
The Sacramental Theology of Tomáš Štítný of Štítné

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The sacramental and liturgical movement that began in fourteenth century Bohemia was, without doubt, the most popularly received of a number of such movements which appeared in various parts of mediaeval Europe.¹ I have argued elsewhere² that this was because of a fortuitous combination of events. Beginning with the powerful community experience of Jan Milíč's "Jerusalem", the movement gained an academic foundation in the monumental *Regulae* of Matěj of Janov as well as in the writings on frequent communion by Vojtěch Raňkův, Mathew of Cracow and Henry of Bitterfeld. When the movement received ecclesiastical approbation from Archbishop Jan Jenštejn, its success was assured – at least among the the literate faithful of urban Prague. The transition of the movement from its urban, often academic, environment to a more widespread and popular one appears to have been, in part, a product of the relatively high ratio between clergy and laity in the country and, as Stanisław Bylina has demonstrated, of the relatively high level of catechesis throughout Bohemia when compared to that in other parts of Europe.³ The success of the "popularisation" of this sacramental and liturgical movement is important if we are to gain a well-balanced understanding of the revolution which swept Bohemia in the second decade of the fifteenth century. For example, the profound attachment to the chalice which was the symbolic heart of the revolution when it broke out in 1419 cannot be explained apart from the widespread success of the frequent communion movement. A laity that communicated infrequently, let alone annually as was the legally enjoined minimum, would have had no attachment to a ritual "innovation" such as the restored lay chalice. It was only because frequent communion was already well established in the religious lives of the laity that the chalice was able to assume the symbolic power that it did.

Discovering the content of any such "popularisation" can be a difficult process, often because the medium of the process is oral and the necessary literary witnesses are, therefore, absent. Happily, this is not entirely the case in Bohemia at the turn of the fifteenth century. For here, we are fortunate that the work of one man, Tomáš Štítný, survives *in extenso* and it is from his writings that we can gain some knowledge of the theological ideas that were being "popularised."

¹ David R. Holeton, "The Bohemian Eucharistic Movement in its European Context," BRRP 1 (1996) 23-47.

² David R. Holeton, *La communion des tout-petits enfants: Une étude mouvement eucharistique en Bohême vers la fin du Moyen-Age*. [Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia, No. 50] (Rome, 1988) 17-82; *ibid*, "Sacramental and Liturgical Reform in Late Medieval Bohemia," in *Gratias Agamus = Studia Liturgica* 17 (1987) 87-96.

³ Stanisław Bylina, "La catéchisation du peuple en Bohême aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles," BRRP 3 (2000) 25f.

Tomáš Štítný of Štítné⁴ was born around 1331 in the small castle of Štítné in Southern Bohemia. A son of the lesser nobility, he had the financial resources necessary to lead an independent life. Sometime, probably shortly after its foundation in 1348, Tomáš began to attend the university in Prague where he appears to have been an independent auditor in philosophy and theology. While at the university, Tomáš's family background gave him access to the circles of Prague's established classes. Throughout Tomáš's time of study, there is no record of him ever having either sought or received an academic degree and it is, perhaps, for this reason that he seems to have been considered as a bit of an academic intruder by some of his university masters.

Sometime after 1360 Tomáš returned to Štítné. After the death of his parents he inherited the title and managed the estate where he lived along with his three sisters. In due course, Tomáš married and became the father of five children of whom only two survived to the age of adulthood and, eventually, outlived him. By 1370 Tomáš was a widower. In 1381 he returned to Prague where he remained until his death which occurred some time in the first decade of the fifteenth century.⁵ During these later years, Tomáš was joined by his daughter Anne whom we later find dwelling in a house near the Bethlehem Chapel with a group of devout women.⁶

Today, perhaps, little of this seems remarkable for a life of a man of independent means. Most modern academics are probably accustomed to having such people of independent means audit their classes. For his own time, however, Tomáš is quite remarkable. Born a decade after the death of Dante (1321) but over a century before the birth of Erasmus (1467), Tomáš represents an emerging world that is both de-latinised and declericalised. Interestingly, the troubles Tomáš encountered were not from ecclesiastical authorities but, rather, from university masters who considered it highly irregular not only that he should audit lectures in theology but that he should then proceed to write about theological topics *in Czech* at a time when it was the considered opinion that Latin was the only language fit for theological discourse. Challenged about this endeavour, Tomáš replied that: "If it was possible for St. Paul to preach to the Jews in the Jewish language and in Greek to the Greeks, it is certainly possible to write in Czech for the Czechs."⁷

Tomáš's earliest literary works, produced before 1376, were a number of Czech translations of Latin works. These included classical works such as the *De conflictu vitiorum et virtutum* [On the conflict of the vices and virtues] attributed to St. Augustine⁸ as well as scholastic works by David of Augsburg⁹ and Hugh of St.

⁴ Tomáš's basic bibliographical information can be found in Jan Gebauer, *O životě a spisích Tomáše ze Štítného* [On the life and works of Tomáš of Štítné] (Spisy Tomáše ze Štítného 1 [The Works of Tomáš of Štítné 1]) (Prague, 1923) 7-11.

⁵ There is some debate about the date of Tomáš's death. Gebauer and others place it in 1401. F.M. Bartoš argues for 1409 in "K životopisu Štítného," *Český časopis fililogický* 3 (1944) 72-8, 116-9.

⁶ *Husitská revoluce* 2:40.

⁷ Jan Sedlák, *M. Jan Hus* (Prague, 1915) 60 n.1. This criticism appears to have persisted throughout Tomáš's life as he still feels the need to make apology for writing in Czech in the preface to his "Books of Christian Instruction" Antonín Jaroslav Vrtátka, *Thómy z Štítného Knihy naučení křesťanského* (Prague, 1873) 4.

⁸ "O boyowany hrzyechow s sslechetnostmy," in František Ryšánek ed., *Sborník Vyšehradský* 2 vv. (Prague, 1960, 1969) 1:82-123. This is now believed to be the work of the Gallican writer Ambrose Aupertus (+781) see: *ibid.* 1:19

⁹ *De septem processibus religiosorum* – "O sedmy wstupnych," *ibid.* 1:122-369.

Victor.¹⁰ As works of a “spiritual” or “moral” character, these were not pieces of “academic” theology. Intended by Tomáš for the moral and spiritual edification of an intelligent readership, their choice reflects something of the spiritual milieu in which Tomáš lived. There is, however, nothing original to Tomáš in the works themselves.

After a short while, Tomáš changed his writing interests and, as a family man, began to write for the benefit of his children. It is these writings for which Tomáš is best known in the history of Czech literature. Tomáš’s own literary style is direct, often homely, and sometimes structured as a dialogue between parent and child. A remark made by Tomáš in his second preface to his *Besední řeči* [Learned Entertainments]¹¹ gives us some insight into his own formation as a child as well as into his own literary purposes. Here, Tomáš explains why he has chosen to write in the form of a dialogue between father and son:

... remembering how pleasant it was for me in my youth to listen to my father or mother when they talked on Christian matters, and how it was through them that I acquired some knowledge of the Scriptures, I devised these books as if children questioned their father and he answered them.¹²

Tomáš most widely read works *O obecných věcech křesťanských* [On General Christian Matters]¹³ revised around 1400 as *Knihy naučení křesťanského* [Books of Christian Instruction]¹⁴ and the previously mentioned *Řeči besední* are, in fact, collections of shorter tracts which treat a wide range of matters covering both what might clearly be considered theological questions as well as others on more general or ethical matters in which he gives counsel on how to lead the Christian life.

Writings from this period of Tomáš’s life are characterized by a homely or domestic style. In time, the readership of Tomáš’s works expanded considerably beyond the *foyer* for which they were originally written. Conscious that his audience had expanded, Tomáš made a number of revisions to these works, widening the range of his “practical” counsel which he directed no longer to his family alone but towards a much more diverse readership.¹⁵ In the fourth book “On General Christian Matters”, Tomáš includes counsel for widely disparate classes and professions including the clergy, lawyers, peasants, artisans, merchants and doctors.¹⁶ This entailed a greater specificity in the guidance and moral counsel offered as Tomáš focused on the potential besetting sins of each occupation or profession.¹⁷

¹⁰ *De arca Noe morali* – “O korábi Noeově,” *ibid.* 1:370-393.

¹¹ Ed. Martin Hattala (Prague, 1897) hereafter BŘ.

¹² BŘ 2.

¹³ Ed. Jaromír Erben *Tomáše ze Štítného: Knížky šestery o obecných věcech křesťanských* (Prague, 1852) hereafter KSOVK.

¹⁴ Ed. Antonín Jaroslav Vřátka, *Thómy z Štítného: Knihy naučení křesťanského* (Prague, 1873) hereafter KNK.

¹⁵ This expanded readership is reflected in the two prefaces to the “Six Books...”. The first (KSOVK 1-3) is addressed to Tomáš’s children, the second (KSOVK 3-6) to the larger readership.

¹⁶ KSOVK 118-177.

