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THE HUSSITE MOVEMENT: A FORERUNNER OF THE REFORMATION OR ITS FIRST PHASE?

In memory of Professor Stanisław Bylina

In historiography, attempts at comparing or providing a common perspective on various distant events are undoubtedly needed. Often they provide valuable insights even if they evoke dispute;¹ however, they should be approached with much caution. Most commonly, they are undertaken by authors who are not knowledgeable enough to competently discuss issues concerning different historical periods. This reservation also applies, perhaps in a particular way, to the author of this paper. This means that my observations are solely meant to draw attention to certain issues and to the existence of hasty and sometimes unjustified historiographic judgements.

The aforementioned pitfalls concern not only different historical periods, but also historians' own interests. I fully share the reservations expressed by the late Jiří Kejř, a renowned expert on the life and work of Jan Hus and the history of the Hussite movement. He wrote that he could never understand why some historians writing about Hussitism referred to the crisis of feudalism and viewed Hussitism as the first phase of the bourgeois revolution or as a historical anomaly. Attempts to justify such claims, he argued, were doomed to failure, because primary sources would not support them and far-reaching generalisations are typically unsafe. In this case, that particularly applies to feudalism, which is difficult to define and had a number of forms.² The question of what the relevance of the Hussite movement was to Protestantism³

¹ Cf., e.g., A. Patschovsky, *Revolučnost husitské revoluce*, *Český časopis historický*, 99, 2001, pp. 231-252.

² J. Kejř, *Žil jsem ve středověku*, Prague 2012, p. 214. Similar reservations were voiced by F. Šmahel (*Husitská revoluce*, vol. 4, *Epilog bouřlivého věku*, Prague 1996, p. 161), who emphasised that the linking of the Hussite movement to the first outbreak of the bourgeois revolution is not confirmed by any sources, whereas the opinions that Hussitism marked the end of an anti-feudal revolutionary wave are out of line with the general social process of the development of the Hussite movement and the Reformation.

³ A. Molnár (*Husovo místo v evropské reformaci*, *Československý časopis historický*, 14, 1966, p. 1), in his attempt to reach a historiographic compromise, defined Protestantism as "a broad socio-political movement opposing the Catholic Church as a powerful institution that claimed to exercise ideological autocracy".

has long puzzled historians. This is no surprise, since the religious background of both movements had a considerable impact upon the Catholic Church. Luis Blanc, in his history of the French Revolution, wrote as early as the 19th century that the Hussite movement had been the first stage of the European reformation and revolutions. Also František Palacký wrote about “the reformation of the 15th and 16th centuries”.⁴ The German reformation and the German Peasants’ War were considered to mark the end of the anti-feudal revolution which began in the early 14th century and included the Bohemian Hussite movement as one of its stages.⁵ It cannot be denied that this view was highly controversial.

Amedeo Molnár, whose contribution to research on the Waldensians, the Hussite movement and Protestantism cannot be overestimated, distinguished two reformations.⁶ The first was “a fairly widespread reformation movement both within the Church structures and by factions which left the Church in the 12th century”. The objective was to reform the Church “at the top and grassroots levels”. This reformation movement took on “the form of passive resistance of the Waldensians and a revolutionary form in the Hussite movement”.⁷ The second reformation dates to the 16th century and is primarily represented by Luther and Calvin. Thus the Hussite movement was the initial phase of the Reformation, whether or not the originators of the following phase were aware of this fact.⁸ In Molnár’s view, the first reformation derived the divine law mainly from the Sermon on the Mount and promoted the view that Christ’s Kingdom was to be awaited on earth. The Bible provided guidelines for daily living and was used as a basis for criticism of the clergy. At the same time, the awaiting of the end of time relativised the legislative aspect of the Bible’s message. In extreme cases this included prophetic visions and the eagerness to adapt ethical norms to individual or collective experiences, regardless of what the Gospel said. Protestantism, on the other hand, appealed specifically to the Pauline epistles. The legislative norms of the Bible became secondary to the Divine Mercy and Christian freedoms.⁹

Molnár argued that the differences between the two reformations did not result solely from their timing. The first one “has folk roots in the broadest sense. It unites its supporters whose majority is from the lowest social stratum. It is disturbingly non-conformist and at times revolutionary. The second reformation is, by contrast, socially

⁴ F. Palacký, *Die Geschichte des Hussitentums und Professor Constantin Höfler*, Prague 1868, p. 160.

⁵ B. Töpfer, Fragen der hussitischen revolutionären Bewegung, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 11, 1963, pp. 146-168.

⁶ Earlier, the Hussite movement was viewed as the first phase of the Reformation by R. Kalivoda, *Husitská ideologie*, Prague 1961, p. 138. See also other works by the same author: Husitství a jeho výústění v době předbělohorské, *Studia Comeniana et Historica*, 13-25, 1983, pp. 3-44; M. Ransdorf, *Kapituly z geneze husitské ideologie*, Prague 1986, p. 11.

⁷ A. Molnár, *Husovo místo*, p. 6; *id.*, Romani 13 nella interpretazione della prima Riforma, *Protestantismo*, 24, 1969, pp. 65-78; *id.*, *Valdenští. Evropský rozměr jejich vzdoru*, Prague 1973.

