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## Confessional Identity of the Bohemian Utraquist Church: the transfer of priests from the *sub una* to the *sub utraque* obedience

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After the wars of the Bohemian Reformation (1419-1436),<sup>1</sup> an autonomous ecclesial body emerged in Bohemia and Moravia, the Bohemian Utraquist Church, that viewed itself as a part of the one, holy, catholic Church, but that remained in a merely formal communion with the Roman pope. The Church was largely Bohemophone, although it included some Germanophone parish communities as well. The main expression of its confessional distinctiveness was a reformed liturgy that combined Latin and Czech languages, and practiced communion under both kinds for the laity of all ages, including little children as well as infants (*communio parvulorum*). Master Jan Hus was considered a saint and venerated on the altars as a martyr in the cause of a renewal of Christ's Church.<sup>2</sup> Until 1471, the church was led by the elected Prague Archbishop, Jan Rokycana, and after him by the Utraquist Consistory headed by the administrator. The church continued to recognize the historic (apostolic) succession in the Roman Church, and insisted on the ordination of its clergy by "proper" bishops. During all of the fifteenth century it also maintained an ambition to serve as an avantguard of reform for all Western Christendom. For a long time, this church – schismatic from the Roman point of view – remained a unique phenomenon in Europe.<sup>3</sup> With the emergence of the Protestant Reformation the Utraquist Church found it necessary to define its identity not only in relation to Rome, but also vis-à-vis the reformed churches. During the entire sixteenth century Bohemia and Moravia enjoyed a considerable religious toleration that was not limited by the principle "cuius regio, eius religio." Defense of its own identity was a major problem of the Utraquist Church for the remaining period of its existence – roughly until 1622. The joining of the Utraquists with the Brethren and the Lutherans in support of the Bohemian Confession (1575) could not but antagonize Rome further. In consequence of Rudolf II's Letter of Majesty (1609) an illusory unified church organization emerged that further complicated the ecclesiological issue for the Utraquists, as well as for the Lutherans and, especially the Brethren.<sup>4</sup> Better knowledge of Utraquist theology belongs among the major desiderata of historical scholarship. It would help in our understanding how the Utraquists themselves defined their own ecclesiology.

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<sup>1</sup> František Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*. Vol. 4. *Epilog bouřlivého věku* (Prague, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> David R. Holeton, "The Celebration of Jan Hus in the Life of the Churches," *Studia Liturgica* 25,1 (2005) 32-59; Jan Royt, "Ikongrafie Mistra Jana Husa v 15. až 18. století." [The iconography of M. Jan Hus from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century] in: *Jan Hus na přelomu tisíciletí*, [Jan Hus at the turn of the millennium] 405-451.

<sup>3</sup> Winfried Eberhard, *Konfessionsbildung und Stände in Böhmen 1478-1530* (Munich and Vienna, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Zdeněk V. David, *Finding the Middle Way. The Utraquists' Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther* (Washington and Baltimore, 2003).

One of the key issues of the period 1520-1620 is the transfer of allegiance by the ordained ministers of the church, for instance, from Utraquism to Lutheranism or to the Unity, and vice versa, and – what was the most common phenomenon – from the Roman Church to Utraquism. My intention is to explore the formal act of reception of Roman priests into the Utraquist Church on the available examples of some one hundred cases. We thus obtain a vantage point, albeit a limited one, from which to view the ecclesiology of a church that represented a real “via media” between Rome and the Protestant Reformation – a kind of Central European Anglicanism.

The shifting of allegiance by Roman priests to Utraquism can be regarded as a mass phenomenon throughout the sixteenth century. The Utraquist Consistory was naturally obliged to adopt an official stand toward this process. A gathering of the party *sub utraque* in Prague in 1531 adopted eleven articles of which the fourth article dealt with the issue at hand: “Inasmuch as a gift of God, many realize what is right according to the law of God and are joining us and wish faithfully to stand together in union with us: all those should be received; they should hold and honestly observe the rules in all the substantial matters of the holy Christian faith, exactly as we hold and observe them; if they have subordinate clergy, those priests should be presented to the members of the Consistory and to the administrator for a thorough examination of what they hold and how they believe about the substantial matters based on the law of God; if they agree in this with our clergy according to the law of the Lord: then they should be received; if some do not agree, our party should be notified, and we should address and examine the disagreement; those who cannot be corrected, should be rejected.”<sup>5</sup>

As my primary source, I shall use, above all, the documents of the Consistory *sub utraque*. My first question is: who was joining the Utraquist Church. Bohemophone priests and monks from the archdiocese of Prague formed a majority. A significant group was young priests, ordained by bishops of the Roman Church in Vienna, Olomouc, and Esztergom. For instance, priest Jan from Kutná Hora, once ordained by the bishop of Vienna, Friedrich Nausea and then serving in Moravia, presented himself to the Consistory in 1553 and “asked to be received into the ranks of the proper clergy *sub utraque*. And after he had presented the documents of his confirmation and ordination to the priestly office, he was received and added to the number of proper clergy.”<sup>6</sup>

