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From: Zdeněk V. David, Senior Scholar Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Opponent

To: Evangelická teologická fakulta, Univerzita Karlova, Praha, Czech Republic

Subject: Assessment of the dissertation by Pavel Kůrka, "Samospráva farnosti v utrakvismu" Dissertation, Prague: Univerzita Karlova, Evangelická teologická fakulta, 2009.

Assessment: Upon an examination of the text (from the viewpoint of its subject, relation to other literature in the field, evidence presented, and conclusions reached), I recommend the acceptance of the dissertation by Evangelická teologická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy.

Subject:

The author's interest is engaged in the role of laity in the administration of Utraquist parishes, which poses the issues of excessive (from the Roman Church's view) or inadequate (from the synodal churches' view) participation by the laity. His focus here is on the appointment of parsons, and on the administration of church property. In the second place, Kůrka is concerned with the status of Utraquism in Czech ecclesiastical history, which had remained obscured into the twentieth century due to a lack of appreciation by ecclesiastical historians of its intermediate theological and ecclesiological position. The Czechoslovak Church, originating in the early twentieth, had initially referred to Utraquism as one of its ideological sources, but it soon departed from Christian traditionalism into a modernist direction.

In considering the status of Utraquist parishes, Kůrka stresses that the organizational structure of the Utraquist Church remained remarkable stable, regardless of possible modification in the beliefs of the Church along the way. Some modification in the administrative structure occurred only during the early turbulent period of the wars of the Bohemian Reformation and in the late period in the wake of the Letter of Majesty in 1609.

The author offers careful definitions of the various aspects of the parish administration that interest him, in particular the role of a patron, and the distinction between "beneficium" [*obročí*] and "fabrica ecclesiae" [*záduší, Kirchenfabrik*]. Particularly relevant is the role of towns as patrons, often acquiring the role from nobles or monasteries [p.15, p.37].

Relation to Previous Historiography:

Kůrka's contextualization of his work in the existing historiography shows the knowledge of an impressive array of sources. He points out that a concrete analysis of the Utraquist parishes was to some extent carried out by historians in the nineteenth century, in particular Václav V. Tomek and Zikmund Winter. The problem of Utraquism was dramatized by its split into Old and Neo-Utraquism, largely thanks to Ferdinand Hrejsa.

The author notes a certain tendency for rehabilitation of Utraquism toward the end of the twentieth century due to an approximation to Utraquist liturgy (on the Roman side), and to greater appreciation of reformist tendencies which at the same time do not lose respect for tradition (on the Protestant side). Kůrka refers particularly to Noemi Rejchrtová's *Studie k českému utrakvismu, zejména doby jagellonské* (hab. Pr. KEBF Praha 1984, knih. ETF UK sign. DIS 80). However, he also sees an increasing understanding for Utraquism in Josef Macek's *Víra a zbožnost jagellonského věku* (Praha 2001) and František Šmahel's *Husitské Čechy: struktury, procesy, ideje* (Praha 2001). Finally, Kůrka refers to Zdeněk David's *Finding the Middle Way: Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther* (Washington, D.C., 2003) as the first attempt to present Utraquism as a distinct denominational current that maintained its identity against the challenges of the sixteenth century and preserved the essential features of the Bohemian Reformation.

Of more specialized relevance to Kůrka's particular theme were the studies of parish administration in the early modern period. In Czech literature, he stresses the studies of Blanka Zilynská, especially her article "Záduší" in the Festschrift for Zdeňka Hledíková (Praha 1998). He also took into account literature on parish administration by German authors and by Anglophone authors, writing about German parishes.

Evidence:

With regard to preserved and available original sources, the author concentrates on large and medium towns, mainly on royal towns and some advanced subject ones. Chronologically, he examines the situation mainly around the turn of the sixteenth century.

The evidence for chapters in the sections "Volba faráře v utrakvismu a její kořeny;" "Volba nebo jmenování zádušních úředníků," and "Některé aspekty zádušního hodpodáření" [pp. 64-129], is based on an impressive array of archival documentation. The author examined relevant materials in the archives of the City of Prague, City of Plzeň, Charles University, Library of the National Museum, National Archive, and National Library of the Czech Republic, as well as documentation in eleven District (Okresní) archives in Bohemia. In addition, he used the resources in two German collections, Stadtarchiv Augsburg and Stadtarchiv Ulm.

For Kůrka's purposes, the accounts of financial ecclesiastical administration were most fully preserved for the fifteenth and sixteenth century for the church of St. Barbara in Kutná Hora, of St. Lawrence in Kaňk, and churches in Soběslav and Rakovník [p. 105-108]. The results of his surveys are competently summarized in a graphic form [p. 139-142]. As an important contribution to our knowledge of liturgical and doctrinal practices,

the expenses for the purchase of wine provided evidence for the spread of communion in both kinds [pp. 113-114].

The author also shows his skill in the use of archival materials (from the District Archives of Nymburk, Rokycany, and Tachov) for recreating from accounting books the customs and procedures in the area of funeral arrangements and rituals around 1600 [p. 119-129]. The results are presented graphically [p. 144-145].

Conclusions:

Choice of the priests in Utraquist parish did not conform to canonical elections. Often the term election “volba” was applied even to appointments from above. Nevertheless, Kůrka demonstrates, on the basis of archival research, that the parishioners in any case had a chance to influence the choice of the priest directly or indirectly. Many official documents explicitly stress the expression of the parishioners’ will in the course of the selection [esp. p. 70].

