals, the patriarchs, the primates, the archbishops and the bishops. The head of the Roman Church was the pope, as the true and revealed successor of Peter, the prince of the apostles, and the body of this Church consisted of the college of cardinals, who were the true and the revealed successors of the rest of Christ's apostles. Páleč emphasized that all must observe what this Roman Church proposed or ordered in the matter of faith.<sup>59</sup>

The fifth meaning of the term church was, according to Páleč, the community of all the predestined or all the believers, who were in the state of grace. He stressed that this Catholic Church of the predestined had neither the office nor the authority to decide and to rule in Catholic or ecclesiastical affairs, because it had never assembled in one place, nor was the identity of the predestined ever known. The ecclesiastical administration of the church, therefore, required as its managers the true successors of St. Peter and the other apostles, and there were no successors on earth other than the pope and the cardinals.<sup>60</sup>

Considering the "atmosphere poisoned by the thirty years of the Great Schism," it would have been difficult to expect that Hus would accept, without reservation, such an institutional definition of the Church, which dwelt on the pope's primacy. Indeed, the earlier-mentioned *Counsel of the Eight Doctors* had already noted: "...some scholars in the Kingdom of Bohemia [i.e., Hus and his like-minded colleagues], having a low opinion of the pope and the college of cardinals, ... in

---

<sup>57</sup> Jan Hus, "Responsiones ad articulos Johannis Wiclef," ed. Sedlák, *Hus* 305\*.

<sup>58</sup> "Talis autem est Romana ecclesia, cuius caput est papa et collegium cardinalium corpus, existentes manifesti successores in predicto officio ecclesiastico et predicta fontali plenitudine potestatis ecclesiastice super terran;" see Stanislav of Znojmo, "Tractatus de Romana ecclesia," ed. Sedlák, *Miscellanea husitica* 315.

<sup>59</sup> Štěpán Páleč, "De aequivocatione nominis ecclesia", ed. Sedlák, *Miscellanea husitica* 356-363.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 362.

these...matters recognize the Scriptures alone as the criterion of judgment."<sup>61</sup> It is evident that reasons of morality led Hus to his stance.

The true Church then had to be, according to Hus, the saints' church, the church of the predestined. The arguments of his opponents forced Hus into a quasi-adoption of Wyclif's radical, "heretical" propositions. Hus, however, was also aware of the vulnerability of this stance, which Páleč had noted in his fifth definition of the term church. As reported by Petr of Mladěnovice, the Council asked Hus about an alleged statement, taken from his polemic against Páleč, namely that a bad or foreknown pope or prelate was not a true shepherd, but a thief and a highwayman. Hus answered: "Such a person is not a proper pope, prelate or shepherd in the eyes of God but, as to his office and in the perception of the faithful, he is a pope, a shepherd, or a priest." He, therefore, took into consideration and partially recognised also the institutional concept of the Church.<sup>62</sup>

After this discussion it is particularly instructive to return to Hus's *Sermo de ecclesia* of 1410 in which – before the outbreak of the polemical passions – he had first dealt with the concept of the Church in a fairly systematic fashion. He defined the Church in three ways. First, in the broad sense (*large*), it included all those professing the same faith by word and deed, both the predestined and the foreknown, the latter particularly if they were in the state of grace at a given time. Second, the holy Church was understood in a strict sense (*stricte*) as a community of the predestined; in harmony with St. Augustine's teaching, it excluded the foreknown from membership. Finally and third, the Church – according to Hus -- was understood to consist of the pope and the college of cardinals, who were to be the special members and officials (*officiales*) of the Lord Jesus Christ according to the first and the second definition.<sup>63</sup>

### III

Why then did the Council of Constance condemn Hus for his teaching about the Church? We come thus to the third and last question. The answer is neither easy, nor without ambiguity, although much has been intimated already. The strict concept of the Church, as a community of the predestined, evidently threatened the institutional, legal and personal functioning of the church militant [*rytěřující*], and appeared to have further serious consequences: denial of papal primacy, refusal of obedience to ecclesiastical authorities, and doubts about the validity of conferred sacraments.

It is, therefore, of a major interest to explore Hus's answers to articles which were presented to him on 18 June 1415. There were thirty articles derived from his treatise *De ecclesia*, and additional contested articles, which had emerged during the trial at Constance. Hus responded with interlinear glosses which, according to Hus, were the expressions of his own conscience and for which he would be judged

---

<sup>61</sup> *Documenta* 476.

<sup>62</sup> "Sic ergo omnia talia limitavi et limito, quod tales, quoat meritum, et sic vere et digne coram Deo, non sunt papae, praelati vel pastores, sed quad officia et hominum reputationem sunt papae, pastores, sacerdotes etc." *Ibid.* 301.