Another important group were priests, newly ordained in Venice, by Greek Uniate bishops in the monastery of Sancta Maria del Horto. There was at least one instance, when the Greek bishop was unavailable. Instead the Utraquist candidates were ordained by a Latin-rite bishop, and after return to Prague had to receive an absolution from the Consistory for the reception of communion *sub una*.<sup>7</sup> Among those seeking reception into the Utraquist Church, it is possible to find also Germanophone priests (from Bohemia, Silesia, and the German lands), and Poles,

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<sup>5</sup> Klement Borový, ed., *Jednání a dopisy konsistoře katolické i utrakvistické*, [Meetings and letters of the Catholic and Utraquist consistories] ed., 2 vv. (Prague, 1868) I:62-63 (n. 75).

<sup>6</sup> Borový, ed., *Jednání a dopisy konsistoře*, 1:314 (n. 501).

<sup>7</sup> David, *Finding the Middle Way*, 100, 145-146.

especially regular clergy. For instance, a German priest *sub una*, Valentin Stainhaisl, a parson in Račice near Kadaň, arrived at the Prague Consistory in 1534, accompanied by the German Utraquist pastor from Kadaň. His application for the reception among the clergy *sub utraque* was successful.<sup>8</sup> Three years later (1548), another German priest *sub una*, Andreas Faber from Franken, was received among the Utraquists.<sup>9</sup> In 1548, the ranks of the Utraquist clergy were augmented by the priest Petr of Gniezno, once a monk in Cracow, and, in 1553, by the priest Albrecht Mačmajer, a native of Lublin in Poland.<sup>10</sup> A candidate for admission always had to appear in Prague before the administrator and the Consistory, and formally apply to join the Utraquist Church. As a rule, he was accompanied by another Utraquist priest, or brought a recommendation from him.

As a part of the admission procedure, the applicants were asked the reason they wished to be received among the clergy *sub utraque*. That is also a basic question of my inquiry. Most of the candidates – either calmly or in an exalted fashion – stated that they recognized “the truth of the Law of the Lord,” or that “they no longer wish to be in opposition to Christ the Lord and to the Holy Scripture,” and, therefore they want to join “our party”, or to be admitted “into the ranks of the clergy *sub utraque*,” also known as “the proper clergy.” Both so-called parties, i.e., the party *sub utraque* and the party *sub una*, are for long time presented as two parts of a single ecclesial body, namely of the universal/Catholic church. Roughly from the mid-sixteenth century we encounter more often references to “our church.” When in 1550 a certain Joannes Hora from Hloušky, ordained by bishop Nausea, was admitted among the Utraquist clergy, he promised to observe “the rules and rituals customary in our church.”<sup>11</sup> Or, in the year 1564, there is a mention of priest Samohel, who “out of silliness and from some giddiness left our church,” joined the *sub una*, and was returning back among the clergy *sub utraque*.<sup>12</sup> During the second half of the sixteenth century the church *sub utraque* gradually adopted its own persona, even less related to the church *sub una* than hitherto.

The Consistory members had a realistic view of human nature and, therefore, habitually inquired from the applicants concerning possible disciplinary problems that they might wish to avoid by shifting ecclesial allegiance. Their responses sought to reassure the Consistory. Thus, an applicant Damian Franta stated in 1555 that “he never had a spouse and had none at present.”<sup>13</sup> In the same year, priest Václav, the parson of Hořovec, responded that “he was not shifting from that [the Roman] party to this [the Utraquist] party because of any evil deed, but only because of the realization of truth, because of which he was once more turning to his God.”<sup>14</sup> Further, an applicant had to submit valid documents concerning his proper ordination by a bishop, who was in communion with the bishop of Rome. Therefore, when in 1541 the dean of Chrudim, Jiřík, supported the application of a young man

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<sup>8</sup> Borový, ed., *Jednání a dopisy konsistoře*, 1:93 (n. 133).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:118-119 (n. 196).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:222 (n. 381); 316-317 (n. 505).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:284 (n. 460).

<sup>12</sup> Julius Pažout, ed., *Jednání a dopisy konsistoře pod obojí způsobou přijímajících (1562-1570)* [Meetings and letters of the Utraquist consistory (1562-1570)] (Prague, 1906) 57-58 (n. 80).