⁸ *Id.*, *Husovo místo*, p. 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

conformist and conservative.”¹⁰ Molnár’s view was fully supported by Kejř, who regarded Wycliffe and Hus as the originators of the first reformation.¹¹

Another relevant and well-argued observation was made by Ferdinand Seibt. He wrote that in the Hussite movement and the German Reformation a prominent role was played by the upper noble class and the upper urban strata.¹² Frantiřek řmahel, the unquestioned highest authority in modern studies of the Hussite movement, argues that the German Reformation, similarly to Bohemian Hussitism, was an urban phenomenon.¹³ It should be mentioned that in his monumental work *The Hussite Revolution*¹⁴ he abandoned his earlier view,¹⁵ acknowledging that the Hussite movement was more significant than just “a reformation before reformations”. Initially, he viewed the Hussite movement to be the first stage of the European reformatory cycle (following Molnár). However, he later concluded that while the Hussite movement was a real revolutionary and reformatory process, “it was a reformation prior to reformations and a revolution preceding revolutions”.¹⁶

The above deliberations show how equivocal all generalisations can be. This is not a question of challenging the evident affinity between the Hussite movement and the Reformation, because this relationship is undeniable.¹⁷ The issue is that generalisations are assertions. For an assertion to be fully convincing, it needs to follow from irrefutable arguments. Hence, how is one to prove that the phrase “a reformation prior to reformations” is a more pertinent description, or conversely, that “the first phase of the Reformation” is categorically more appropriate? In my view, this is a wording dispute which cannot be resolved. With this in mind, the question which I deliberately put in the title of this paper sounds a little provocative. Moreover, I do not know an unequivocal answer to it, because depending on one’s line of argument, it is possible to prove or substantiate either of the alternatives appearing in the question.

More important than the resolution of such disputes is the identification of clear or merely indirect links which allow the Hussite movement to be tied strongly with the 16th-century Reformation. Let us begin with the basic issue. The word most frequently, if not solely, used (as in the case of Protestantism) in reference to what initiated the battle against the Church was *protest*. This protest was targeted at various kinds of evil which had been permeating the Church and diverted it from the purity of the Mount. This may appear to be another wording dispute, but I am convinced that the original word which lay at the core of the teaching of Wycliffe, Hus, the Hussite movement, Luther and the entire reformatory movement was *disobedience*. This is

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹ J. Kejř, *Jan Hus známý i neznámý (Resumé knihy, která nebude napsána)*, Prague 2010, p. 31.

¹² F. Seibt, *Hussitenstudien. Personen, Ereignisse, Ideen einer frühen Revolution*, Munich 1987, pp. 217-228.

¹³ F. řmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, p. 152.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, fn. 298, p. 212.

¹⁵ *Id.*, *La révolution hussite, une anomalie historique*, Paris 1985, p. 128.

¹⁶ *Id.*, *Husitské řechy. Struktury. Procesy. Ideje*, Prague 2001, p. 75.

¹⁷ Those researchers who claimed that Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and other reformers had not been significantly inspired by Hus were obviously wrong. For more on this topic, see A. Molnár, *Husovo místo*, p. 2.

a fact and not my evaluation. This disobedience led the protest against the observed distortions to the point of separation from the Catholic Church. Hus himself admitted that he had ignored the papal ban on preaching¹⁸ and remained disobedient to his superiors until the end of his life. Kejř, who viewed Hus very objectively in all of his works, was right in saying that such a blatant violation of obedience would have been inadmissible “even in modern liberal times”.¹⁹ As is well known, in the Reformation period this was a common phenomenon.

Highly controversial was Todd’s claim that the dispute between Hus and the 16th-century reformers on the one hand and the church authorities on the other could be summed up as “the Gospel against the letter of the law”.²⁰ Another of his statements was totally mistaken: “Hus, Luther and Zwingli just wanted to reform the existing Church. When they were excommunicated, they had to come to terms with their plight”.²¹ None of them was excommunicated for their efforts to reform the Church without distorting it. All of them were excluded from the community of the faithful because they wanted to leave their own mark on the Church. Acceptance of their demands would have led to the establishment of an entirely new church.

Let us recall just a few examples to highlight the previous point. Molnár was right in saying that, according to Hus, the truth had been embodied whenever people had been ready to defend it even to death.²² This sounds very modern; however, it should be added that even though the Bohemian reformer identified the truth with Jesus Christ, this was his own individual truth and not the truth spread by the Church.²³ Hus’s truth shortly became the truth of his adherents (for example, it strongly resonated in Jan Želivský’s preaching).²⁴ And once the Truth was subject to individual interpretation, this meant that everything else could be interpreted in the same vein. However, Hus himself might not have perceived it in this way.

Rejecting human judgments in his own cause (which did not mean that he rejected them in their entirety), Hus, who had been accused of heresy, appealed directly to Christ’s judgment. This was a procedure unknown in either religious or secular law. It was deemed so ‘eccentric’ that it even astounded Jan of Jesenice, a renowned lawyer, who had been a follower of Wycliffism since as early as 1408²⁵ and supported and defended Hus in various cases.²⁶ In a letter written as early as 1411, Hus referred to

¹⁸ *Mistr Jan Hus, Výklady*, ed. J. Daňhelka, Prague 1975, p. 151.

