
The History of the Jednota Bratrská Liturgy of the Eucharist: The State of the Question

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Dear ladies and gentlemen of the conference: I ask you to consider this paper as a first postcard sent to you at the beginning of a rather long journey to the proverbial parts unknown. My interest in this subject dates only to 1998, when in a manner similar to that of one of yesterday's presenters I was able to locate the place (indeed, the very house) in which my maternal great-great-grandfather, Jan Podvoleccky, had been born in 1830. At that time I also discovered that my ancestor's family was protestant, and had been so for a considerably long time. My training is in the history of ancient Christian liturgy (and eastern Christian liturgy at that), and so I find myself in truly new territory, as I explore the vagaries of Christian liturgy in the late-mediaeval Czech lands.

I need not belabour the point with you regarding the complexity of the history of Christianity here from the fifteenth century to the seventeenth. Verbs such as "disentangle" seem to be standard fare in the vocabulary of the papers I have heard so far. My paper today aims for a modest goal even than elucidating *the* state of the question. Instead, what follows is a series of observations and questions based on my research to date. Of the history of the Jednota from its foundation in the winter of 1457-1458 to its suppression in the Czech lands following the Battle of Bíla Hora (1620) my research focuses on the early history, from the predecessors of the Jednota to the death of Lukaš of Prague in 1528. I understand that from the point of view of the history of Jednota political thought the so-called early period ends in 1495. However, from the perspective of Jednota liturgy I believe that the early, creative, or formative period extends at least until the publication of Lukaš's *Zprávy kněžské* of 1527. After 1528 until the death of Jan Amos Komenský, the last senior of the Jednota (1670), my preliminary research indicates that Jednota liturgical texts came more and more to follow Reformed usages.

I have divided these observations and questions into two parts, one having to do with method, the other with sources. In the concluding portion of the paper I will make some preliminary comments on the 1527 eucharistic liturgy of Lukaš of Prague.

Method

By "method" I mean the approach we take to the Jednota Bratrská as a religious phenomenon. How do we interpret them? If Jan Hus was considered by earlier scholars (and by some today) as a proto-protestant, how much more so the Jednota! The reasons for this bent in Jednota historiography are complex, of course, but surely the shadow of Herrnhut falls over this entire question. In addition, of course, the later history of the Jednota seems to have conditioned the approach of some scholars to the entire history of that community, so that the final rapprochement of the Jednota particularly with Calvinist theology is taken as the

ultimate reason for the Jednota's existence. This kind of protestant historiography is exemplified in my opinion by Řičan's history of the Jednota, which is the only history of the Jednota by a Czech scholar I know of which has been translated into English.

From the perspective of the history of the eucharistic liturgy or liturgies of the Brethren this historiographical perspective is unfortunate and unhelpful because not only does it cast the early Brethren as proto-Calvinists (or even proto-Anabaptists), but it also then casts the Brethren's liturgical practices in the anachronistic light of Calvinist (and even Anabaptist?) liturgical expectations and stereotypes. Thus (so the argument goes), if the early Brethren were proto-Protestants, then their liturgy must have been so as well.

Řičan's treatment of the liturgical work of Lukaš of Prague, the putative author of the 1527 Jednota liturgy of the eucharist (the term "Lord's Supper" appears for the first time only in the Brethren Agenda of 1580), exemplifies this tendency, in my view:

He [i.e., Lukaš] was remembered by later generations as *elegantiae templorum amator* (lover of fairly fashioned temples). The old Brethren, out of their opposition to "church" worship, preferred as much as possible simplicity and freedom. Brother Lukaš here, as in many other matters, turned toward the Hussites and Catholics. He wished to have the services enriched, and their celebration mattered to him.¹

The question in this passage has to do with Řičan's assertion that the "old Brethren" wanted "simplicity and freedom" in their liturgies. Where does Řičan derive this view? It has been suggested that Řičan alludes here to the significant influence of Petr Chelčický on the Jednota: that the anarchist thinker's call to return to the way of life of the primitive Christians must have included a call to rejection of the Catholic Church's developed liturgy.² However, it must be remembered that in the Middle Ages there were other movements, such as the Franciscans, advocating the embrace of the *vita apostolica* but which retained the structure and content of the Catholic Mass and daily office. At the very least, Řičan comes dangerously close to Protestantizing the early Brethren. Although he was the leader of the movement of the Brethren away from the ideas of Chelčický into the relative mainstream of society in Bohemia, we are still left wondering about the extent to which Lukaš represented any kind of continuity with the practice of the first generation of Brethren, liturgical practice included.