¹⁷ For example, Tomáš warned merchants to be wary of the three ways they were most likely to fall into sin in their work – that is, by selling goods that are not what they are claimed to be (copper for

The titles of the six books included in “On General Christian Matters” give some idea of this mixture of the specifically theological and more general counsel which Tomáš offered his readers:

- Book I: Of faith, hope and charity.
- Book II: Of virgins, widows and married people.
- Book III: Of the master of the household, of the mistress, and of the household [itself].
- Book IV: How the nine orders of people bear the similitude of the nine orders of angels.
- Book V: How the devil tempts us.
- Book VI: How we purify ourselves from our sins [containing an exposition of the sacraments].

Back in Prague in the 1390s Tomáš changed the focus of his writing once again and produced his *Řeči nedělní a sváteční*¹⁸ [Addresses for Sundays and Holy Days]. These provide digested sermons for about twenty Sundays of the liturgical year¹⁹ and for a number of weekdays.²⁰ Sermons are also provided for about twenty-five Holy Days including all the major feasts of the Lord and most of the saints’ days popular in his time but, curiously, omitting the Czech saints and patrons of the nation for whom Tomáš made no provision.

In his latter years Tomáš’s literary interests evolved yet again and once more included translations from the Latin works of such mediaeval writers as Anselm of Canterbury, Bernard of Clairvaux, James of Cessola and Richard of St. Victor. During this period, Tomáš also became increasingly interested in mysticism. His last known work is a translation of the visions of St. Birgitta of Sweden [*Zjevení sv. Brigity*].²¹ It is during this final stage of Tomáš’s literary life that he revised his material in “On General Christian Matters” and published them as “Books of Christian Instruction.”

In the second preface to his “Six Books on General Christian Matters” Tomáš gives us some insight into his sources and methodology. He tells his readers that he is putting into Czech “what he heard in sermons and from learned men as well as his own thoughts.”²² Later, in his “Addresses for Sundays and Holy Days” he makes reference to the sermons he has heard in Prague.

Thus, Tomáš’s writings reflect and are informed by the reformist theological trends underway in the Prague of his time both as he had heard them preached in churches and as he had discussed them publicly at the University as well as in the more private circles to which his social status had given him access. Tomáš identifies Vojtěch Raškův as having been of particular influence in the development

gold, watered wine &c.), by short-weighting products sold, and by selling bad merchandise for good (e.g. ailing animals as healthy &c.). KSOVK 173.

¹⁸ Josef Straka ed., [Spisy Tomáše ze Štítného II] (Prague, 1929).

¹⁹ The four Sundays of Advent, the Sunday after Christmas, those after Candlemas, the pre-Lenten and Lenten Sundays, Palm Sunday and Easter.

²⁰ Notably the first few days of Lent, the Paschal Triduum and Easter Week.

²¹ Unedited; see Gebauer, *O životě a spisích Tomáše ze Štítného* 23-24.

²² KSOVK 2f.

of these ideas but also considered himself to be Milíč's spiritual son²³ having been a part of his "Jerusalem" community. Tomáš was a contemporary of Matěj of Janov and of the other reforming masters at the University such as Matthew of Cracow and Henry of Bitterfeld. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that Tomáš reflects many of the opinions that characterised this reform movement: he mistrusts the monastic life because he sees too many monks not adhering to its spirit; he is suspicious of miracles because he sees too many clerics turning them to their own economic profit; he is cautious of excessive devotion to the saints, indulgences and tithes because they, too, are easily turned into a means of filling the purses of the clergy. In all of this, nothing is original or unique to Tomáš and all of these concerns can equally be found in the works of Jan Milíč or Matěj of Janov as well as other members of the fourteenth century Bohemian reform movement. On the other hand, what is missing from Tomáš is the strident moral or political attacks on the clergy (for whom, as we shall see, he usually makes apology) or the vehemence of polemic against the curia which we find, for example, in Matthew of Cracow's *De squaloribus curiae Romanae*.²⁴ Tomáš has carefully filtered the various dimensions of the reformist movement and, in his Czech writings, has refused to engage his lay readers in the ecclesiastical polemics of his day. Thus, Tomáš acted as conduit between the reform movement in Prague (which was University-centered and continued to use Latin as its language of discourse) and the wider Bohemian population, most of whom lived outside the capital and who did not have access to the Latin works of the reformist University masters. It is because of Tomáš's claim to be digesting, repeating and, presumably, through the very act of vernacularisation, interpreting what was being said in the ecclesiastical and academic circles in the Prague of his day that he is an important source from whom we can gain a more precise understanding of what was being "popularised" concerning this sacramental and liturgical movement. Tomáš's *haute vulgarisation* of these ideas prepared much of the soil which was to prove so fertile for the more radical religious reforms that were to play such an important role in the development of Bohemian life in the fifteenth century.

Tomáš on the Sacraments.

a) General Observations

The sixth book included in his "On General Christian Matters" is an instruction on the sacraments.²⁵ This appears in a revised form as the fifteenth (and last) book in his "Books of Christian Instruction."²⁶ While Tomáš's theology is fundamentally biblical in nature, the overall hermeneutic he adopts to interpret the sacraments is of later, mediaeval origin. What is significant for this period is that Tomáš generally avoids the allegorical interpretation of sacraments and ritual action so popular at the time.²⁷ Tomáš's explanation of the baptismal rites, for example,

²³ Gebauer, *O životě a spisích Tomáše ze Štítného* 11 n.29.

²⁴ Władysław Seńko, *Mateusza z Krakowa: "De praxi Romanae curiae"* (Wrocław – Warsaw – Cracow, 1969).

²⁵ KSOVK 207-269.

²⁶ KNK 306-340. It is not the purpose of this article to study the evolution of Tomáš's teaching on the sacraments although this would be an interesting undertaking. Hereafter, texts will be drawn from Tomáš's revised "On the Seven Church Sacraments."

²⁷ For a discussion of mediaeval allegorical liturgical exposition in both a broad and technical sense see Timothy M. Thibodeau, *Enigmata Figurarum: Biblical Exegesis and Liturgical Exposition in*

could, with rare exception, be considered an acceptable piece of modern mystagogia.

From the various sacramental “models” used during the mediaeval period (e.g. biological²⁸, medicinal, juridical &c.), Tomáš takes the so-called “medicinal” model as his hermeneutical tool with which to explain the purpose of the sacraments. Widely popular because of the prominence given to it by Peter Lombard in his *Sentences*²⁹, and by successive commentators on them,³⁰ the “medical model” was well-established in the tradition and it is, thus, not surprising to find Tomáš using the model as his hermeneutical tool. Here he could be following the general theological tradition or following more closely on both Milíč³¹ and Matěj of Janov³² who had used the same model before him. The premise of the model is, as Tomáš explains, that:

Durand's *Rationale*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 86 (1993) 65-79. The allegorical exposition of the liturgy continued in Bohemia into the fifteenth century, see David R. Holeton, “Insights into Utraquist Eucharistic Thought: A Fifteenth Century *Expositio missae*,” in Jiří K. Kroupa ed., *Septuaginta Paulo Spunar Oblata* (Prague, 2000) 349-366 and “*Chorus significat virgines ... dyaconus Mariam*’: An Utraquist Abridged Allegorical Exposition of the Eucharist,” *Festschrift for Noemi Rejchrtová* (forthcoming).

²⁸ In this model each sacrament was seen as representing a particular biological need or phase in life (e.g. baptism = birth; eucharist = growth; confirmation = strengthening).

²⁹ *Sententiae*, l. 4, d. 2, c. 5 (Collegium S. Bonaventurae, *Magistri Petri Lombardi Parisiensis episcopi Sententiae in IV libris distinctae* 2 vv. (Rome, 1971³, 1981³) 2:239-40.

³⁰ Thomas Aquinas, in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, invokes the medical model on a number of occasions (e.g. *In IV Sent.*, dist. 12, q. 3, 2c; dist. 17, q. 3, 3a, rat. 4; dist. 23, q. 1, 2a) as did Bonaventure and other Franciscan theologians of the fourteenth century.

³¹ In his Sermon for the Feast of S. Peter in the collection *Gratiae Dei* (MS Prague NK XII D 1 ff. 39a-42b) Milíč draws on the medical model for the whole sacramental system:

Audi nunc quia licet proprium sit solius Dei, sua propria potentate peccata dimittere. Cum hoc ipsum sibi proprium Christus Petro et suis successoribus dare promisit, ut et ipsi suo modo peccata dimittant. Auctoritate non sua propria sed divina. Deus ergo auctoritative solus dimittit, sed sacerdotes ministerialiter non mireris cum audis in contritione dimitti peccata et in confessione, quia diversis temporibus hec fiunt.

Quia autem Petri que precedit sententias celi, precedit secundum effectum, in quo Deus posuit remedium nostre salutis videlicet in sacramentis, ut quicumque saluari debet oportet ut prius ab ecclesia sacramenta recipiat baptismum, penitentiam, eucharistiam et alia sacramenta, per que quis mundatur, absoluitur et liberatur. Et sic prius necesse est sacramentis absolui, et demum in eternum esse solutum.