¹⁹ J. Kejř, *Znovu o Husově rehabilitaci*, [in:] *Z počátků české reformace*, Brno 2006, p. 253; *id.*, *Jan Hus známý*, pp. 52-53.

²⁰ J. M. Todd, *Reformation*, New York 1971 [Polish Translation: *Reformacja*, translated by J. S. Łoś, translation edited and bibliographical remarks translated by T. Szafranski, Warsaw 1974, p. 95].

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

²² A. Molnár, *Husovo místo*, p. 5.

²³ See especially J. Kejř, *Jan Hus sám o sobě*, [in:] *id.*, *Z počátků*, p. 25, also p. 30.

²⁴ *Jan Želivský, Dochovaná kázání z roku 1419*, vol. 1, ed. A. Molnár, Prague 1953, p. 58.

²⁵ J. Kejř, *Husitský právník M. Jan z Jesenice*, Prague 1965, p. 8.

²⁶ *Id.*, *Právo a právní prameny v díle Husově*, [in:] *id.*, *Z počátků*, pp. 86-88; *id.*, *Jan Hus jako právní myslitel*, [in:] *ibid.*, pp. 100-101, 103; *id.*, *K pramenům Husova procesu: tzv. Ordo procedendi*, [in:] *ibid.*, pp. 132-134, 138; *id.*, *Znovu o Husově rehabilitaci*, [in:] *ibid.*, p. 255.

“the Christ’s Church” of Bohemia and “the Christ’s Church” of England.²⁷ This, obviously, was not synonymous with what the Reformation brought a century later, but Hus certainly did not have in mind an orthodox vision of the Church.

Paul de Vooght was also wrong in arguing that Hus had been pushed to resist the Church by his opponents, who had made him a heretic despite the fact that in following his predecessors (including Wycliffe) he adopted only ideas that could, in his view, be combined with orthodoxy. What happened at the Council of Constance was sheer revenge.²⁸ This last point corresponds to the view of Todd, who claimed that in the case of Hus and then Luther, the Church only wanted a judgement to be delivered, a conviction, because a rebel had to be disabled.²⁹ In fact, the opposite was true. According to Kejř, the situation was absurd. Hus was ready to be burned at the stake while the council fathers urged him to recant in order to save his life.³⁰ In the cases of Hus and Luther, the Church only wanted them to recant their errors. Equally unjustified was the claim by Otto Hermann Pesch, who believed that Hus had been condemned because, among other things, he was not a Gersonist, that is, a follower of the Ockhamist theologian Jean Gerson.³¹ It is not the case that Hus was burned at the stake blameless and only because his judges were driven by ill will.³² Under the law of the time, he was found guilty of heresy and when he refused to recant his errors, he received the only possible sentence in that situation.³³

The relationship of Protestantism with Hussitism is not thought to arise out of some specific knowledge on the part of Luther and other reformers about what had happened in Bohemia a century earlier. Besides sketchy information about Hus and Jerome of Prague, Luther had no idea about the Taborites and other Bohemian radicals, and he never visited Bohemia.³⁴ In 1517, he still regarded the Hussites and the Unity of the Brethren (*Calviniani ante Calvinum*³⁵) as the “unsuccessful heretics” (*haeretici infoelices*). In the following year, Luther intended to write an anti-Hussite treatise,³⁶ and after 1519 he sympathised only with the views of the Bohemian Utraquists, still treating the Unity of the Brethren as a heretic sect.³⁷ Until 1519, he also

²⁷ *M. Jana Husi korespondence a dokumenty*, ed. V. Novotný, Prague 1920, No. 24.

²⁸ P. de Vooght, *L’Hérésie de Jean Huss*, Louvain 1960, p. 473

²⁹ J. M. Todd, *Reformacja*, p. 181.

³⁰ J. Kejř, *Jan Hus sám o sobě*, p. 31.

³¹ O. H. Pesch, *Hinführung zu Luther*, Mainz 1982, [*Zrozumieć Lutra*, translated by A. Marniok and K. Kowalik, Poznań 2008, p. 346]

³² J. Kejř, *Jan Hus známý*, p. 108.

³³ *Id.*, *Husův proces*, Prague 2000.

³⁴ F. Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, p. 147.

³⁵ R. J. W. Evans, *Calvinism in East Central Europe: Hungary and her neighbours 1540–1700*, [in:] *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, ed. M. Prestwich, Oxford 1985, p. 169. On the Unity of the Brethren, see J. Macek, *Víra a zbožnost jagellonského věku*, Prague 2001, pp. 286–321 (see this source for more references); J. Halama, *Sociální učení českých bratří 1464–1618*, Brno 2003, pp. 97–213.

³⁶ A. Molnár, *Husovo místo*, pp. 8–9.