<sup>63</sup> Jan Hus, "Sermo de ecclesia," ed. Sedlák, *Jan Hus* 116\*-117\*.

by the Almighty Lord. He likewise stated that he could not respond in complete sentences for the lack of time and paper, and also for the reasons of safety.<sup>64</sup>

Concerning the proposition that the one Catholic Church was a community of the predestined, Hus responded “propriissime dicta secundum Augustinum” [in the most proper sense according to Augustine]. Here the words *propriissime dicta* remind of the term *stricte* in Hus’s second definition in his *Sermo de ecclesia*.<sup>65</sup>

Hus gave the same answer to the proposition that the foreknown were not members of the Church, namely “catholicae propriissime dictae” [of the Catholic Church in the most proper sense]. He responded similarly to other articles dealing with this topic.<sup>66</sup> Implying that the strict definition or the definition in the most proper sense was not exhaustive, Hus evidently did not unequivocally deny the existence of an institutional, ‘visible’ Church.

It is difficult to avoid the distinct impression that Hus was also tried *ex post facto* and on the basis of “collective guilt” for the sake Wyclif, who had been dead for thirty years, but only a month ago condemned by the Council.<sup>67</sup> It was generally known that Hus and his colleagues in Prague had emphatically proclaimed their high esteem for Wyclif, and had become involved in major controversies on behalf of the Evangelical Doctor’s teaching. We have noted the events of 1403, and many other instances could be cited, such as the events of 1408, Matěj Knín’s *quodlibet* disputation in early 1409, the issuance of the Decree of Kutná Hora, the burning and defense of Wyclif’s writings in 1410, and Hus’s *quodlibet* of 1411, as well as the disturbances which Jerónym of Prague, an associate of Hus, had caused at several European universities by his defense of Wyclif’s teaching.<sup>68</sup>

The judicial proceedings against Hus, which would culminate at Constance, had originally begun with Hus’s appeal against Archbishop Zbyněk’s order to surrender Wyclif’s writings.<sup>69</sup> Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris, had in fact already in May 1414 urged the Archbishop of Prague, Konrád of Vechta, to eradicate “the most pernicious chaff originating in the writings of one John Wyclif,” and suggested that – if persuasion failed – “this heresy and its authors be dispatched into the fire” with the assistance of the secular arm. On subsequently receiving from Konrád, among others, Hus’s treatise *De ecclesia*, the Frenchman singled out as the most pernicious the proposition that who was foreknown (for damnation) or who lived in mortal sin had no dominion, jurisdiction, or power over other Christians. According to Gerson, every spiritual and secular authority should rise against such an opinion, and eradicate it with fire and sword rather than by disputation.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Jan Hus “Responsum ultimum … ad articulos excerptos e libro De ecclesia <et> de processu causae,” *Documenta* 225-234. Quotation: “Ad articulos extractos de libellis meis non potui sententias scribere, et propter brevitatem temporis, et propter parentiam papyri, et propter periculum etc.”

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 225; see also n. 63 and the relevant text.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 225-226.

<sup>67</sup> Kejř, *Husův process* 148.

<sup>68</sup> See Herold, *Pražská univerzita a Wyclif*.

<sup>69</sup> Kejř, *Husův process* 52 ff.

<sup>70</sup> Jean Gerson’s letters to Konrád of Vechta, the Archbishop of Prague, dated 27 May 1414 and 24 September 1414 were published in *Documenta* 523-526, 527-528. Note particularly Gerson’s statement: “Error inter alios perniciosissimus … videtur esse mihi ille: quod praescitus aut malus existens in peccato mortali nullam habet dominationem vel jurisdictionem vel potestatem super alios

Subsequently, preaching the sermon *Prosperum iter* in Constance, Gerson claimed that the Council not only could try cases of authentic heresy, but also had the authority to condemn opinions, even if they did not contradict Scripture, the exegeses of the doctors, or the tradition of the Church, as was the case of numerous of Wyclif's and Hus's assertions. Evidently, Gerson did not care to distinguish between the teaching of Wyclif and Hus.<sup>71</sup> Inasmuch as the other Council Fathers shared Gerson's attitude, once Wyclif had been condemned for heresy, Hus had no chance, properly speaking, to demonstrate to the Council any dissimilarities between his own and the Oxford theologian's teaching.