Sic ergo merita nostra non sunt nisi dona Dei, quia ipse solus ea facit, et cum per hoc non desinunt esse merita nostra. Sic quidquis sacerdotes secundum ineffabilem modum sibi tradite potestatem operantur, solus Deus illa facit in eis et per eos et cum eis. *Ibid.* 42b.

In his Sermon for Trinity XII in the collection *Abortivus* (MS Prague NK I D 37 ff. 233aa-235aa) Milíč calls for daily reception of communion as a medicine against sin:

Correctionem ergo accipiamus et medicamen contra febrem cotidiarum dum incessante peccamus. Contra febrem interpolatam quoniam intercise peccamus, nunc bonum nunc malum faciendo. Contra tercionam quoniam fidem et spem habendo, contra caritatem peccamus. Contra quartanam quoniam a decior cardinabilis virtutibus deviamus ut sic sanati ad eternam salutem feliciter veniamus. *Ibid.* f. 235ba.

I am grateful to my colleague Dr. Peter Morée for drawing these examples of Milíč’s application of the medical model to my attention.

³² Matěj says that all the sacraments were instituted of God “*ad remedium fragilique et infirmo homini ad salutem*” *Regulae* l. IV, art. vi. c. 4 (5:226). When speaking of the effects of frequent communion, Matěj produces strings of curative effects – both personal and social – which he attributes to the sacrament. See: “Les effets de la communion fréquente,” in David R. Holeton, *La communion des tout-petits enfants* ... 44-49.

... as in the case of physical healing when ... one is strengthened or protected from physical harm, so also in the case of spiritual healing one is strengthened or protected by the sacraments. Baptism, confession and holy oil are three sacraments that function as a healing power which eliminates spiritual disorder.³³

Through the seven sacraments we are able to protect ourselves from the seven sins ... we fell into through our first father. ...that is, we now have the sacrament of baptism, confession and holy oil to protect us from deadly sin ... we are now able to protect ourselves from blind thought, hardness of heart, our [spiritual] weaknesses and our bodily weaknesses.³⁴

These, Tomáš tells us, are respectively through ordination (against blind thought), the eucharist (against hardness of heart), confirmation (against mockery of the good) and matrimony (against lustful desires).³⁵

In addition to their “medicinal” properties the sacraments serve the function of bringing the Christian to particular Christian virtues. Thus:

The seven sacraments bring us to faith, hope, love, kindness, peacefulness, strength and truth. Baptism brings to faith in the Trinity; confirmation to hope; the holy body to love; priesthood to peacefulness; matrimony to kindness; holy oil to strength. ... Confession leads us to truthfulness.³⁶

In the incarnation, Christ comes into the world as a doctor to heal the illness that came with Adam’s fall. The sacraments are his medicines. The source of their power is derived from the cross and the shedding of Christ’s blood:

Thus our Saviour, who wants to help us, came to this world as a doctor and took upon himself a human body. ... he was then able to heal our bodies by spilling his blood for us. In this way, he gave power to the seven church sacraments to be used by us in the healing of our spiritual bodies.³⁷

Tomáš’s overall ecclesiology is quite straight forward and closely reflects the society in which he lived. Baptism, as the first sacrament, admits to the church³⁸ and, along with confirmation and Holy Order, is understood by Tomáš as a sacrament of character.³⁹ Interestingly, however, for Tomáš baptism is not a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division, whether of sex or race or social status, are transcended as Paul describes it (Galatians 3:27-28), but into a church whose structure reflects the hierarchical social order of Tomáš’s own society. This is somewhat at odds with Matěj of Janov’s theological reflection on his experience as a member of Milíč’s “Jerusalem” community where baptism had been

³³ KNK 308 -9.

³⁴ KNK 309.

³⁵ KNK *loc. cit.*

³⁶ KNK 309-10.

³⁷ KNK 306. Of baptism, Tomáš writes: “Power was given to holy baptism when the Son of God shed his holy blood, when blood and water flowed from his side, and alone he instituted baptism both with his example and command.” *Ibid.* 310.

³⁸ KNK 309. Tomáš speaks of those who “wish to be part of the people of God.” This is a much more personal (rather than institutional) understanding of the church than might be expected for the time.

³⁹ KNK 310. Tomáš interprets the “character” given by these sacraments as a quality of recognisability in which those who have received them are recognised as having been differentiated from all others. *Loc. cit.*

the social leveler which was the common token of admission to the eucharist which was the very glue of the community's existence.⁴⁰

Tomáš draws on the image of the secular army, an analogy in common use among scholastic theologians when treating the subject of baptism. There is but one army that belongs to the king and its members are recognised by their sign or badge. So too in the case Christ's army, its members are recognized by the "signs" of baptism, confirmation and ordination. And just as the secular army has three ranks (the troops or soldiers, knights and princes) so does the army of Jesus Christ. That is, those who are baptised are the troops (*vojsko*), those who are confirmed are the knights (*rytieři*) and, finally, those who have taken upon themselves priestly orders are princes (*kniežata*).⁴¹ This hierarchical and clerical model of the church recurs regularly throughout his work.

b) Particular Sacraments

Having put the sacraments within the medicinal model and a vertical ecclesiology, Tomáš presents a short chapter on each of the sacraments. Here, it will only be possible to outline the general content of what he says of each.

i) Baptism

Tomáš's presentation on baptism consists of four parts which are respectively titled: i) who can baptize?; ii) that the sacrament of baptism washes of all sins; iii) that there are three types of baptism; and iv) what do those things mean that we use in baptism?

The first section (Who can baptize?) is very practical and addresses those living in an age in which infant mortality was high and it was generally believed that to die without baptism was to be deprived of the possibility of an eternity in God's presence. Thus, when a priest is unavailable, anyone may baptize but must "follow what the priest does" i.e. pour water and "follow Christ's words without eliminating any part."⁴² Tomáš takes pains to note that women must say, "I baptize – *Ja sem je křtila*" and not "I wash – *Oblévaly sme je*" for, as he says, "washing does not include the sacrament of baptism."⁴³

In the second part, (that the sacrament of baptism washes of all sin) Tomáš repeats the standard Augustinian position on original sin and the role baptism plays in cleansing from it.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ In his *Regulae*, Matěj asks why those who are in communion through the first mode (baptism) are not also in communion with the church through the second mode (eucharist). "... quod omnis christianus, qui abscisus est a communione primo modo dicta, puta per mortale peccatum, abscisus est quoad participacionum vite et spiritus eciam a secunda iam de facto; quodsi talis se ingerat ad sacramenta ecclesie, iudicium sibi manducat et bibit." *Regulae* L. IV, art. III, c. 15 (V, 38). Matěj sees this as applying to all: both the ordained and the laity and, in this latter category, Matěj shows particular concern for the poor and the marginalised – the *parvuli in Christo*. "... plebei sancti in multis laboriosi et parvuli in Christo habent necesse et est ipsius valde utile sepius sumere suum panem vite et fortitudinis, id est sacramentum, quam monachi, clerici vel sacerdotes, qui vitam vacantem deo suo elegerunt et obtinent locum in ecclesia Christi virorum perfectorum." *Regulae* L. IV, art. VI, c. 15 (V, 266).

⁴¹ KNK 310.

⁴² KNK 311.

⁴³ *Loc. cit.*

⁴⁴ KNK 312.

The third section, on the three types of baptism, is interesting in that it presents material that is somewhat surprising for the time of its writing. Tomáš explains that there are three types of baptism (water, Spirit and blood). The sections on baptism by water and blood (martyrdom) are quite traditional. Interesting, however, are Tomáš's observations on baptism in the Spirit:

In order to be saved one may only be in the Spirit when he believes in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. If one keeps close to Christ and follows his commandments he will still be saved even though he has not been baptized with water or if he did not spill his own blood. As in the case of the sinner who was crucified with Christ, he was not baptized in water yet he became baptized in the spirit because he regretted his sins while hanging on the cross.⁴⁵

In making provision for the baptism in the Spirit of those baptized neither with water nor in blood, Tomáš goes well beyond the general mediaeval understanding that the reception of baptism in water was "generally (i.e. by all) necessary for salvation." Tomáš's text is difficult to explain in the context of a society in which (except for Jews) unbaptised adults were virtually unknown. Tomáš does not appear to be sufficiently anti-clerical to provide a "regular" means for salvation outside the normal structures of the church. Could this be, perhaps, a pastoral gesture to those parents whose infants died before baptism, suggesting that the faith of the parents (or of the Church) was sufficient? If so, this would certainly be a theological innovation in a society and church that sanctioned parents who allowed their children to die unbaptised. Or, perhaps, is this an oblique gesture to the validity of the baptism of the Waldensians present in South Bohemia who would have been considered to be outside the Church and, therefore, beyond salvation. It is unfortunate that we have no clues about why Tomáš made provision in this matter.