³⁷ J. Macek, *Víra*, p. 337.

viewed Hus as a heretic.³⁸ According to a generally held historiographic view, Luther was pushed to embrace Hussitism by Johann Maier von Eck during the 1519 Leipzig Debate, who told him that his understanding of the Church was close to that of Hus. From then onwards, Luther perceived Hus as an ally. Soon afterwards, he received Hus's *De ecclesia* (*The Church*) sent from Prague by Václav Rožďalovský and Jan Poduška, dubbed a Waldensian priest (a priest of the Unity of the Brethren).³⁹ Luther contributed to the publishing of Hus's work in two thousand copies, one of which he sent to George Spalatin, the highly influential secretary of elector Frederic the Wise of Saxony, along with a letter in which he wrote *sumus omnes Hussitae* (*We are all Hussites*).⁴⁰ While Luther initially denied being the second Hus, he finally reasoned that he shared some of Hus's views.⁴¹ In his 1522 letter to the Bohemians he wrote that even if they were to deny Hus, Hus would still "be ours".⁴² In later years, probably in an attempt to highlight his own role, Luther falsely claimed that even though Wycliffe and Hus had criticised the Church's bad habits, they had not attacked its doctrine. *Ea est mea vocatio* ("this is my calling"), he added.⁴³

Thanks to research by Zdeněk V. David, it is possible to clarify this picture and even partially revise it. Already at the Leipzig Debate, Luther often stated that several articles from Hus's teachings that had been condemned by the Council of Constance fully complied with the Gospel and were thus genuinely Christian. He soon repeated that statement. In late 1519, he praised communion under both kinds (*sub utraque specie*), although he was not yet directly in favour of its reception. By the end of the following year, in his response to Eck, Luther argued that the condemnation of Hus in Constance was unlawful. In a 1522 letter to the Bohemians, he wrote that Hus's and Jerome of Prague's blood had been innocently shed. In that same year, he began explicitly and overtly to support communion under both kinds, abandoning his previ-

³⁸ J. M. Todd, *Martin Luther: a Biographical Study*, London 1964 [Polish translation: *Marcin Luter*, translated by T. Szafranski, afterword by Fr. A. Skowronek, Warsaw 1983, p. 161].

³⁹ A. Molnár, *Husovo misto*, pp. 8-9; J. Macek, *Víra*, p. 336, 338; J. M. Todd, *Reformacja*, p. 178; P. Čornej, M. Bartlová, *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české*, Vol. 6, 1437-1526, Prague-Litomyšl 2007, pp. 689-690.

⁴⁰ F. Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, p. 145; *id.*, *Hereze a předčasná reformace: causa ad disputandum*, [in:] *id.*, *Mezi středověkem a renesancí*, Prague 2002, p. 275; J. Macek, *Víra*, p. 339; M. Wernisch, *Husitství. Raně reformační příběh*, Brno 2003, p. 113; P. Soukup, *Jan Hus. Život a smrt kazatele*, Prague 2015, 174-175; Z. D. David, *Finding the Middle Way: The Utraquists' Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther*, Washington D.C. 2003, p. 54.

⁴¹ J. M. Todd, *Reformacja*, p. 20. If this statement is to refer to Luther's general opinion considered over time, then it does not arouse any doubts. However, in 1520, the opposite was true. First, Luther declared: "We are all Hussites", but by the end of the year, he had renounced any comparison with the Bohemian reformer. For specific information, albeit with not always fully convincing conclusions, see: S. H. Hendrix, "We are all Hussites"? Hus and Luther Revisited, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 65, 1974, pp. 134-161.

⁴² A. Molnár, *Na rozhraní věků. Cesty reformace*, Prague 1985, p. 216ff.; F. Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, p. 146.

⁴³ F. Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, p. 147.

ous hesitations. He also considered St. Paul and St. Augustine to have been Hussites, because of the views that they had professed.⁴⁴

There is no doubt that Luther's contemporaries correctly interpreted his intentions and views. In 1523, Johannes Cochlaeus condemned Luther's 1520 treatise *Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament, das ist von der heiligen Messe* (*A Sermon on the New Testament, that is on the Holy Mass*) as Hussite, heretic and subversive, while in the same year Thomas More claimed that Luther was exploiting the Bohemian heresy to attack the Vatican's authority.⁴⁵

It should also be added that Hussitism continued to gain recognition over time. Various texts on Hussitism (including the four Articles of Prague) were printed by Jacob Sobijs and Martin Reinhart.⁴⁶ In Germany, Jan Žižka's activity was growing in popularity, largely thanks to Ulrich von Hutten.⁴⁷ Thomas Müntzer preached in Prague.⁴⁸ In the 1530s Johannes Agricola promoted Hus and his works.⁴⁹

Also Calvin seems to have had some knowledge of the issues of interest to us. From 1523 he studied at the Collège de Montaigu, part of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Paris, where he most likely learned about the views of Wycliffe, Hus and Luther, since John Mair, teaching at the college, mentioned them in his "Commentary on the Gospel".⁵⁰ On the other hand, Calvin did not cite Hus's texts; he mentioned Hus's burning in Constance only once, saying that it might have been the result of the *Remanensium perfidie* of the Church rather than of Sigismund of Luxembourg, who, in his opinion, went back on his word but did so only under the pressure of the clergy.⁵¹ It might be concluded, however, that since he knew such a detail (though interpreted incorrectly by him – but that is a completely different matter), his knowledge of Hus's views must have been far deeper than is generally assumed.

As I mentioned earlier, the relationship of the Hussite movement with the Reformation cannot be doubted. Without exhausting the topic even in the smallest degree, one may indicate similarities, similar views or actions, and even – speculative though this may be – certain "common" character traits of the most famous figures.

Let us start by recalling a few general statements provided by historiography. George R. Potter is right when he says that Wycliffe, Hus, Zwingli, Calvin and Cranmer agreed that there was

"but one Catholic church whose creed was the same and should be known to all. Their model was that of the primitive church of the days of the Apostles; it was from this that Rome, the Popes

⁴⁴ Z. V. David, *Finding the Middle Way*, pp. 52-55.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 56.