<sup>13</sup> Borový, ed., *Jednání a dopisy konsistoře*, 1:329 (n. 516).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:325-326 (n. 513).

from Kolín, who was ordained by a bishop in Esztergom, the Consistory responded “that his certificate was defective, and that he should bring a better and more reliable one.” Once he returned from Hungary with a new certificate – the Consistory continued: “we shall examine it, and provide a sympathetic response.”<sup>15</sup>

The final step for the applicant was the act of admission that had a clear-cut form. The organizational articles were read to him; he promised obedience to God, to the administrator, and to the Consistory: “that he wished to be administered by the Consistory (like by a mother),” and he confirmed this determination by a handshake with the administrator, or one of the Consistory members. Thereafter, he was officially recorded in the register of clergy, “in album nostrae parties sacerdotum,” and sent as a chaplain to a parish in order to learn the procedures and customs of the Utraquist Church.

As noted, there was also a reverse flow from Utraquist to the Roman side. The continuing, albeit precarious link, between the churches *sub utraque* and *sub una*, facilitated such transition both organizationally and subjectively. The administrators and the Consistories continued to steer a middle course between the Roman Curia and the reformed churches until 1609. They were neither Crypto-Romanists, nor Crypto-Lutheran. The one exception on record was Administrator Fabian Rezek (1590-1593), who conspired with nuncio Cesare Speciano to bring the Utraquists into full obedience to Rome. This plot was thwarted by a determined opposition led by Tomáš of Soběslav.<sup>16</sup>

A prime example of the shifting allegiances was Eliáš Šud of Semanín. Son of Mikuláš Šud, an astronomer at the court of Emperor Ferdinand I, he studied in the Jesuit college of Prague, and subsequently joined the Augustinian monastery of St. Lawrence in Šopka near Mělník. He was even groomed to become the new prior of the Augustinian monastery in Ročov near Louny, and Archbishop Antonín Brus of Mohelnice ordained him to priesthood in 1569. Soon leaving the monastic life, Šud served as a parson in Nymburk and joined the church *sub utraque* in 1570. Although a Utraquist and a parson of the Týn church, he agreed to serve as the Administrator of the renewed Consistory that – on the basis of Rudolf II’s Letter of Majesty of 1609 – administered jointly the Utraquists, the Brethren, and the Lutherans.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, a firm believer in the catholicity of the church *sub utraque* was the priest Jan Locika of Domažlice. Locika asserted the rights of Utraquism against Lutheranizing pressures after 1609. In 1618, he conducted an enormous Easter procession, irritating the Brethren and the Lutherans, but demonstrating beyond doubt the great popularity of Utraquism in Prague at this late date. After the battle of the White Mountain, when the Counter Reformation or Re-Catholicization (I would prefer the term “Romanization”) began,<sup>18</sup> he – like rest of the Utraquist clergy – was

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 1:169 (n. 294).

<sup>16</sup> David, *Finding the Middle Way*, 252-258.

<sup>17</sup> Zikmund Winter, *Život církevní v Čechách. Kulturně-historický obraz z XV. a XVI. století*, [Church life in Bohemia. A cultural-historical picture from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries] 2 vv. (Prague, 1895) 1:334-335. See also David, *Finding the Middle Way*, 316-317.

<sup>18</sup> I hesitate to describe the process that occurred in Bohemia after 1620 by the hitherto conventional term of “Re-Catholicization.” This term, reflects largely the view of the Roman Church, and obscures other approaches to the interpretation and definition of the catholicity of the church. I

forced to pledge allegiance to the Archbishop of Prague. He did so in the expectation that the Utraquist priests would be permitted to practice their established rites. These hopes were, however, soon disappointed, as the prohibition of communion *sub utraque* was announced in early 1622. Despite this injunction, Locika administered communion in both kinds in the Týn church at Easter (March 27) to more than one thousand faithful. At the archbishop's behest Locika was arrested on 13 April, and jailed in the Cistercian monastery at Osek, where he died in the same year. According to a later legend, he was beheaded at the castle of Křivoklát.<sup>19</sup>

I wish to conclude my article with an appeal to theologians, church historians, and metahistorians to orient their research endeavours exactly toward an understanding of the ecclesiology of Czech Utraquism. What has been hitherto considered a decadent phenomenon of an extinguished church, may appear in an entirely different light. In my opinion, it will emerge that the primary interest of the Utraquists did not rest in a separation from the erring Rome, but in the elaboration and universal acceptance of a new concept of a catholicity of the church.<sup>20</sup>

(Translated from the Czech by Zdeněk V. David)

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submit as a substitute the term "Romanization" as one of the possibilities how to designate that complicated process of liquidating the ecclesial bodies that opposed the Roman church, and their subordination to the Roman Curia, and, as the case may be, to the Roman Catholic monarchs.

<sup>19</sup> David, *Finding the Middle Way*, 332-333, 361.

<sup>20</sup> The text of my paper, presented at the Sixth Symposium on the Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice, June 2004, was furnished only with the most essential documentation. I regret that – for various reasons – I was unable to augment the notes.