The final section (What do those things mean that we use in baptism?) is, as suggested earlier, a good mystagogia on the rite in which the ritual actions are given appropriate theological explanations based on the content of the liturgical texts and which correspond to the actions themselves. Anyone who read Tomáš's description of baptism would be able to follow with understanding the rite as it took place in the parish church knowing both what the priest was doing and why. Tomáš also provides some observations on the historical evolution of the rite explaining why, for example, godparents make promises on behalf of their infant godchildren, promises which were once made by adult candidates on their own behalf at the time of their own baptism.⁴⁶ This would have helped make sense of those parts of the rite that still seemed beyond comprehension in an age when the candidates were infants alone. Tomáš ends his baptismal instruction by again noting what lay persons are to do when they baptize in the absence of a priest asserting that they are not to perform any of the other baptismal ceremonies (exorcisms, signation, clothing &c.) other than the effusion of water in the Name of the Trinity.

ii) Confirmation

⁴⁵ KNK 313.

⁴⁶ KNK 313-14.

Confirmation in the Middle Ages, as today, proved difficult to furnish with a convincing theological rationale independent of one which links it to baptism. Tomáš treats the sacrament more briefly than any other sacrament. This is not unsurprising as the large size of the dioceses, the small number of bishops and the refusal to delegate the sacrament to presbyters would have made confirmation a very rare experience in the life of the average Bohemian parish of Tomáš's day,. He provides a minimal explanation of what is done ritually⁴⁷ and invokes the traditional mediaeval images of "being confirmed to fight" and makes confirmation analogous to the institution of knighthood.

Tomáš's last sentence in this short chapter on confirmation is intriguing and appears proleptic: "One who is confirmed acknowledges those responsibilities which his sponsor in baptism acknowledged for him, mainly that he will always keep his true faith."⁴⁸

This sounds very much like the "myth" of "primitive" confirmation we hear of more extensively in Petr Chelčický's account of Stanislav of Znojmo early in the fifteenth century; even more so when Tomáš tells his readers that "confirmation is given by a bishop to a person who is baptized and able to think for himself."⁴⁹ Here, Tomáš may well have helped to prepare the ground for the "invention" of "protestant" or "reformed" confirmation – one of the most significant contributions of the Bohemian Reformation to the reformation of the liturgical practice of the churches issuing from the Second Reformation of the sixteenth century.⁵⁰

iii) Eucharist

Tomáš's teaching on the eucharist is of major significance to the popularisation of the Bohemian frequent communion movement.⁵¹ He begins his section on this sacrament quite traditionally emphasizing the importance of honouring the sacrament, the mystery of the transformation of the sacrament and the presence of Christ in the sacrament. Here, there is nothing unusual.

⁴⁷ Tomáš says that the bishop signs the candidate on the forehead with the sign of the cross, invoking the name of the Holy Trinity, and then slaps the candidate on the face. Here, he seems familiar with the rite as used at the time and found in the near-contemporary (1376) pontifical of Albert of Sternberk, Bishop of Litomyšl. The formula for confirmation is: *Confirmo te signo crucis in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.* and is followed by an exchange of the greeting of peace which, by this time in the middle ages, had become a buffet although this latter practice is nowhere indicated in the rubrics. This was followed by the prayer: *Deus qui apostolis tuis sanctum dedisti spiritum, et per eos eorumque successores ceteris fidelibus tuis tradendum esse voluisti, respice propicius ad humilitatis nostre famularum, et presta, ut eorum corda quorum frontes sacro crismate delinivimus et signo sancte cru+cis designavimus, idem Spiritus Sanctus adveniens templum glorie sue dignantur in habitando perficiat. Per.* This is then followed by a bidding for the confirmands to kneel for a blessing by the bishop after which they are dismissed by the archdeacon. (MS Prague Strahov DG I 19 f. lvii^{ab-ba}) While Tomáš gave some historical background to clarify the ceremonies at baptism, here he is satisfied with the popular mediaeval allegorical interpretation of the bishop's buffet as a sign of being prepared to suffer in the service of Christ rather than tracing it to its historical origins as a vestige of the kiss of peace which the bishop exchanged for the first time with the neophytes after the final anointing at their baptism.

⁴⁸ KNK 315.

⁴⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁵⁰ See David R. Holeton, "The Fifteenth Century Bohemian Origins of the Reformation Understanding of Confirmation." in J. Neil Alexander ed., *With Ever Joyful Hearts: Essays on Liturgy and Music in Honor of Marion J. Hatchett* (New York NY, 1999) 82-102.

⁵¹ See Holeton, *La communion des tout - petits enfants* 68-9.

Having rehearsed the traditional attitudes towards the eucharist, Tomáš takes an important step by making the assertion that accepting the eucharist as nutrition is most important.⁵² This is a major change of attitude from those which characterised the age wherein the effects of the sacrament were understood to be received through gazing on the sacrament rather than eating it.⁵³ While Tomáš seems to take a step back from this assertion in his section on how it is possible to receive the benefits of the eucharist while not actually receiving it physically,⁵⁴ this appears to be a passing acknowledgement of what had been and, perhaps, for many of Tomáš's readers still was the accepted piety of the time which, perhaps, would have been scandalous or unrealistic to ignore.⁵⁵

That chapter, however, is buried between more extensive chapters in which Tomáš propagates reforming ideas on the reception of communion. His next chapter, entitled "how often can the sacrament be taken?" begins with the assertion "anyone can receive communion daily"⁵⁶ and continues by asserting (without citing a particular text) that "St. Augustine recommends that communion be received every Sunday."⁵⁷ In the European context of the time, this was truly revolutionary; in Tomáš it reflects the evolution in Bohemia of the practice of increased frequency of communion over the last quarter of the fourteenth century to the point where weekly, if not daily, communion of the laity had become commonplace. While Tomáš does rehearse some of the traditional criteria used to help individuals judge exactly how often *they* should be communicating,⁵⁸ the weight of his argument is in favour of frequent communion. This is of considerable importance for the popularisation of the practice as it goes against the established mediaeval tradition on the question which, often citing the same patristic texts, weighed in favour of eucharistic abstinence rather than frequent communion.⁵⁹

Addressing the question of preparation for communion, Tomáš follows the position that had developed among the fourteenth century Prague reformers. While the communicant is expected to be in a state of grace, there is no mention made of the rigorous fasts and penances against which Matěj of Janov had written and which had effectively fenced the altar to the average would-be communicant.⁶⁰

⁵² "This I say about this sacrament: it is important not only to honour it but also to receive it as nutrition." KNK 322.

⁵³ Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development* 2 vv. (New York, 1951) 1:120ff.; 2:208ff; Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991) 63ff.

⁵⁴ KNK 323-24. Unlike the other sacraments which must be actually received by the individual to be of benefit, Tomáš understands the eucharist in a wider ecclesiastical sense in which the prayer of the church offered in the eucharist is of benefit to all, both living and dead. Here he cites Gregory the Great as his source but without any textual reference. *Ibid.* 324.

⁵⁵ This may also have been a reaction to the censure of Matěj of Janov when, in 1389, a synodical action required him to recant his teaching on frequent communion – an injunction which was reversed in 1391. See, Holeton, *La communion ...* 77-8.

⁵⁶ KNK 324.

⁵⁷ KNK 325.

⁵⁸ I rehearse the late evolution of the mediaeval position on frequency of communion in my article "The Bohemian Eucharistic Movement ..." BRRP 1 (1996) 24-35.

⁵⁹ Holeton, "The Bohemian Eucharistic Movement..." 26 n.18.

⁶⁰ Matthias de Janov, *Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti* L.I, tr.II, reg. IV, c.12 V. Kybal, O. Odložik and J. Nechutová edd., 6 vol. (Innsbruck, Prague and Oldenbourg, 1905-1993) 1:145; Holeton, *La communion*, 49-58.

Tomáš is inclined to over-emphasize the ascetic placing importance on spiritual “adulthood” which he equates with the abandonment of worldly comforts. Married couples, for example, are counseled to abstain from sexual relations for two or three days before communicating⁶¹ and those “who have been tempted physically in their dreams should also abstain from the sacrament that day.”⁶² Here, perhaps, we see more of Tomáš the widower than Tomáš the happily married Christian let alone Tomáš the newlywed!⁶³

Tomáš’s last chapter on the eucharist addresses the question: “What are the benefits of receiving the holy sacrament?” Arguing that God would hardly have established so great a sacrament if the benefits were but small, Tomáš returns to the theme of the eucharist as nutrition for both body and soul.⁶⁴ This idea of nutrition leads Tomáš into telling his readers why it is important to communicate on particular holy days. Beginning with Christmas communion (rather than the generally required Easter) Tomáš established the relationship between the incarnation in Bethlehem, its etymology as “house of bread” and feeding on the sacrament.⁶⁵ Tomáš then progresses through the liturgical year noting the *anamnesis* or commemoration that would be made by communicating on particular feasts (Easter, Pentecost, the Assumption) as well as every Sunday.⁶⁶

The importance of Tomáš’s chapters on the eucharist for the popularisation of frequent reception of communion cannot be overemphasized. In a few pages, he has placed before his readers the substance of the eucharistic reform movement that had evolved in Prague during the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Frequent communion, rather than eucharistic abstinence, is the premise of Tomáš’s argument and he equips his readers with a basic theology of the sacrament’s institution and purpose. The reader is presented with a method of engaging the mystery of Christ’s eucharistic presence along with the necessary devotional material needed to assist in the preparation for frequent communion.