⁴⁶ Cf. S. Hoyer, *Jan Hus und der Hussitismus in den Flugschriften des ersten Jahrzehnts der Reformation*, [in:] *Flugschriften als Massenmedium der Reformationszeit*, Stuttgart 1981, pp. 291-307.

⁴⁷ F. Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, pp. 154-155.

⁴⁸ E. Maur, *Tomaš Müntzer*, Prague 1993, p. 116ff; J. M. Todd, *Reformacja*, p. 210; Z. V. David, *Finding the Middle Way*, p. 62; P. Čornej, M. Bartlová, *Velké dějiny*, p. 691.

⁴⁹ A. Molnár, Jan Agricola a Husovo dílo, *Kostnické jiskry*, 26, 1958.

⁵⁰ S. Piwko, *Jan Kalwin. Życie i dzieło*, Warsaw 1995, p. 10.

⁵¹ A. Molnár, *Husovo misto*, p. 9.

and the hierarchy had manifestly departed and so had led men away from Christ. The Reformers always insisted that they were neither innovators nor heretics; they were seeking to reestablish the visible congregation of Christians upon the right foundations and principles⁵².

Similar views were expressed by John M. Todd when he wrote that Wycliffe and Hus's ideas of going back to the Bible, the role of national languages and the need for changes in the priesthood and sacramental life were close to the Reformation.⁵³ According to Todd, Hus fought for what the sixteenth-century reformers did,⁵⁴ and the main similarity between Luther and Hus concerned their definition of the Church – the conviction that the community of the faithful and, consequently, the entire status of the church authorities, were ill-defined.⁵⁵

It has long been noted that the Unity of the Brethren and also the Utraquists were part of Protestantism.⁵⁶ According to František Šmahel, Luther's ideas of communion under both kinds for the laity, national languages, secularisation of excessive Church assets and rejection of the cruel Inquisition within the Catholic Church are linked to the Hussite movement and the Unity of the Brethren.⁵⁷ This is close to what Molnár stated earlier. He argued that the radical Czech Utraquists' path onward to God's love and justification began in the late 15th century. He also emphasised the ideals of the Unity of the Brethren and especially of Luke of Prague.⁵⁸

Jan Hus, had he still been alive, could have supported the Four Articles of Prague which became the core of the Hussite movement, because in his time he argued for them in his works, teaching and letters.⁵⁹ He was not the originator of the practice of offering the chalice to the people, but he approved of this initiative of Jakoubek ze Stříbra (Jacob of Mies) in his letter written in Constance, and he asked that this new practice not be opposed.⁶⁰ The practice of communion in both kinds quickly spread beyond the limits of Prague and became the practice among Hus's followers. Shortly later the University of Prague declared its approval.⁶¹ I have already mentioned Lu-

⁵² G. R. Potter, *Zwingli*, Cambridge 1976, pp. 167-168.

⁵³ J. M. Todd, *Reformacja*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁵⁵ J. M. Todd, *Marcin Luter*, pp. 161-162.

⁵⁶ F. G. Heymann, The Hussite-Utraquist Church in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 52, 1961, p. 15.

⁵⁷ F. Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, p. 147. See also N. Kotowski, *Husovy ekklesiologické názory u Martina Luthera, zejména v jeho raném období*, [in:] J. B. Lášek (ed.), *Jan Hus mezi epochami, národy a konfesemi*, Prague 1995, pp. 277-284; H. A. Oberman, *Hus a Luther (Antikrist a druhý reformační objev)*, [in:] *ibid.*, pp. 265-276.

⁵⁸ A. Molnár, Luther und die Böhmisches Brüder, *Communio viatorum. A Theological Quarterly*, 24, 1981, pp. 47-67.

⁵⁹ A. Molnár, *Husovo místo*, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁰ *M. Jana Husi korespondence*, no. 141. Cf. A. Molnár, Teologie husitského kalicha, *Theologická příloha Křesťanské revue*, 32, 1965, pp. 2-3; F. Šmahel, *Jan Hus. Život a dílo*, Prague 2013, pp. 190-191.

⁶¹ *Archiv český čili staré písemné památky české i moravské* (henceforth AČ), vol. III, F. Palacký, Prague 1844, no. 11.

ther's views on communion *sub utraque specie*, which became one of the symbols of Protestantism too. In Molnár's opinion, in Lutheranism the offering of the chalice to the faithful was not introduced under the influence of Hussitism. Philip Melanchthon argued for Utraquism, referring to Saint Cyprian and Saint Jerome. His argumentation was advanced by Spalatin in 1530.⁶² There is no reason to reject the opinion of this outstanding researcher, because in essence it is surely correct. However, Amadeo Molnár was silent about and disregarded an obvious matter: without Hus's inspiration and then the practices of his followers, the Reformation as a religious movement would be unlikely to have occurred at all.

The first of the Four Articles of Prague stated that the Word of God was to be freely preached. This meant in essence that everybody could not only freely preach the Gospel, but also interpret it freely. The masters of Prague tried to meet possible threats by the introduction of something similar to an examination for potential preachers. This attempt was unsuccessful, and one of the reasons was the fact that the new practice became common almost instantly.⁶³ To an extent, the equivalent of this practice in Lutheranism was the later *sola scriptura* principle and its clarification: *scriptura scripturam interpretatur*.

