

Bohemian Reformation

Historical Theology

9/11/2022

Tim Hendricks

I. HUSSITES: ORIGINS & BELIEFS

A. BOHEMIAN CHURCH (“Christianization of Bohemia,” wikipedia.com)

1. Outgrowth of Moravian Church which was started by St.s Cyril and Methodius, Byzantine missionaries around 860 - 865.
2. Initially Bohemian Christians resembled the Eastern Church, but when tensions arose between Bohemia & Moravia Bohemian Christians became increasingly connected to Rome. Yet, some notions from the Eastern Church persisted.

B. JAN HUS (“Jan Hus,” “Bible Translations into Czech,” wikipedia.com)

1. Began teaching at University of Prague in 1398 and defended John Wycliffe’s teachings publicly beginning around 1401.
2. Appointed preacher of Bethlehem Chapel in 1402 where he promoted ideas which would be codified in the “Four Articles of Prague.”
3. The Bible may have been fully translated into Czech, but not published in one complete unit by 1400. Hus was actively working to put together a complete copy in Czech at the time of his death. The first complete Czech Bible was published in 1488 in Prague.

C. DEATH OF JAN HUS

1. Czech people and nobles protested Hus’ execution and began to break from the Roman Church. Initially the Czechs agreed to follow Roman doctrine as long as it was accurate to the Bible with Prague University as arbitrator if there were any disputes.
2. Initially King Wenceslaus of Bohemia supported the Hussites, but in 1418 his brother Sigismund, who had overseen Hus’ execution, convinced Wenceslaus that religious insurrection would lead to political insurrection. In response Wenceslaus switched sides which resulted in much social unrest, the stress of which may have lead to his death due to complications from a stroke in 1419. Wenceslaus was succeeded by Sigismund.
3. Additionally Hus’ death left a leadership void among the Hussites resulting in two rival factions developing, the moderate Ultraquists and radical Taborites. In spite of their differences they would get along until 1434.
 - a) Ultraquists supported 4 major points:
 1. Freedom to preach the Word of God.
 2. Freedom of the communion of the chalice (communion under both kinds) to laity not just priests.

3. Exclusion of the clergy from having large temporal possessions or civil authority.
 4. Strict repression and punishment of mortal public sins, whether in clergy or in laity.
- b) Taborites agreed to these points but also opposed teaching transubstantiation and desired to end the following:
- i. veneration of saints and images
 - ii. fasts and excessive holidays
 - iii. confession to priests
 - iv. Indulgences
 - v. Oaths
 - vi. prayers for the dead
 - vii. sacrament of confirmation
 - viii. sacrament of anointing the sick
 - ix. clergy appointments from Rome.

II. HUSSITE WARS (AKA, HUSSITE REVOLUTION & BOHEMIAN WARS) (“Hussite Wars,” wikipedia.com)

- A. Pope Martin V issued a bull on 3/17/1420 declaring a crusade to destroy Wycliffites (Lollards), Hussites and all other “heretics” in Bohemia. Eventually there will be five Anti-Hussite Crusades and a civil war.
- B. The crusaders besieged Prague on 4/30/1420 led by King Sigismund. The Hussites eventually fled Prague, regrouped and formed a unified Hussite army based at Tabor. This army presented the “Four Articles of Prague” as their demands to cease hostilities.

Four Articles of Prague (copied from “Hussite Wars” wikipedia.com)

1. *The word of God shall be preached and made known in the kingdom of Bohemia freely and in an orderly manner by the priests of the Lord.*
2. *The sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist shall be freely administered in the two kinds, that is bread and wine, to all the faithful in Christ who are not precluded by mortal sin – according to the word and disposition of Our Saviour.*
3. *The secular power over riches and worldly goods which the clergy possesses in contradiction to Christ's precept, to the prejudice of its office and to the detriment of the secular arm, shall be taken and withdrawn from it, and the clergy itself shall be brought back to the evangelical rule and an apostolic life such as that which Christ and his apostles led.*
4. *All mortal sins, and in particular all public and other disorders, which are contrary to God's law shall in every rank of life be duly and judiciously prohibited and destroyed by those whose office it is.*

C. Sigismund rejected the Articles and was defeated at the Battle of Vitkov Hill in July 1420 and then lost two castles near Prague in October 1420 ending the first crusade, but more crusades would follow.

D. With the Ultraquists firmly in charge peace talks resumed resulting in the negotiation of “The Compacts” which are slightly varied from the “Articles of Prague,” but secured in some fashion freedom for Hussites to worship according to their conscience. “The Compacts” were ratified on 7/5/1436.

III. ENDING THE HUSSITE WARS

A. Between the 4th and 5th crusades German princes convinced the Pope to attempt peace talks with the Hussites. These negotiations were originally scheduled as the Council of Basel to begin 3/3/1431, but when the Hussites requested to include the Eastern Church and other groups Rome considered to be heretical Rome decided to try one more crusade.

“The Compacts” (copied from “The Hussite Wars”
Wikipedia.com)

B. On 8/8/1431 Frederick I, Elector of Brandenburg accompanied by Cardinal Cesarini, and a large army of crusaders besieged Domazlice. On 8/14/1431 a Bohemian Hussite army accompanied by another army of 6,000 Polish Hussites arrived to assist Domazlice and completely routed the crusaders.

C. On 10/15/1431 the Council of Basel was reinstated, but no resolution had been reached before war broke out between the Ultraquist and Taborite factions in 1434 resulting in the defeat of the Taborites. Later, and separately, the Polish Hussites were defeated by Polish Royal troops in 1439 leaving the Ultraquists as the sole remaining Hussite faction.

1. *The Holy Sacrament is to be given freely in both kinds to all Christians in Bohemia and Moravia, and to those elsewhere who adhere to the faith of these two countries.*
2. *All mortal sins shall be punished and extirpated by those whose office it is so to do.*
3. *The word of God is to be freely and truthfully preached by the priests of the Lord, and by worthy deacons.*
4. *The priests in the time of the law of grace shall claim no ownership of worldly possessions.*

E. AFTERMATH OF THE HUSSITE WARS

1. Population of Bohemia reduced from ~3 million in 1400 AD to less than 2 million by 1526 AD.
2. Pope Paul II excommunicated Hussite King George of Podebrady in 1466 and forbade Catholics from serving him.

3. King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary invaded Bohemia in an attempt to conquer Bohemia and return it to Catholicism under his rule. Moravia, Silesia and Lusatia sided with Matthias, but Bohemia proper stayed with King George of Podebrady. The dispute was settled by a final ratification of the Council of Basel on 3/20/1485 during peace talks held at Kutna Hora. The resulting peace would last through the beginning of the Reformation in the early 16th century.