Nevertheless, it will not be without interest to note briefly in conclusion at least some of Hus's responses to Wyclif's forty-five "heretical" articles, concerning which the Council questioned him in 1415. Let us leave aside those propositions, which were so preposterous that Wyclif could have hardly maintained them, such as article six that God should obey the devil, which Hus rejected as clearly false. The unlikely article thirty-one claimed that the establishment of a monastery was a sinful act, and those entering such institutions were diabolical individuals [*viri dyabolici*]. Again Hus denied holding, or ever having held, such a view. He considered as meritorious acts both establishing and staffing of monasteries, as long as this was done with good intentions in observance of the Law of Christ.<sup>72</sup> Article twenty-nine ascribed to Wyclif another opinion, unlikely to be held by a long-time Oxford teacher, namely that universities, colleges, graduations, and master's degrees were expressions of vanity and benefited the Church as little as the devil. Hus probably did not even need to add here his "Non teneo nec tenui."<sup>73</sup>

In some cases Hus evidently did not dispel the suspicion that he upheld and supported Wyclif's theses. This was already true of article one concerning remanence. Hus noted that he had never held the view that the material substance of bread and wine persisted (after consecration) in the sacrament of the altar. Moreover, he stressed that on this issue he followed the teaching of the saints and of the Church.<sup>74</sup> Paradoxically, Hus was tainted by the suspicion of remanence due to the provocative assertions by Stanislav of Znojmo and Matěj of Knín, made much earlier in the period before 1408.<sup>75</sup>

As for Wyclif's ecclesiological theses, Hus evidently failed to clear himself of the suspicion of holding article eight, namely that a foreknown or wicked pope had no power over the faithful, except for that bestowed on him by the emperor. This happened despite Hus's admission that such a pope still had power as a servant, through whom God was acting.<sup>76</sup> It was significant that Hus in this connection referred to Matthew [23:3-4] and cited from it (*Super kathedram Moysi...*). This verse

de populo christiano. ... Videtur autem parviti meae, quod contra hunc errorem exsurgere deberet omnis dominatio tam spiritualis quam temporalis, ad exterminationem magis igne et gladio, quam curiosa ratiocinatione."

<sup>71</sup> Kejř, *Husův process* 145; Werner, *Jan Hus* 201-202.

<sup>72</sup> Jan Hus, "Responsiones ... ad articulos Johannis Wiclef," ed., Sedlák, *Jan Hus* 305\*, 308\*.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 308\*.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 305\*.

<sup>75</sup> For instance, Herold, *Pražská univerzita a Wyclif* 150-151, 238.

<sup>76</sup> Jan Hus, "Responsiones ... ad articulos Johannis Wiclef," ed. Sedlák, *Jan Hus* 305\*: "Non teneo nec tenui, sed dico: Si papa esset pessimus, ipse habet potestatem tamquam minister, per quem Deus operatur, iuxta illud Matth. 23: Super kathedram Moysi etc."

had been strongly favoured already by Milíč of Kroměříž, who quoted it in his *Tres sermones synodales* together with the commentary of Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum*. From our point of view it is likewise interesting that Hus employed the same citation in his treatise, *De ecclesia*.<sup>77</sup> It is true that both Milíč and Hus used the quotation about the Old Testament Scribes and Pharisees as a springboard to criticize contemporary bad priests. Nevertheless, the mid-part of the quotation, *omnia quaecum dixerint vobis servate et facite*, emphasized obedience of the institutional Church, even if at times it was represented by unworthy priests.

Then there was article fifteen, containing the notorious Wycliffite thesis, *Nullus est dominus civilis, nullus est prelatus, nullus episcopus, dum est in peccato mortali*, which had so much offended Gerson. Hus retorted that he interpreted this proposition in agreement with Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, Gregory and John Chrysostom, as well as with canon law embodied Gratian's *Decretum*, namely that if a lord (also a monarch), prelate or bishop lived in a mortal sin, he was not worthy [*digne*] of the rank, but still he was in factual possession of his office.<sup>78</sup> Here also it can be said that Hus allowed a place for the institutional Church. Hus's cause was significantly damaged when his judges and King Sigismund focused on the original proposition, and ignored the Bohemian's relevant qualifications.<sup>79</sup>

Hus also rejected article thirty two, containing Wyclif's thesis that accumulation of wealth by the clergy violated Christ's teaching. According to him, wealth could be held by priests, as long as it was not misused.<sup>80</sup> Article thirty-four reflected Wyclif's late intense dislike of the mendicant orders, which led him to assert that the mendicants were heretics, and those giving them alms were subject to excommunication.<sup>81</sup> Hus distanced himself from this harsh view, stating that he did not view the mendicants as heretics, but rather expected them to be good Christians. As a token of this belief, he had himself often given alms to them, and had urged others to do likewise.<sup>82</sup>