The third article demanded a poor Church, which practically meant secularisation of the clergy's material wealth. Probably Hus did not envision the radical form of the early Hussite Revolution, but he supported the idea of the poor Church. Hus's view of the riches of the Church was close to that of the Waldensians.⁶⁴ Following Wycliffe's teachings, Hus supported Wenceslaus IV of Bohemia when he confiscated all of the Church treasures in 1411.⁶⁵ The confiscation of Church assets was officially justified by noble intentions (references to the apostolic church tradition), but the actual intentions were driven by more material motives. Protestants did the same.

Hus followed Wycliffe's concept of the Church as *universitas predestinatorum* [the company of the predestined] or *communitas predestinatorum* [community of the predestined ones]. There is no space here to discuss the details, but in short this meant the rejection of the institutionalised Church and contestation of its earthly power.⁶⁶ This is enough to see how misguided was Scott H. Hendrix's statement that Hus's ecclesiology "was not subversive".⁶⁷ Hus and Luther's understandings of predestination differed, but their theories had some common traits.⁶⁸ In Calvinism the idea of predestination took hold only after Calvin died. In Lutheranism it became a standard more than a decade later. Let us note one more issue. Hus argued that parish priests

⁶² A. Molnár, *Husovo místo*, pp. 10-11.

⁶³ See e.g. J. Kejř, *Mistři pražské univerzity a kněží táborští*, Prague 1981, pp. 10-13.

⁶⁴ A. Molnár, *Jan Hus známý*, p. 31; A. Molnár, *Husité*, Prague 1984, p. 87.

⁶⁵ A. Molnár, *Znovu o Husově rehabilitaci*, pp. 253-254.

⁶⁶ A. Molnár, *Jan Hus známý*, p. 36.

⁶⁷ S. H. Hendrix, In Quest of the Vera Ecclesia: The Crises of Late Medieval Ecclesiology, *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 7, 1976, p. 373.

⁶⁸ A. Molnár, *Husovo místo*, p. 12.

and bishops should be elected or appointed by the entire community of the faithful, as used to be done in the early Christian Church.⁶⁹

The desire to introduce changes inevitably also included the liturgy. This did not concern Hus, and for some time it did not concern his Utraquist (moderate) followers either. In general, they were willing to reconcile with Rome provided that the Holy See approved the offering of communion under both kinds, and did their best to follow the Church's official stances on other important issues. The situation in the provinces, however, was different. Once anyone could preach freely, the most radical members of the clergy began introducing other novelties. The mass was said in barns. Everyday tables and barrels served as altars. Immersion baptism was practised in rivers. Burials took place in the absence of a priest. Christian relics and images of the saints were disdained.⁷⁰ The Taborites (a radical Hussite fraction) in fact succeeded in developing their own confession. They did not need a church to celebrate mass; they rejected common symbols of Christian religion, including the cross, which they replaced with the chalice.⁷¹ When celebrating mass they did not use vestments. They disregarded fasting.⁷² They destroyed relics. They condemned Mariolatry (and in this respect they were close to the Protestants) and the veneration of saints.⁷³ The pressure of the radicals affected the Utraquists (also called the Calixtines, from *calix*, Latin for their emblem, the chalice), who accepted the celebration of the mass in the Czech vernacular. To be precise, they agreed that the mass need not be delivered in Latin. The only exception were the words spoken during transubstantiation.⁷⁴ National vernacular liturgies became one of the benchmarks of the Reformation.

The liturgy rites underwent far-reaching changes in reformist churches. The Hussite model was followed,⁷⁵ although there was wide discretion in introducing other changes. It is enough to mention Thomas Müntzer and his reformed services in Allstedt in 1523,⁷⁶ and Martin Bucer, who followed the example of Müntzer, and whose activity in Strasbourg included his significant contribution to *Confessio Tetrapolitana*, the confession of four cities: Strasbourg, Constance, Memmingen, and Lindau.⁷⁷ Thomas Cranmer, who drew up the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1549 (revised in 1552),⁷⁸ should also be men-

⁶⁹ *Jan Hus, Knižky o svatokupectví*, ed. A. Gregor, Prague 1954, p. 90.

⁷⁰ *Dokumeneta Mag. Joannis Hus*, ed. F. Palacký, Prague 1869, pp. 636-638.

⁷¹ *Jan z Příbramě, Život kněží tábořských*, ed. J. Boubin, Příbram 2000, p. 57.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 54, 57; AČ, III, p. 222.

⁷³ *Jan z Příbramě, Život*, p. 55.

⁷⁴ Cf. for example S. Bylina, *Rewolucja husycka. Przedświt i pierwsze lata*, Warsaw 2011, pp. 214, 223.

⁷⁵ Cf. D. R. Holeton, *The Revolution of Utraquist Liturgy. A Precursor of Western Liturgical Reform*, *Studia Liturgica*, 25, 1995, pp. 51-67; D. R. Holeton, *The Evolution of Utraquist Eucharistic Liturgy: a textual Study*, [in:] *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice, vol. 2 Papers from the XVIIIth World Congress of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences*, Brno 1996, Prague 1998, pp. 97-126.