The Eucharist in *Zprávy kněžské* (1527)

The first complete liturgy of the eucharist available to us is the 1527 rite by Lukaš of Prague. Prof. Josef Smolík of the Evangelical Theological Faculty of the Charles University published an edition of this rite, along with a translation into German, in *Coena Domini*.³ Smolík based his text on the 1527 edition of Lukáš's

¹ Rudolf Řičan, *The History of the Unity of Brethren*, trans. C. Daniel Crews (Bethlehem PA and Winston-Salem NC, 1992) 104.

² I am indebted to Dr. Thomas Fudge, who offered this suggestion during the discussion following the presentation of this paper.

³ "Das Abendmahl nach den Ordnungen der Brüderunität," in Irmgard Pahl, ed., *Coena Domini I: Die Abendmahlsliturgie der Reformationskirchen im 16./17. Jahrhundert*, [Spicilegium Friburgense 29] (Freiburg, 1983) 543-561. The inclusion of this liturgy in a collection of Reformation liturgies of the

Zprávy kněžské (Priestly Notes) in the Statní Okresní Archív in Brno.⁴ According to Smolík, this liturgy actually began to be used by the Jednota in 1518, and was the basis for the liturgy of the Lord's Supper in the later Jednota agenda of 1580 and 1612.⁵ However, Smolík also notes that the exhortations highlighting Lukáš's distinctive theology of the sacramental presence of Christ in the eucharist were reduced in the later Jednota agenda.⁶

I have seven brief observations to make regarding Lukáš's 1527 liturgy. 1. It does not appear to parallel Luther's 1526 *Deutsche Messe*, with its focus on the Sanctus and the Words of Institution. It is rather a collection of prayers and admonitions leading up to the consecration of the elements via the *verba*. 2. Nor does it appear to have been influenced by Zwingli's early recasting of the Roman Canon in his 1523 *Epicheiresis*. Zwingli's work is an elegant re-forming of the collection of prayers which make up the Canon, into four prayers reflecting the themes of the Canon, but at the same time expressing Zwingli's emerging theology of the eucharist. In other words, Zwingli's work displays a kind of tidying-up of the Canon (and much else, of course). "Tidy" is not a word befitting Lukáš's rite! However, it is possible that it is patient of comparison with the *Epicheiresis* if one considers both liturgies to be relatively conservative recastings of the Roman Mass. 3. As Smolík points out, the 1527 rite reflects again and again Lukáš's particular theology of the sacramental presence of Christ.⁷ 4. There is significant offertory language in the 1527 rite, which it combines with the *verba*. Clearly, unlike Luther, Zwingli, or (later) Calvin, eucharistic sacrifice was not a driving factor for liturgical change. 5. The rite emphasizes the "true" (*vere*) presence of Christ in the eucharist. This emphasis probably reflects the desire of the Jednota to distance themselves from other Czech reforming movements of the time which denied such presence. 6. The *verba* play a central role in the consecration of the elements, as they do in the entire mediaeval western Catholic tradition. As others have pointed out, Luther's revisions of the Canon, which had the effect of emphasizing even more the words of institution, simply brought the scholastic theology of the means of consecration of the eucharist to its logical conclusion. However, Lukáš differs from Luther in rubrically indicating, after the recitation of the *verba*, that the gifts had been consecrated. Why the 1527 rite should point out the consecration is not entirely clear. It is possible that among the Jednota members were people with ties or backgrounds in more radical groups which did not recognize the presence of Christ in the eucharist, and so rubrical emphasis on the fact of consecration may have been necessary for the instruction of priests who either came from or leaned toward such groups. 7. The 1527 rite uses the term *canon*, but not in the same sense as the word was used by Catholics to refer to the *Canon Missae*. However, as David Holeyton has pointed out, the term might bear a relationship to the terminology used

Lord's Supper begs the question of the proper location of the Jednota liturgies of the eucharist: with the late medieval tradition, or with Reformation traditions.