If there are things missing in Tomáš’s chapters on the eucharist, the most notable is his failure to provide any material which would help the reader engage the liturgical action itself. Tomáš’s interest in the liturgy is as a locus for eucharistic *consecration* rather than as an activity of the whole church which calls for the “full, conscious, and active” engagement of the individuals present. The reader is told that the priest must be ordained, that the host must normally be made of wheat, that the priest must repeat the words as established, and that the action ought to take place as the church intended. None of these, however, are really concerned with the action of the liturgy. The first observation (on ordination) provides Tomáš with the first of a number of occasions to address the matter of unworthy priests.⁶⁷ The

⁶¹ KNK 328.

⁶² *Loc. cit.*

⁶³ Tomáš is certainly not alone in some of these preoccupations. See Gary Macy, “Reception of the Eucharist According to the Theologians: A Case of Diversity in the 13th and 14th Centuries,” in *idem. Treasures from the Storeroom: Medieval Religion and the Eucharist* (Collegeville, 1999) 36-58.

⁶⁴ KNK 328-9.

⁶⁵ KNK 329.

⁶⁶ KNK 329-30.

⁶⁷ KNK 316 Tomáš notes that “however good or evil, once ordained, the priest is able to consecrate the sacrament and give it to his people” and that “no one else, even be he better educated or behaved, can offer the sacrifice.” KNK 316 Tomáš is apparently addressing a popular concern over the ability of an unworthy priest to consecrate. In this chapter, he repeats the assertion “in the case of

second (on the elements) Tomáš uses to address the possibility of elements other than wheat bread and grape wine in case of necessity. The question of the established words leads to what appears to be a polemic in favour of the Latin text.⁶⁸ Finally, the observation on form is the occasion to deal with often hypothesized anomalies.⁶⁹

iv) Priesthood

Czech has never had an exact equivalent of the inclusive “*sacramento ordinis*” or “sacrament of holy order” and uses the term “*kněžství* – priesthood” which, depending on context, may designate either the sacrament of order or simply the presbyterate/priesthood. Tomáš, uses the term in a restricted sense and discusses only the order of presbyter or priest and makes no reference of any sort to the “minor orders,” sub-diaconate or diaconate. He only discusses bishops in terms of those who bestow “power” on priests. Given his audience, this would likely reflect the ecclesiastical reality of the faithful outside Prague where deacons and bishops would have been very rare creatures. By the late middle ages, the diaconate was understood as a transitional stage on the way to the priesthood. In fifteenth century Bohemia, candidates for priesthood would have been deacons for a very short while, sometimes no more than a matter of minutes. In a diocese as large as that of Prague, the Archbishop would not have appeared in small towns and villages with any regularity. Hence, ordination or the sacrament of holy order was really about priests.

Tomáš begins his rather short chapter on priesthood by recapitulating the general medicinal model and its application to the priesthood: both priests and medicine heal. The *power* to offer the eucharistic sacrifice and to absolve are the principal medicines of the priest. This is a “sacred power given to the priest by the bishop when he is ordained to his office.”⁷⁰ That said, Tomáš turns his attention to moral concerns, which are his primary interest in this chapter, and says nothing about the ways in which the priest might practice his “medicine”. In other words, Tomáš expresses no interest in matters of ministry. Not surprisingly, there is no concern of any sort for the baptismal or universal priesthood of all believers. The priest is portrayed by Tomáš as the classic “shaman” who has the “power” to confect what is necessary for salvation.

Beginning with the assertion that, at ordination, a candidate “gives a promise to be truthful and that he will keep his body pure,”⁷¹ Tomáš goes on to make the wry observation that “much can be said about the purity of a priest, but one cannot

the priest, even one who is evil, as long as he has been ordained in the catholic church he is able to consecrate Holy Communion.” *Loc. cit.* Tomáš returns to this again in his chapter on ordination which will be discussed below.

⁶⁸ *Loc. cit.* The paragraph is too short to be able to establish a context. The statement, however, is bald: “Even if the priest should say these words in another language, nothing would change if he wished to consecrate the sacrament.” Given the contemporary experiments with the use of the vernacular in the liturgy (see: Holeton, “The Bohemian Eucharistic Movement ...,” 44 n.100) this statement seems rather reactionary coming from Tomáš.

⁶⁹ KNK 316-7. The issue addressed is the commonly asked question about what happens when a deranged priest pronounces the words of consecration over all the bread stored in an oven (or bakery) to which the answer is nothing, because this is not the form established by Christ.

⁷⁰ KNK 330.

⁷¹ *Loc. cit.*

better the situation by complaining about his behaviour.”⁷² While briefly noting the salutary effect a good priest has on those to whom he ministers, Tomáš’s principal concern is to make something positive out of what seem to have been generally negative experiences with the clergy. “Even a bad priest may have said something which is good and he should be listened to.”⁷³ Then, quoting Gregory the Great, Tomáš suggests that “a bad superior must be honoured in his office not in his actions.” “Even a bad priest through his office can lead people to salvation for he has custody of the treasures of the church.”⁷⁴ Cumulatively, this is a rather tragic counsel of despair. It may well reflect, however, the state of the rural parishes of the time. In an age where non-residency and pluralism were rife, many rural parishes may have been served by priests who brought little honour to their office. On the other hand, this may reflect the rather puritanical stance that Tomáš often takes over moral matters in which most people, including the clergy, would certainly fail to meet his standards.

Perhaps more important than trying to make apology for the human failings found, not surprisingly, even in the clergy is Tomáš’s need to reassure the faithful about a matter that would have been of life and death concern: the efficacy of the sacraments. The sacraments played a central role in the salvation of an individual. Baptism and the eucharist were considered “generally necessary for salvation”, that is, they must be received by all. Should the sacraments celebrated by a wicked priest be ineffective, then it was not just a concern over the moral qualities of the priest but, much more importantly, a question of the very salvation of the souls of those over whom the priest had cure. Simply stated: invalid or ineffective sacraments could not effect what was necessary for salvation.⁷⁵ Tomáš deals with this serious pastoral concern by putting it in a larger ecclesiastical context arguing, in effect, that the sacraments are the sacraments of the church and not of the priest. Thus:

God will accept everything which is good in the priest and the actions he performs for his people. And so, the sacraments of the church are not decreased in value [if celebrated] by a bad priest nor are they better through a good priest.⁷⁶

In a church traumatised by the papal schism, this would have been good news, indeed.

v) Matrimony

Tomáš, despite his having been a married man and the father of five children, does not allow this personal experience to affect the position he presents on

⁷² *Loc. cit.*

⁷³ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁴ KNK 330-1.

⁷⁵ At the time this was a particularly difficult question in the minds of the faithful. With the papal schism and each pope having excommunicated the other and his followers the faithful were faced with the question: were they, through their bishop, in communion with the *real* pope and, derivatively, were the sacraments they were receiving *real* sacraments which kept them in communion with the *real* church in which they could be brought to salvation? The question was exacerbated by Wyclif’s assertion that an unworthy priest did not celebrate valid sacraments. The combination of the papal schism and Wyclifite thought present in Bohemia could not but have raised considerable doubt in the minds of many over the question of their own salvation.

⁷⁶ KNK 331.

marriage. His views reflect the near-dualist clerical attitudes of the day towards human sexuality as something which, somehow, must be “excused” while, at the same time, must not be given unreserved approval. Thus, he does not present his readers with a well-balanced view of marriage. Marriage, for Tomáš, exists to legitimate the sexual act. In enumerating the sacraments and their purposes at the beginning of his book on the sacraments, Tomáš lists matrimony as the last of the sacraments noting that it exists for those who wish to fulfill their carnal needs but who also wish to protect themselves from deadly sin.⁷⁷ He begins his chapter on marriage by asserting that “marriage can be related to healing in that it eliminates an otherwise deadly act,”⁷⁸ i.e. marriage is a remedy against fornication.⁷⁹

Tomáš then proceeds to say more positive things of marriage pointing to the traditional theology which sees marriage as a representation of the union between Christ and his church. The incarnation, notes Tomáš, makes it impossible for Christ to separate himself from this reality.⁸⁰

The chapter, however, makes no mention of marriage as also having been instituted for the mutual comfort and help of the couple. While, according to Tomáš, marriage is lifelong and without the possibility of separation and remarriage while the former partner is alive, there is no sense that it is contracted in love (a word never invoked in the chapter) nor with any sense of “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish for the rest of our lives.” Tomáš counsels the wife with the faint comfort that “when a woman praises her husband, she will have much respect for him and will become rich in God.”⁸¹ No admonishment is made to the husband.⁸²

At the end of his chapter, Tomáš returns to his original theme of marriage as a remedy against sin. While marriage is an holy estate and is sanctified by God, greater holiness lies in maintaining the purity of one’s body for God. This, understandably, says Tomáš, leads to conflict within marriage as both parties in the marriage try to serve both God and the flesh. And, while Paul concluded that it was “better to marry than to burn with desire”,⁸³ Tomáš concludes that, if possible, it is better to remain single “if one hopes to attain the holy state of purity” than to marry.⁸⁴

vi) Confession

⁷⁷ KNK 309.