⁷⁶ F. Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, p. 152.

⁷⁷ J. M. Todd, *Reformacja*, pp. 223, 289.

⁷⁸ For a thorough analysis see M. Davies, *Cranmer's Godly Order: The Destruction of Catholicism Through Liturgical Change* (Liturgical Revolution), Roman Catholic Books, 1995, Chapters 11 and 12.

tioned. All of the reformers contested the Catholic liturgy and the sacrificial nature of the Mass, and all – with the exception of Luther – questioned the true and real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.⁷⁹ In that respect there was a profound difference, because the Hussites, including Utraquists and Taborites, did not reject the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Taborites, however, were accused of adhering to Wycliff's doctrine of remanence.⁸⁰ In Bohemia the Picards were an exception. They rejected the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. For this Jan Žižka – himself a follower of Jan Hus – exterminated them with the consent of moderate Hussites based in Prague.⁸¹

The Taborites were accused of rejecting the anointing of the sick and other sacraments.⁸² The Lutheran church recognises only Communion and Baptism as sacraments. Similarly Calvinists recognise Baptism and the Eucharist (the spiritual presence of Christ) as the only sacraments.

Of matters less essential, but nevertheless important and interesting, mention could be made of the fact that Müntzer's views were similar to those of the millenarian Taborites and Jan Želivský. Želivský, according to experts in Bohemian matters, could not have known anything about them.⁸³ Josef Macek's analogy between the radical Hussites and the so-called grassroot reformations appears to be correct.⁸⁴ Calvin's activities and impact resemble those of Jan Želivský.⁸⁵

In the Hussite Movement and in the Reformation, a clear and possibly crucial trait was internal conflicts. In both there was much competition, deep divisions, accusations, internal heresies, and finally the physical persecution of opponents within the same camp. While condemning the atrocities of the Church, the Hussites did not hesitate to exterminate the Picards to protect their own orthodoxy (which did not in fact exist, if the differences between the Utraquists and Taborites are considered). Želivský was responsible for the death of one of his ideological (in fact political) opponents, who was decapitated after being recognised to be extraordinarily dangerous, especially since he had the talent of controlling crowds. The Taborites split into two factions. In 1434 an army of Utraquist nobility and Catholics defeated the radical Taborites at the Battle of Lipany, which virtually ended the Hussite Wars.

Alister McGrath, author of *A Life of John Calvin*, states correctly that the Hussitic Movement was a power, a doctrine which jeopardised the position of the Church. The Reformation in West European towns made the destabilising force of heresies much more obvious. From the very beginning there were tensions between the mainstream

⁷⁹ Ibid., Chapter V.

⁸⁰ *Staré letopisy české z rukopisu křižovnického*, ed. F. Šimek, M. Kaňák, Prague 1959, p. 99.

⁸¹ Cf. S. Bylina, *Na skraju lewicy husyckiej*, Warsaw 2005, especially chapter IV; J. J. Jukl, *Adamité. Historie a vyhubení husitských naháčů*, Prague 2014.

⁸² *Staré letopisy české z vaticlavského rukopisu novočeským pravopisem vydává*, F. Šimek, Prague 1937, p. 59; *Staré letopisy české z rukopisu křižovnického*, pp. 98-99.

⁸³ J. Macek, *Víra*, pp. 340-342; F. Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, p. 150.

⁸⁴ J. Macek, Die böhmische und die deutsche radikale Reformation bis zum Jahre 1525, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 85, 1974, pp. 5-29.

⁸⁵ More on Želivský in B. Kopičková, *Jan Želivský*, Prague 1990; S. Bylina, *Program husyckiego kaznodziei*, [in:] S. Bylina (ed.), *Ruchy heretyckie w średniowieczu. Studia*, Wrocław 1991, pp. 194-203.

reformers (Luther, Zwingli, Bullinger, Bucer and Calvin), for whom the reform was a cooperative symbiotic process involving secular authorities within the framework of the existing social order, and the radical reformers (e.g. Jacob Hutter), for whom a true reformation meant the eradication of the old and demoralised socio-political system.⁸⁶ For Luther and Philip Melancthon, all non-Catholic opponents were fanatics, including the followers of Zwingli. Zwingli judged his Swiss opponents similarly.⁸⁷ Michael Servetus was the only person (as McGrath underlines) who was burnt at the stake for heresy in Geneva in Calvin's lifetime,⁸⁸ but this does not change the fact. Zwingli was behind the drowning of Felix Manz in Zurich. The Protestants also had their "Picards" – a group which could not be approved because of their views. Manz was the first Swiss Anabaptist to be martyred at the hands of magisterial Protestants. By 1530, over two thousand Anabaptists had been killed in Switzerland and southern Germany.

The difference between the Hussites and Protestants was that the Hussites – despite their heated internal ideological disputes and much hostility – had to tolerate their factions for a long time and cooperate actively to resist the anti-Hussite crusades.