Concerning the selection of financial officials [*zádušní úředníci*], uniformity could not be found. The Utraquist Church did not promulgate a set of rules for financial administration. The Church’s pronouncements in ecclesiology focused on (1) criticism of higher hierarchy; and (2) eschatological vision of the Church Triumphant [p. 72].

The self-administration of Utraquist parishes was limited in its novelty. It was less due to religious reformist ideas, such as clerical poverty and limits on the power of ecclesiastical hierarchy. It could be better understood as a strengthening of the patron’s right on the part of towns, and a share in this right by the financial officials, as kind of “sub-patrons” [p. 72]. The patterns of administration often developed before Reformation and continued during the Counter Reformation [p. 73].

In smaller towns special organs for administration of church finances did not develop and the function was taken over by the town council [p. 73]. Three types of arrangements for financial administration had emerged: (1) the church accounts were treated as an integral part of the town administration (Nymburk, Stribro); (2) there were distinct officials for ecclesiastical accounts, but appointed directly by the city council (Kutna Hora, Kolin); (3) only exceptionally, there was a genuine self-administration with parishioners’ electing the financial officials and controlling their accounts (the towns of Prague, Velvary) [p. 75-77].

The administration of the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague represented a curious arrangement in which an atypical model of divided office of patron between the Old Town and the University was instituted and prevailed [p. 85].

Despite the relative independence of the administrative organization from confessional issues, the denominational considerations could play a role. Thus, in the 1590s the tightening of control of the town council – at the expense of parishioners’ autonomy – might be viewed as a measure to keep Lutheran, Calvinist, or Brethren’s

influences out of the Utraquist churches. This was the case especially in the Old Town of Prague, where Utraquist orthodoxy was particularly entrenched [p. 88].

On the other hand, the assumption of the function of ecclesiastical financial accounting by the Old Town of Prague in the 1590s might also be viewed as a symptom of increasing bureaucratization. This would be analogous to the growth of royal absolutism at the expense of the estates' power [p. 89-90]. In any case, the election of financial officials did not necessarily derive from the character of Utraquist ecclesiology, and might have been only an accidental development.

The author's principal conclusion is that the essential ingredient in the arrangement of parish administration was the customary secular administrative procedures rather than a reflection of denominational religious beliefs. It is in this connection that the author makes his fresh suggestion of a parallel between bureaucratization and the growth of absolutism in limiting the role of self-government in ecclesiastical affairs.

Questions:

The discussion of church administration in St. Paul's times is interesting, but specific relevance to the Utraquist parish is not clear [p. 21-30]. The same is true of the church administration in ancient and early medieval times. Similarly, the discussion of parish administration in the German parts of the Holy Roman Empire is also of interest, but the direct bearing on the administration of Utraquist parishes could be made more explicit [p. 32-47].

The discussion of ecclesiology in early Bohemian Reformation with its stress on the influences of John Wyclif and Matěj of Janov points out, to some extent, the limitation of material wealth of the clergy, yet does not explicitly connect this factor with later "beneficium" or "záduší" [pp. 48-54].

The examination of the four confessions (Augsburg, Brethren, Second Swiss, Bohemian), concerning ecclesiological questions are wide-ranging [pp. 55-58]. A sharper focus could be helpful.

Ecclesiological rules of the Unity of Brethren show contrast to Utraquist practice? In limitation of the patron's rights in nomination of candidates for priesthood? [pp. 59-63].

Concerning ecclesiology of the Utraquist Church: Did not the opposition to monarchic popes and monarchic bishops imply and favor considerable autonomy for parishes? [p. 72]. Did, in fact, the Utraquist Church, as represented by the views of the Lower Consistory, indulge in pronounced eschatological speculation? [p. 72].

If patterns of the parish's financial administration continued from the Utraquist period into the period of Counter Reformation, this presumably contrasted with the abolition of the community's role in electing a parish priests? [p.73].

Could not the restraint in dogmatic and ecclesiological pronouncements by the Utraquist Church [see p. 130] be viewed as a consequence of its self-perception not as something new that needs to be defined, but as a restoration of the church prior to the growth of papal monarchism, which had rested on a well-defined ancient foundation (i.e., approximately the Western Church of the first millennium)?

Suggestions:

Concerning the role of the patron in suggesting a candidate for priesthood and that of the bishop in the final approval [p. 16], there seems to be an interesting parallel in reverse, according to which the Archbishop of Prague [acting as a patron on behalf of the King] was to nominate candidates for priesthood in Utraquist parishes on royal estates, but their final approval depended on the Utraquist Consistory. [See David, *Finding the Middle Way*, 262-266]. In the future, the author might consider doing more work concerning the selection of Utraquist parsons, in particular, explore archival evidence for the role of the estate manager on royal manors. [See David, *Finding the Middle Way*, 263, 323].

Did Ferdinand I's punishment of towns in 1547 have an effect on the administration of parishes? Was there a correlation with the declining power of towns in Germany at that time? [See p. 46-47].

The parallel between Bohemia and Poland could be addressed (in the future), namely, that the towns remained more conservative (in Bohemia Utraquist), while nobility embraced more advanced forms of Reformation (in Bohemia Lutheranism or the Unity) [p.46; see David, *Finding the Middle Way*, 170-178].

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