⁷⁸ KNK 331.

⁷⁹ This theology of marriage has its roots in Paul’s observation in 1 Cor. 7:2,9 and was certainly reinforced by the Augustinian tradition in the west cf. *de Gen ad lit.* 9:7. It can still be found in the liturgical tradition today. The exhortation at the beginning of the marriage rite in the English *Book of Common Prayer* has, since 1549, enumerated the purposes for which marriage was ordained. The first is procreation, the second is “for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continence, might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ’s body.” F.E. Brightman, *The English Rite* 2 vv. (London, 1921) 2:802.

⁸⁰ KNK 331.

⁸¹ KNK 331.

⁸² To be fair to Tomáš, it is important to remember that he has devoted large sections of Books Two and Three of “On General Christian Matters” to the duties and responsibilities of wives and husbands.

⁸³ 1 Cor. 7:9.

⁸⁴ KNK 331.

Tomáš treats the sacrament of penance or confession at greater length than any other sacrament. This is hardly surprising as, in the ecclesiastical culture of late mediaeval Europe, penance was the sacrament received most often by the average lay person.⁸⁵ Much of the chapter's structure is determined by a piece of mnemonic verse that was widespread in the penitential manuals of the age.

Tomáš appears to be completely innocent of any knowledge of the historical development of the practice of penance in the course of western Christian history and accepts the model of what liturgical scholars classify as “modern penance” as if it were the original and normative model for reconciliation from post-baptismal sin.⁸⁶ This form of penance, a modification of the somewhat earlier “tariff penance” model,⁸⁷ began to emerge in the mid-tenth century and achieved its final form towards the end of the twelfth century. It is still in current practice in the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. “Modern” penance involves the penitent making a detailed confession of sin to a priest who, after hearing the confession, gives absolution and assigns a penance to be performed by the penitent after leaving the place of confession.⁸⁸ Auricular confession to a priest in this, or any, form became

⁸⁵ Until the end of the twelfth century annual confession was all that was required and this appears to have constituted the customary frequency. Beginning in the thirteenth century, the preaching of the Dominicans and the Minorites spread the practice of more frequent, “devotional” confession in which lesser sins and failings were confessed to a priest, unlike in earlier practice where only “grave” sins were considered subject to auricular confession. The frequency with which the devout confessed increased steadily so that, by the fourteenth century, “exceptional” people like St. Catherine of Siena confessed daily and St. Birgitta of Sweden twice a day. E. Delaruelle, E.-R. Labande, and Paul Ourliac contend that daily confession was common among the devout and was encouraged by the heightened sense of sin and fear of judgement which characterised the age along with the system of indulgences which required confession in order to acquire the indulgence. *L'Eglise au temps du Grand Schisme et de la crise conciliaire (1378-1449)* 656 [Histoire de l'Eglise Depuis les Origines Jusqu'à Nos Jours 14] (Paris, 1962) 656.

The wide-spread practice of “devotional” confession did not find universal support. The celebrated Franciscan moralist and canonist known as Astesanus de Ast (+ 1330) held that the priest is only under statutory obligation to hear the annual (obligatory) confessions of his parishioners, although he ought to hear their confessions whenever they want to confess (G.B. L[amberti] ed., *Summa astensis* I.V, t. xiv, q. 8 [Lyons, 1519] pt. 2:12^{bb}-13^{aa}). As his authority, Astesanus cites the earlier Franciscan Richard of Middleton (Richardus de Mediavilla 1249-1308) *Super quatuor libros sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, l. IV, d. xviii, art. ii, q. iii, contra [2 vv., Brixen 1591] 2:274. By the fifteenth century, there are numerous examples of confessors discouraging too-frequent confession for fear of encouraging a pathological scrupulosity in penitents who insisted on finding sin where no sin was.

⁸⁶ On the history of penance see: Cyrille Vogel, “Sin and Penance,” in Philippe Delhaye, *The Pastoral Treatment of Sin* (New York, 1968) 177-282; Pierre-Marie Gy, “Penance and Reconciliation,” in Aimé-Georges Martimort ed., *The Church at Prayer* 4 vv. (Collegeville, 1986-8) 3:101-115.

⁸⁷ The origins of “tariff penance” can be traced to Celtic and Anglo-Saxon monasteries of the seventh century. In this earlier form, the penitent made a detailed confession to a priest who, with the help of a book called a penitential, examined the penitent and calculated the length of penance. (The penitential provided a long list of sins and, with each sin, a penance – usually a fast the length of which varied with the gravity of the sin.) Having received his penance, the penitent went away and, over a period of weeks, months or years, performed the penance. When the period of penance was over, the penitent returned to the priest to seek absolution. On the penitential see Cyrille Vogel, *Les «Libri paenitentiales»* [Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 27] (Turnhout, 1978) and supplement under the same title by A.J. Frantzen (Turnhout, 1985). English translations of some of the major penitentals can be found in John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer ed., *Mediaeval Handbooks of Penance* (New York, 1938).

⁸⁸ The practice of granting absolution immediately after the confession had been made to the priest, with the penance performed at a later time, dates from the mid-tenth century.

an annual obligation on the faithful only in 1215 when it was enjoined by Canon 21 of the Fourth Lateran Council and, then, was mandatory only for those in a state of grave or “mortal” sin.⁸⁹

Knowing nothing of these historical origins and the development of the practice of penance within the western church, Tomáš found himself faced with having to make an apologia for a practice that does not sit easily with the biblical texts he cites. He struggles to fit the pastoral practice he knows with the biblical passages from John 20:23 (“If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven...”) and James 5:16 (“... confess your sins to one another”) in order to contend that what, in Tomáš’s time, was the relatively “modern” practice of private auricular confession to a priest was the only model for confession and that the origins of the practice are apostolic.⁹⁰

There is an interesting vestige of the earlier tariff penance in Tomáš’s chapter on the performance of the penance itself. Here, he is quite clear that “one cannot be forgiven until one performs one’s penance.”⁹¹ This was true of the “tariff penance” model when absolution normally took place *after* the penance had been performed, but not of the “modern penance” model in which the priest pronounced forgiveness before the penance had been performed. Scholastic theologians, following the lead of Thomas Aquinas, had concluded that it followed from the dominical mandate “whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19) that it was the indicative formula “*Ego te absolvo...*” that alone was essential to the sacrament.⁹² Thus, by Tomáš’s time, the generally received theological opinion was that forgiveness of sin took place with the pronouncement of the formula “*Ego te absolvo*” and not through any of the other liturgical prayers or gestures that were said or performed by the priest.⁹³ Thus, Tomáš’s observation that the sequence was confession - absolution - penance - forgiveness (rather than confession - absolution/forgiveness - penance) ran counter to the general opinion of his time and is symptomatic of a spiritual rigorism that punctuates Tomáš’s writings.

It is in his writings on penance, more than in any other chapter in the Books of Christian Instruction, that Tomáš devotes himself to pastoral direction on when, where and with whom a sacrament should be engaged. On occasion, Tomáš’s advice is that of a spiritual director when, for example, he writes on humility and its qualities as the spiritual attitude necessary for the beginning of confession.⁹⁴ More often, however, the counsel is very practical, particularly when he outlines “sixteen rules” for making a “proper” confession.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ See Nicole Bériou, “Autour de Latran IV (1215): La naissance de la confession moderne et sa diffusion,” in Groupe de la Bussière, *Pratiques de la confession* (Paris, 1983) 73-93.

⁹⁰ KNK 332. “From [James’s exhortation ‘confess your sins to one another’] it came to be that whomsoever was troubled by their sins could confess these to a priest and admit his guilt. The priest, in turn, would give the person a penance and forgive him through grace....”

⁹¹ KNK 338.

⁹² The first clear allusion to the importance granted the *Ego te absolvo* appears the *Homilia LXIV in Litanía Majori* of Radulph Ardentis [PL 155, 1899-1902] dating from the end of the twelfth century. See Cyrille Vogel, *Le pécheur et la pénitence au moyen-âge* (Paris, 1969) 174f.

⁹³ Gy, “Penance and Reconciliation,” 112.

⁹⁴ KNK 332-3.

⁹⁵ KNK 337-8. More will be said of these below.