Some more interesting analogies, though clearly of secondary relevance, can be drawn. Hus was a courageous man. At the Council of Constance he refused to recant so as not to offend his followers.⁸⁹ As mentioned earlier, he appealed to Jesus Christ as the supreme judge. Luther, when asked by Eck whether he would recant what he had written, replied that *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) was the basis of Christian belief, and boldly denied the Pope's and councils' primacy, adding that he could not go against his conscience. To a letter of Sylvester Mazzolini (Prierias) denouncing him, Luther responded that church punishments could not separate him from the church, "if the truth of the church connects me. I would rather be cursed and excommunicated than be blessed with you. [...] I am the Lord's, if I am lost, I am lost to the Lord."⁹⁰ Hus's reactions to his opponents were highly emotional;⁹¹ Luther's temperament, as it is generally known, was vehement. Not infrequently his choice of words was drastic and aggressive. Calvin, as his biographers have accurately observed, was prone to emotional verbal attacks⁹² and to a pettiness and bitterness that increased with age.⁹³

Finally, two other essential differences (although not the only ones) should be mentioned. In short, in Bohemia the Hussite revolution produced the so-called *království dvojího lidu* (the kingdom of two denominations) and the *tolerance z nut-*

⁸⁶ A. E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*, Wiley-Blackwell 1995 [Polish translation: *Jan Kalwin. Studium kształtowania kultury zachodu*, Warsaw 2009, p. 176].

⁸⁷ G. R. Potter, *Zwingli*, p. 187ff.

⁸⁸ A. E. McGrath, *Jan Kalwin*, p. 174.

⁸⁹ *Historické spisy Petra z Mladoňovic a jiné zprávy a paměti o M. Janovi Husovi a M. Jeronymovi z Prahy*, [in:] *Fontes rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. VIII, ed. V. Novotný, Prague 1932, p. 116.

⁹⁰ Löscher, *Vollständige Reformations acta und documenta*, 1712, vol. 2, pp. 426-427, after <http://www.martinluther.dk/LUTPRI04.htm> (18, 19 and 81).

⁹¹ J. Kejř, *Jan Hus známý*, pp. 45-46.

⁹² B. Cottret, *Calvin: Bibliographie*, JC Lattès 1995 [Polish translation *Kalwin*, Warsaw 2000, p. 232].

⁹³ A. E. McGrath, *Jan Kalwin*, p. 177.

nosti (tolerance born of necessity).⁹⁴ The principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (literally: whose realm, his religion) became binding. The other difference was one between Luther and the Utraquists, referring to their respective perceptions of papal authority. Luther categorically refuted apostolic succession (the sacrament of Holy Orders).⁹⁵ This limited the likelihood of reaching a potential agreement with the Vatican. In the early 1620s the threat that the Utraquists might join the growing Protestant movement was obvious. Consequently the objective was to unite the Utraquists and Catholics in Bohemia. The union was to be finalised by the *legat de latere* (an appointed papal legate) Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio. In fact this was an initiative of Ladislaus or László Szalkai, who shortly afterwards was appointed archbishop of Esztergom. Conservative Utraquists were highly critical of the Unity of the Brethren and of the Lutheran Reformation. They also wanted to weaken their radical faction, which was beginning to welcome the novelties coming from Germany. *Compactata* negotiations were held at Buda and failed. Nevertheless, the attempt meant that theoretically a reconciliation was considered possible at the time.⁹⁶

If it is possible to say, without much exaggeration, that there would have been no Hussitism without earlier mediaeval heresies, the same holds for the relation between Protestantism and Hussitism. Provided that one avoids references to the Late Middle Ages, where there was a tendency to attempt to prove or at least suggest the complete originality of the religious protest of the 16th century, it is impossible to ignore the linkages and borrowings in the heretical pronouncements of Luther and later Reformed theologians. Such linkages and borrowings of ideas are a natural phenomenon. To an extent, probably every reform and protest are unknowingly inspired by things that happened earlier. References to past events are different, less radical, not fully successful, but the past provides guidance for future generations.

Once Hussitism and Protestantism are juxtaposed, one more observation becomes obvious. The Council of Constance was the response of the Church to the crisis afflicting it, Hus's pronouncements included. The response to the Reformation was the Council of Trent and the *Contrareformatio* (Counter-Reformation). Neither of the Councils was successful in preserving the unity of the Roman Catholic Church.

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Keywords: Hus, Luther, Hussitism, Reformation, Protestantism

⁹⁴ See above all F. Šmahel, *Husitské Čechy*, p. 429ff.; P. Čornej, M. Bartlová, *Velké dějiny*, passim; J. Macek, *Víra*, passim; J. Macek, *Jagellonský věk v českých zemích*, vol. 1-4, Prague 2001-2002, passim.

⁹⁵ Z. V. David, *Finding the Middle Way*, p. 59.

⁹⁶ A. Kalous, *Jednání o unii katolíků a utrakvistů ve dvacátých letech 16. století*, [in:] *Zrození mýtu. Dva životy husitské epochy*, Prague–Litomyšl 2011, pp. 186-188; A. Kalous, *Plenitudo potestatis in partibus? Papežští legáti a nunciové ve střední Evropě na konci středověku (1450-1526)*, Brno 2010, pp. 127-128, 380-381; Z. V. David, *Finding the Middle Way*, pp. 59, 73-76; P. Čornej, M. Bartlová, *Velké dějiny*, p. 699ff.

ABSTRACT

The author considers Hussitism, asking the question whether it was a forerunner of the Reformation or in fact its first stage. It is shown that this is not a question to which a definitive answer can easily be given. Examples are given of the adoption of Hussite ideas in the Reformation movement, but differences in their reception are also discussed.