\*\*\*

Hus's amendments to the accusatory articles, and his avowed differences from Wyclif, in my opinion, justify carefully nuanced conclusions. They warn us against overestimating the dependence of Hus's treatise *De ecclesia* on Wyclif's work of the same name. After all, Hus's answers to the thirty articles, laid before him

<sup>77</sup> Hus, *De ecclesia* 36, 90, 159, 160, 183, 185, 192. – Hus noted in the last citation from Chapter Twenty-One that "doctores Salvatoris" truncated the quotation from Matthew at the beginning, by omitting "supra kathedram Moysi sederunt scribe et pharisei," and also at the end, by omitting "secundum opera eorum nolite facere," but they emphasised the middle part, concerning obedience: "omnia quecumque dixerint vobis, servate et facite."

<sup>78</sup> Jan Hus, "Responsiones ... ad articulos Johannis Wiclef," ed., Sedláček, *Jan Hus* 306\*-307\*: "luxta sanctorum sententiam Augustini, Jeronimi, Ambrosii, Gregorii, Crisostomi, Remigii et Graciani ista proposicio habet sensum verum, videlicet quod nullus talis est digne, quamvis secundum officium sit talis."

<sup>79</sup> This was the famous personal confrontation of Hus with King Sigismund on 8 June 1415, which Petr of Mladoňovice described. On that occasion the Council Fathers called in the king – who had stood aside by the window – to hear Hus state once more that not even a monarch was a king in a worthy manner (*digne*), when in the state of mortal sin. See Petr of Mladoňovice, "Relatio de M. Jan Hus causa," *Documenta* 299-300.

<sup>80</sup> Jan Hus, "Responsiones ... ad articulos Johannis Wiclef," ed. Sedláček, *Jan Hus* 308\*.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 308\*.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 308\*-309\*.

by the Council on 18 June 1415, explicitly emphasized that his treatise, *De ecclesia*, recognised the Roman Church which – according to the witness of the saints – embraced all believing Christians, subject to the obedience of the Roman pope, according to the law of Christ: *nam pono in libro De ecclesia esse sanctam Romanam ecclesiam, quae est, secundum sanctos, omnes fideles Christiani ad oboedientiam Romani pontificis juxta legem Christi pertinentes.*<sup>83</sup> As we have already recalled, Hus ended his final responses to these and other articles, involved in the trial, by stating that he had written them according to his own conscience for which he would be accountable to the Almighty Lord.<sup>84</sup>

It is, of course, also well known that in Constance Hus's responses were suspected of insincerity, and that the Bohemian remained for the Council Fathers *sectator et fautor et eruditor ac defensor errorum Johannis Wicleff haeresiarchae* [follower, supporter, disseminator and defender of the errors of the heresiarch, John Wyclif], or as stated in the verdict, *non Christi, sed potius Joannis Wicleff haeresiarchae discipulus* [a disciple not of Christ, but rather of the heresiarch, John Wyclif].<sup>85</sup>

When he completed his responses on 20 June 1415, Hus was fully aware that his choice was between recantation and a death by fire. Thus he also noted at the conclusion of his written answers.<sup>86</sup> His conscience would not permit him to declare about the entire corpus of Wyclif's writings, without any differentiation: *Non teneo, nec tenui.* Neither could he declare so about his own teaching, which he viewed as correct and confirmed by the authority of Scripture and the Church fathers. Gerson, as noted, was of another opinion, and his view regrettably prevailed. Thus the Council of Constance cut short not only Hus's life, but also a "Prague" chapter in the thrust of Wyclif's, or more properly Hus's, reformatory ecclesiology.

Then there followed the revolution by Hus's followers and the bloody wars of the Bohemian Reformation. Another study would be needed to determine to what extent – explicitly or implicitly – these struggles could reflect or reflected the theses and propositions of Wyclif's ecclesiology, or of its version modified by Hus. Another reformatory chapter began to unfold one hundred and four years after the Bohemian's death. This time Hus did not have to share the limelight with Wyclif, it was his own *De ecclesia*, which helped to inspire Martin Luther.

(Translated from the Czech by Zdeněk V. David)

---

<sup>83</sup> "Responsum ultimum ... ad articulos excerptos e libro *De ecclesia* <et> de processu causae," *Documenta* 231.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 233.

<sup>85</sup> "Articuli testium Constantiensium," ed. Sedlák, *Jan Hus* 339\*; the text of the verdict is in *ibid.* 344\*-345\*.

<sup>86</sup> "Responsum ultimum ... ad articulos excerptos e libro *De ecclesia* <et> de processu causae," *Documenta* 234.