Tomáš's counsel is generally reflective of the pastoral literature on penance in the late middle ages. Hence such advice as: Although confession is required only annually and while on one's deathbed,⁹⁶ "it is better performed frequently and not put off as death may come catching the person unawares and unable to confess and, thus, he will die unforgiven."⁹⁷ The act of confession itself leads to contrition and amendment of life.⁹⁸ An interesting insight into the role played by penance in social control can be seen in Tomáš's observation that "those who do not confess often may be tempted further into yet more serious sin."⁹⁹ Penitents, says Tomáš, ought not to be embarrassed about their sins but should confess all of them in detail and not in a general manner.¹⁰⁰ Overall, Tomáš's counsel is, for its time, helpful and unexceptionable.

There are occasions, however, where the advice Tomáš gives could be either seen as pastorally insensitive or controversial. The fundamental premise of penance is God's power to forgive. The system of tariff penance is based on the priest's "power" to proclaim, in the name of the church, that forgiveness. Raising questions that create doubts about the effectiveness of that forgiveness is pastorally unhelpful and can give rise to serious questions of conscience. Thus, Tomáš is unhelpful when, in trying to deal with the importance of firmness of resolution in contrition, he suggests that "for example, a young man who behaves in a very worldly way with a woman and later confesses his sin; should he later think back on the sexual act with pleasure, he will not be forgiven."¹⁰¹

Tomáš steps boldly into one of the great controversies of his age when he addresses the question of who may absolve. The historic position was that a confession was to be made to a person who had the pastoral cure of the ecclesial community to which an individual belonged i.e. the parish priest or another priest of the parish to which the individual belonged. At the time when the practice of "private" tariff penance replaced the, still earlier, system of "public" canonical penance, this was a canonical attempt to acknowledge that the sinful acts of an individual had an effect on the ecclesial community as a whole. The rise of the mendicant orders threatened this vestigial affirmation of the social nature of sin. The authority of mendicants, who had no ongoing pastoral care for the penitent, to hear confessions and absolve was a matter of much bitter, ongoing debate and conflicting legislation.¹⁰² Bohemia, as much as any other part of Europe, was

⁹⁶ KNK 336.

⁹⁷ KNK 333-4.

⁹⁸ KNK 334. Tomáš gives the interesting example of the man who does not confess his sins will continue to mistreat his wife and children.

⁹⁹ KNK 336.

¹⁰⁰ KNK 336-7. "And what confession is this? 'I looked where I should not have looked?' To this one should add at what, why, where and for how long he did look at it." *Ibid.* 336.

¹⁰¹ KNK 333.

¹⁰² Lateran IV (Decree c.21) obliged those in serious sins to confess to their parish priest annually, otherwise the choice of confessor was up to the individual. (H. Denzinger and A. Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum* [DS] 812). The Bull *Ad fructus uberes* of Martin IV (12 December 1281) allowed mendicants to hear confessions independent of the permission of the ordinary. Some parish priests continued to demand that those confessions made before mendicants be repeated before the parish priest. Boniface VIII annulled this concession of Martin IV (*Super cathedram*, 18 February 1300) but Benedict IX (a Dominican) renewed the privilege in the Constitution *Inter cunctas sollicitudines* (17 February 1304 – DS 880) but recommended that these confessions be repeated before the parish priest. Benedict's Constitution was, itself, annulled

engaged in this controversy.¹⁰³ Tomáš weighs into this debate in favour of the mendicants when he declares:

The pope has also given the power of absolution to the priest-brothers in the diocese in which they also have the permission of the local bishop. These brothers may hear confessions in all churches of the diocese. If anyone speaks against this teaching, he is wrong. Whoever confesses to these brothers seeks healing in the wise and faithful.¹⁰⁴

The observation is made in the context of Tomáš's advice on the question "to whom should we confess?", a question which draws him back into what seems to be his generally low view of the parochial clergy first raised in his chapter on the priesthood. Tomáš's immediate instinct is to suggest that his readers should confess to "a priest who is wise and faithful, one who seeks the salvation of the souls in his cure rather than personal wealth" but fears that making such a suggestion "would make the split worse among you." Thus, the reader "should confess to their priest and to the one that is given power."¹⁰⁵

Tomáš's section on the actual penance is interesting in that he is quite clear that the penance must be performed. Here, it appears that he is dealing with a popular, ecclesial culture in which people are in the habit of making confession and receiving absolution but not performing the assigned penance.

Tomáš provides sixteen rules for making a "proper" confession and asserts the dependence of absolution on the accomplishment of the penance assigned. These "sixteen rules" are not original to Tomáš but, rather, are a Czech translation and elaboration of a widespread mnemonic whose earliest witness appears in Thomas Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences*¹⁰⁶ and which was widely copied by other scholastics in their own commentaries on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. They were still being repeated in Prague during Tomáš's lifetime and a substantial portion of them can be found, for example, in Matthew of Cracow's *Tractatus de confessione "Quoniam fundamentum in ianua..."*, which was a widespread work of this Prague University master.¹⁰⁷

by the Council of Vienne (*Dudum a Bonifacio* 6 May 1312). Jean de Pouilly (Polliaco), doctor of the University of Paris, defended the exclusive rites of the parish priest over the claims of the mendicants for which he was accused at the papal court of John XXII in Avignon and, in turn, made to recant. (Constitution *Vas electionis* 24 July 1321 – DS 921-924). The controversy continued to rage after Tomáš's death when Eugenius IV had to condemn these "errors" once again in *Gregis nobis* – 16 January 1447).

¹⁰³ Jan Milíč, Tomáš's "spiritual father" was involved in this controversy and, reportedly, told his followers to confess only to their own pastor and not to the mendicants who have no authority to hear confessions unless they have the permission of the archbishop. Peter C.A. Morée, *Preaching in Fourteenth-Century Bohemia* (Slavkov, 1999) 72f.

¹⁰⁴ KNK 335. Tomáš tries to settle this issue by giving it papal mandate. Beginning with the pope, Tomáš creates a vertical ecclesiology in which the pope appoints bishops who, in turn, appoint parish priests who, in turn, appoint curates "so that we can confess to a priest of our choice." "And so, whatever a priest is able to do in his local church, the bishop is able to do in his diocese and the pope is able to do in all Christianity." It is the pope who has also given authority to the brothers in priest's orders to absolve. *Loc. cit.*

¹⁰⁵ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁰⁶ L.IV, d.4.q.14 and also found in his *Summa theologica*, III, q.9 a.4.

¹⁰⁷ Here they are drawn on in part to create the structure of the introduction to his tractatus. See Prague MSS NK I B 14 ff. 31b-44b (at 31v-32a); NK IV G 32 ff. 269a-294b (at 269a-270a); NK XII A 23 ff. 138a-149a (at 138a-b).

While there are many readings of the text, it lays out the rules for an ideal confession which should:

Sit simplex, humilis, confessio, pura, fidelis,
 Atque frequens, nuda, discreta, libens, verecunda,
 Integra, secreta, lachrimabilis, accelerata,
 Fortis, et accusans, et sit parere parata.¹⁰⁸

That is:

Let the confession be simple, humble, pure, faithful,
 And frequent, unadorned, discreet, willing, ashamed,
 Whole, secret, tearful, prompt,
 Strong, and reproachful, and showing readiness to obey.

While Tomáš does not attempt to create a versified Czech version of the mnemonic, his list of “sixteen rules”, with a very brief commentary on each, makes what was commonly held to be the qualities of a “good” confession available to his readers who might not otherwise have the linguistic skills to master the Latin rhyme. Once again, Tomáš is the agent for the popularisation of a religious culture which may not otherwise have ventured far beyond the Latin-based spirituality of Prague religious culture.

What is, perhaps, most remarkable in all of Tomáš’s writings on penance are his observations on indulgences. For, while accepting their potential benefit: “Indulgences are also beneficial as penance ... if approved by the pope and bishops...,”¹⁰⁹ Tomáš claims that this is a matter he has discussed with Master Vojtěch [Raňkův] with whom he concurs on the matter. But Tomáš then denounces indulgences as popularly understood stating baldly that:

It is untrue that one is able to buy indulgences for the release of one’s sins in the next world. I do not understand those who say that one can be forgiven for five hundred years if they buy indulgences.¹¹⁰

Here, Tomáš tempers an otherwise unremarkable discussion of penance with the currents of the Prague reform and adumbrates the controversy that would erupt in May of 1412 when John XXIII’s bulls of indulgence were proclaimed in Prague.¹¹¹

vii) Holy Oil

“Holy oil is given to the sick that they may be strengthened.”¹¹² Thus Tomáš begins his brief chapter on the anointing of the sick. What he has to say is of considerable interest as it reveals a more traditional understanding of the sacrament than was typical of fourteenth century Europe. In the course of the middle ages the use of holy oil had evolved from the anointing of the sick for the restoration of health to the

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¹⁰⁹ KNK 339.

¹¹⁰ *Loc. cit.*

¹¹¹ See Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967) 80ff.

¹¹² KNK 340.