⁴ *Ibid.* 543. The book bears the signature G 21 III 582. Smolík notes (note 1) that the title page of this edition bears the date 1523, although the final page of the book is dated 1527.

⁵ *Ibid.* 543-544.

⁶ *Ibid.* 544.

⁷ The standard discussion of Lukáš's theology of the modes of Christ's presence remains Erhard Peschke, *Die Theologie der böhmischen Brüder in ihrer Frühzeit*, (Stuttgart, 1935) 1/1:221-304, esp. 272-304.

to denote the large collection of offertory prayers called the *canon minor* which developed before the *canon* proper in the late Middle Ages. If there is a positive relationship between the two usages, Lukáš may have been liturgically conservative indeed.⁸

Sources

The earliest printed sources include the 1527 edition of the *Zprávy kněžské*, the *Agenda při Wečeře Páně* (Kralitz, 1580), and its second edition (Kralitz, 1612). In his discussion of the Jednota in Poland, Joseph Müller mentions in passing a Jednota agenda printed in 1620 in Prague.⁹

It is not yet possible to say much about manuscript sources containing texts of Jednota liturgies of the eucharist, because there is yet to be done the basic foundational research in the archives of the Czech Republic, Poland, and Germany. However, Jaroslav Bidlo in the third volume of his history of the Jednota also mentions one Polish manuscript containing Jednota agenda, and two Herrnhut manuscripts of Jednota liturgical texts.¹⁰ I have not found other references in the secondary literature to manuscripts. However, I can report on my preliminary examination of two books in the National Library in Prague, listed as numbers 426 and 429 in Truhlař's catalogue of Czech manuscripts in the Charles University Library.¹¹

Truhlař 426 is entitled *Agenda Czeska*, and was printed in 1581.¹² An inscription on the inside right cover page (1v) reads "T-R. P.G. Thomas Richter Pastor Gebhardsdorfensis: 1731." Gebhardsdorf is a small town in southwestern Silesia, on the border with Bohemia (modern Giebułtow in Poland). How the book came to Prague is unknown. It contains both the printed text of 1581, and manuscript additions to the book in what I believe are at least five different hands, in twenty-one pages preceding the beginning of the printed text, and in nineteen pages following the end of the printed text.

Page 3b of the manuscript material preceding the printed text contains a seven-part "Cultus divini Ordo Ecclesiasticus," a liturgy comprising hymns, prayers, reading, and preaching. Collects for the church year, including the four Sundays of Advent, Christmas, New Year, Good Friday (which the text calls *Die Parasceve*), Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity, John the Baptist, the Visitation, Michael the Archangel, Apostles' feasts, and a Penitential Day (8a-20a). There is much more manuscript liturgical material, including what appears to be a prayer of

⁸ My thanks to Prof. David Holeton for suggesting this possibility.

⁹ "Exemplar Prag. Mus. 37F37. Agenda für Taufe und Abendmahl gedruckt 1620 bei Kaniel Karl Karlsberg in Prag. Durckort und Inhalt der Agenda beweisen, dass sie nur für die böhmische Unität bestimmt war. Darum kann als ihr Verfasser wohl nur Cyrill in Fragen kommen." Joseph Th. Müller, *Geschichte der Böhmisches Brüder*, III. Band: *Die polnische Unität 1548-1793* (Herrnhut, 1931) 227, n. 125.

¹⁰ Jaroslav Bidlo, *Jednota bratrská v prvním vyhnanství*, Čast III: (1572-1586), (Prague, 1909) 140, n. 3.

¹¹ Josef Truhlař, *Katalog českých rukopisů c.k. veřejné a universitní knihovny pražské* (Prague, 1906). The book, which now resides in the collections of the National Library in Prague, bears the signature přív. 54.F.507.

¹² *Agenda Czeska/to gest Spis o Ceremoniách a pořadcých Cýrkevnijch kterak seslowem Bužijm a swatostmi Krzstowými/lídu w Kralowstwij Czeskem prawdu Ewangelium swatého magijcýmu a mí-lugijcýmu/posluhowati má. M.D.LXXXj.*

consecration for the Lord's Supper. The striking aspect of the manuscript portions of Truhlář 426 lies in their apparent difference from the content of the printed *Agenda*. Was it intended to supplement the printed text, or to replace it when the confessional allegiance of the parish changed?