“last anointing” in preparation for death. “Anointing of the sick” thus became “extreme unction.”¹¹³ Tomáš mentions neither death nor a “last anointing” in his chapter. Instead, beginning with the dominical institution of the sacrament in the transmission of power to the apostles to heal the sick (Mk 6:7; 12-3) and the exhortation in James (5:14) to summon the priests¹¹⁴ should someone be sick, Tomáš treats the sacrament as one for healing rather than preparation for death. “[T]he priest becomes the healer and the oil his medicine ... as the oil heals one’s wounds, so the grace of God heals one’s soul.”¹¹⁵

The close association between the forgiveness of sin and the anointing of the sick found in both the gospels (cf. Mk 2:1-12) and James (5:15) is emphasized by Tomáš and reflects the tenor of the liturgical prayers for the anointing of the sick in Tomáš’s day which were heavily penitential. This was the result of the practice of frequent recourse to private auricular confession which eventually replaced the more ancient rite of penance *ad mortem*. Over time, the rite of penance *ad mortem* and the rite for the anointing of the sick (which were juxtaposed in the liturgical texts) became conflated¹¹⁶ and the latter rite took on the penitential prayers and discipline of the former.¹¹⁷ Tomáš, unaware of the historical development of the rite, interprets the penitential nature of the liturgical texts as the rationale for the healthy not needing anointing. “... the sacrament is given only to the sick as the healthy have opportunity to confess their sins. A sick person is poor in that he has no occasion to confess his sins. This sacrament removes the sins of the sick.”¹¹⁸

Tomáš ends the chapter by telling his readers that the sacrament may be given to children who have attained the age of reason and may be received every time a person is sick. And, with that, the book concludes doxologically: “*Deo gratias!* This is the end. Glory be to God! Amen.”¹¹⁹

Evaluation

What can be said of Tomáš’s *O sedmeře kostelní svátostí* [On the Seven Church Sacraments]? As the first vernacular work on the sacraments written in Czech and by a layman, the importance of the text extends into realms well beyond

¹¹³ Peter Lombard (d. 1160) is apparently the first to use the term “extreme unction”. *Sent.* IV dist. 23 c. 1 (James L. Empereur, *Prophetic Anointing* [Wilmington DE, 1982] 58.) But while the terms *extrema unctio* or *unctio exeuntium* had been used by theologians and canonists from the twelfth century, the terms are rare in liturgical texts until the fifteenth century even though the rites had become increasingly associated with the time of death. A.G. Martimort, “Prayer for the Sick and Sacramental Anointing,” in *The Church at Prayer* 3:131.

¹¹⁴ KNK 340. Tomáš presents the text in the singular.

¹¹⁵ *Loc. cit.*

¹¹⁶ See, for example, the rites for the thirteenth century Pontificale Romanae Curiae in Michel Andrieu, *Le pontifical Romain au moyen-âge 4 vv.* (Vatican City, 1938-1941) 2:488.

¹¹⁷ By the year 800, some two centuries after the introduction of the Celtic system of private tariff penance to the European continent, deathbed penance (*ad mortem*) was the only remaining vestige of the older system of public canonical penance. At the same time, the practice of anointing the sick by presbyters (rather than by any baptised Christian) was just becoming organised. This new rite of presbyteral anointing began to be performed at the same time as the already established rites of deathbed penance. As a result, the anointing of the sick became increasingly spiritualized with its emphasis on the remission of sin rather than on healing. Charles W. Gusmer, *And You Visited Me: Sacramental Ministry to the Sick and Dying* (New York, 1984) 25. Martimort, “Prayer for the Sick ...,” 131.

¹¹⁸ KNK 340.

¹¹⁹ *Loc. cit.*

the theological and, as such, merits study from the viewpoint of a wide variety of disciplines.¹²⁰ In the more restricted field of sacramental theology and church history, the work stands as an important barometer of the church reform movement in Bohemia outside its Latinised and clericalised home-ground in the academic circles of late fourteenth century Prague. In it we have our most extensive witness to what was being popularly taught about the sacraments in the Lands of the Crown of St. Wenceslaus at the turn of the fifteenth century. This makes *O sedmeře kostelní svátostí* a work of capital importance in any search for a better understanding of the religious milieu which gave birth to Utraquism.

In setting out to explain the sacraments, Tomáš did not undertake an easy task. Living in an age in which the celebration of the sacraments had become the domain of the clergy and lay participation was, with the exception of confession, largely passive, Tomáš's self-appointed task was to make some coherent sense of seven sacraments – the institution of each of which was (falsely) attributed to Christ – which, to a passive observer, appeared to have little to do with one another. In order to accomplish this unenviable task, Tomáš turned to one of the diverse sacramental models of his day and settled on the “medicinal model” as his hermeneutical tool. While, perhaps, a helpful device with which to make a cohesive whole of what, after Peter Lombard, had come to be universally acknowledged in the West as “*the*” seven sacraments of the church, the medicinal model is basically a random and arbitrary instrument and is thus, ultimately, a false lens through which to see the sacraments. Like the other models popular at the time (biological, juridical &c.) the medicinal model portrays the sacraments in a more monochromatic fashion than can be theologically justified. By drawing on one aspect of a sacrament, and one that is often of minor theological import at that, the sacraments are made, often with some difficulty, to conform to the model rather than emerging from it naturally. While, for example, there may be a logic (according to the model) in suggesting that marriage is a medicine that saves the individual from the sin of lust, that is, ultimately, not the essence of the sacrament of marriage nor the purpose for which it was instituted. By isolating this one dimension of marriage in order to make it conform to the model, the result is a very unbalanced understanding of the nature and purpose of marriage both sacramentally and pastorally. Similar difficulties could be found in the application of this model to the other sacraments as well – save the anointing of the sick which is, by intention, *the* medicinal sacrament.

A modern sacramental theologian would likely suggest that there is a fundamental flaw in Tomáš's approach to the sacraments. Today, it would be common to speak of the sacraments in terms of encounters with Christ and as means of relating the individual and community to the Paschal mystery (the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ). For Tomáš, the sacraments in general stop short of that; either they are curative, and particular sacraments heal particular spiritual infirmities, or else they bestow particular spiritual gifts. Either way, they fall short of the much more Christological and ecclesiological interpretation of the sacraments that would be favoured by sacramental theologians today.

¹²⁰ The sources of Tomáš's theological vocabulary would, for example, being an important field on inquiry. To what extent was it a vestige of the Cyrillo-Methodian tradition and to what extent is Tomáš creating the vocabulary to suit his own needs?

That question aside, the importance of the work as a barometer measuring the progress of the reform movement is invaluable. While there are some areas in which Tomáš's explanation of the sacraments is very traditional for his day – marriage, once again, being a prime example – what Tomáš has to say about others propagates an understanding of the sacraments consonant with that of the Prague reform movement. While what he writes of confirmation, for example, draws, in part, on traditional mediaeval metaphors of chivalry to interpret the sacrament, Tomáš then goes well beyond that to speak of confirmation using language that is quite new. Similarly, his dismissal of the “vulgar” understanding of the mechanical effectiveness of indulgences when discussing penance popularised quite radical reforming ideas current in Prague academic circles.

Of paramount importance is what Tomáš has to say about the frequent reception of the eucharist. Here, he provides sufficient material to lay a firm popular foundation for what was the most radical sacramental innovation of the Prague reformers and the one which, in the end, effectively made the restored lay chalice possible. Without a popular piety in which frequent communion held an important place and into which the lay chalice was later to take its natural place, the uprisings in the countryside of South Bohemia in July 1419, with their subsequent “pilgrimages” to the hilltops, could never have taken place.¹²¹

Thus, Tomáš's *O sedmeře kostelní svátostí* merits being numbered among the foundation stones of the sacramental revival which made the Bohemian church unique in late mediaeval Europe and, by popularising those reforming currents and widening the movement's base beyond the University and Prague, helped to assure its success. By adding this aspect to the unique constellation of events which had conspired to assure the success of the frequent communion movement,¹²² Tomáš's writings on the eucharist were an important instrument in propagating a reformed sacramental piety which enabled the lay chalice to take on the symbolic importance it did once the Hussite revolution began.

¹²¹ When Wenceslas IV decreed that all clergy who did not hold legal title to a parish were to be expelled, this caused a crisis for rural Utraquism where many Utraquist clergy had usurped their livings. As smaller towns had but one parish, the withdrawal of the usurping Utraquist clergy effectively suppressed the chalice in numerous towns. See Howard Kaminsky, “From Mt. Tabor to the Defenestration,” in *A History of the Hussite Reformation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967) 278-286.

¹²² The constellation of the experiential (Milíč's “Jerusalem”), the academic (Matěj of Janov, Matthew of Cracow and Henry of Bitterfeld), the ecclesiastical (Jan Jenstějn), and the popular (Tomáš) made the Bohemian frequent communion movement succeed unlike any other in mediaeval Europe. See: Holec, “The Bohemian Eucharistic Movement in its European Context,” *BRRP* 1 (1996) 28-34.