Other evidence in the book points strongly to its Lutheran identity. The *Agenda* does contain a feast of „Master Jan Hus.“¹³ But, as David Holeton has pointed out, the text makes clear that that feast, as well as the Division of the Apostles and the feast of the Transfiguration, are in the book because of their celebration in Bohemia but that they are adiaphora.¹⁴ In addition, the Preface to the Reader notes that the text of the *Agenda* had been compared with the liturgies in use in Wittenberg, Brandenburg, and Würzburg.¹⁵ To what history does this book witness? Perhaps this copy of the *Agenda Czeska* reflects ongoing liturgical development in this particular Silesian parish, which in the period from 1581 to the time of the manuscript additions gradually moved away from the specifically Bohemian practices of the *Agenda* to usages of other origins. More research must be done before it is possible to draw sustainable conclusions.

Truhlář 429, described by Truhlář as *modlitby ranni* (daily prayers), but it actually contains far more.¹⁶ It is first a Czech psalter printed in 1581. But as with Truhlář 426, it also contains manuscript additions, including texts bearing the title *Spowed chegicy fstolu večere Páně gitj podle spusobu cyrkwe evangelickych, augsspurgskau konffesy se sprawugicych*. I cannot, however, immediately identify any of the several prayers before the invitation to communion, or the several prayers before and after receiving the Lord's Supper, with any Lutheran liturgical text of which I am aware. It appears that at least some of the prayers are intended for private use, because they are in the first person. However, not all of the prayers are so constructed.

A key liturgical question for both of the above texts concerns the identification of the manuscript prayers noted above with known Jednota, Lutheran, or Reformed texts. I am continuing to analyze Truhlář 426 and 429, and three other manuscripts enumerated in volume one of Bartoš's *Soupis* which I believe could be Jednota liturgical texts.¹⁷

Concluding Questions

The above very modest observations regarding the history of the eucharist in the Jednota Bratrská obviously raise more questions than they suggest definitive answers. There is much fundamental research yet to be done in Czech, Polish, and German archives. However, allow me to conclude with four questions which the research so far suggests. 1. What precisely are the manuscript and printed sources for Jednota liturgical practice from the emergence of the Jednota as a distinctive

¹³ *Ibid.* 65.

¹⁴ Latin text, page B3b, Czech text, page A4b. E-mail message to author, 8 February 2002. I am grateful to Professor David Holeton for this information and that which appears in the following note.

¹⁵ Latin text, page B2b, Czech text, page A3a. E-mail message to author, 8 February 2002.

¹⁶ This book, which also now resides in the National Library, bears the signature přív. 54.G.173. = Tresor F 83.

¹⁷ F.M. Bartoš, *Soupis rukopisů Národního musea v Praze. Pars Prior: Codices bohemicos complectens* (Prague, 1926), nos. 139, 333, and 455.

community in 1457-1458 to the first edition of the *Zprávy kněžské* in 1527? 2. Is the 1527 rite is the creation of Lukáš of Prague, or did he use sources? Perhaps a better way to put the question is to frame the matter in terms of the relation of Lukáš's rite to Roman Catholic and Utraquist masses, as well as to what can be determined of the eucharistic liturgies of the Taborites. What relation is there, for example, between the offertory prayers of Lukáš's liturgy, and the so-called "little canon" of offertory prayers which developed in the Roman Mass in the late Middle Ages?¹⁸ 3. To move to the other end of the chronology of the Jednota, what were the liturgical texts used by the successors to the Jednota in Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland following the Battle of White Mountain to the issuance of the Edict of Toleration in 1789? Truhlář 426 and 429 suggest that at least some Protestants, persecuted in their own lands, used manuscripts, and that they reused earlier liturgical books. 4. What, if any, was the influence of the Jednota catechetical literature on the Jednota eucharist, and vice-versa?¹⁹ 5. How do we categorize the Jednota liturgical tradition, at least to 1575? Is it one of the last vestiges of the late medieval Catholic liturgical tradition, or does it belong to the dawn of the Reformation liturgical traditions? Or do we need to invent a different category altogether for this little-known tradition?

¹⁸ I am indebted to Prof. David HOLETON for suggesting this question.

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