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MASTER NICHOLAS OF DRESDEN
THE OLD COLOR AND THE NEW

SELECTED WORKS CONTRASTING THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH
AND THE ROMAN CHURCH

Edited, Annotated, and Translated by
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FOREWORD

This edition was prepared in my seminar in medieval history at the University of Washington, in 1961. Each of the three students and myself took part of each text and carried out the work of transcription, collation, annotation, and translation; then each individual's work was checked by the seminar as a whole. Thus the actual edition is the product of our joint enterprise. The introductory essay and prefaces, however, were written by myself, and the indices were prepared by Patricia Rosenberg, who also undertook the exacting task of typing the final copy.

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Finally, I should like to record the present status of the other editors: Dr. Boba is Assistant Professor at the University of Washington; D. L. Bilderback is Assistant Professor at Fresno State College; Patricia Rosenberg is humanities reference librarian at the University of Oregon.

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NICHOLAS OF DRESDEN AND THE DRESDEN SCHOOL IN HUSSITE PRAGUE

Among the several components of Hussitism, one was a strong element of proto-nationalism, a combination of Slavonicism, national messianism, and anti-Germanism. The Westernization of Bohemia had been in large part the work of Germans and had taken the form of both imitation and importation of German institutions; on the other hand, the process had been successful to the point of bringing the Czech nationality up to the German—or European—level, and by the end of the fourteenth century the superior position of the Germans in many areas of social life was challenged by Czech claims to equality or pre-eminence. In some cases, most notably when Czech peasants won "German Law" status, the process hurt no one; when, however, there was a limited quantity of good things, such as offices on town councils or ecclesiastical prebends, the Czech claim to a larger share could succeed only at the expense of German interests. Nor did the objectively competitive situation fail to generate emotions of mutual ethnic hatred, with the further effect, on the Czech side, of a kind of positive ideological reflex, a feeling of Czech pride and the delusion of a special and glorious Czech destiny. As we might expect, this Czech self-consciousness found its most intensely cultivated expression among those who were professionally occupied with ideas, the Czech intelligentsia of the University of Prague.

In the last two or three decades of the fourteenth century this element had increasingly espoused the ideas of religious and moral reform, partly at least as

a mode of national self-assertion, and by the beginning of the fifteenth century a good deal of the intellectual life of the University consisted of Czech-German controversies in philosophy, where the Czechs' Wyclifite realism was opposed to the Germans' nominalism, and in theology, where the Czechs' espousal of Wyclifism was met by German orthodoxy. But although much of the dynamism that would carry the Czech reform movement forward into revolt, revolution, and reformation undoubtedly derived from this fruitful struggle, the concomitant conversion of an international community of scholars into a battleground of nationalities had unfortunate consequences. At one point in the complicated political maneuverings connected with the Schism and the Conciliar movement, King Wenceslas IV wished the University of Prague to support his withdrawal of obedience from Pope Gregory XII; the Germans refused but the Czechs agreed, and won for their reward the Kutná Hora Decree of 1409, which reversed the power relationship at the University by giving three votes to the Czech Nation, only one vote to the three German-dominated Nations combined. In consequence most of the German masters and students left Prague, some founding the University of Leipzig, others going elsewhere; henceforth Prague's University would be an instrument of the Czech reform party, a national institution. But at the same time the international matrix that had engendered and nourished the reform movement seemed to disappear, leaving the paradox of an ecumenically oriented movement that held its actual existence as a local, ethnically limited phenomenon.

And yet the universalism implicit in the idea of reform did not fail to assert itself, alongside the national element and sometimes in opposition to it. The international community of the medieval establishment, the university, was replaced by an International of heresy. Disaffected elements from far-off as well as neighboring lands began to move into Bohemia, sometimes as individuals who joined the Czechs, sometimes as groups that maintained their alien identity, but generally serving to nourish the springs of revolt and revolution with the fruits—ideas, emotions, attitudes—of generations of heretical experience. The end result was perhaps less pleasant for the Czech nation than interesting to the historian, but it is in any case

probable that the greatest act of the Czech people—Hussitism—required this international concentration of ideas and energies for its realization, just as it also required a continuing international orientation to preserve itself from provincial insignificance. Nor is it surprising to find that the German nationality was well represented in the new Prague and in the reformed Bohemia that began to take shape; whatever of nationalistic prejudice the Hussites maintained, and expressed in such phrases as “Our born enemies the Germans,”¹ was counterbalanced by the idealism that John Hus had aptly voiced when he wrote, “A good German is dearer to me than an evil brother.”²

Thus it could happen that for a half-dozen of Hussitism's most decisive years, from 1412 to 1417, an important role in the reform movement was played by a group of Germans in Prague, known as the “Dresdeners” or the “Dresden School.”³ The history of this group in Dresden is not at all clear, but we can surmise why they left: on 18 October 1411 Bishop Rudolph of Meissen, Dresden's diocesan, issued a decree forbidding the teaching of the Bible and *Decretum* in secondary schools, and soon after that we find the Dresden School relocated in Prague, no doubt in direct consequence.⁴ There is evidence that the masters

¹ The phrase appears in Prague's manifesto of 3 April, 1420, summoning faithful Czechs to resist the Crusade (*Archiv český*, 3 (1844), ed. Fr. Palacký, p. 212).

² “Výklad desatera,” ed. K. J. Erben, *Mistra Jana Husi, Sebrané spisy české* (Prague, 1865), 1: p. 156.

³ The most important discussions of this group in the modern literature are Jan Sedlák's *Mikuláš z Drážďan* (Brno, 1914); F. M. Bartoš's “Vznik a počátky táborství,” *Husitství a cizina* (Prague, 1931), pp. 113–153; Josef Pekař's “Jakoubek a Mikuláš z Drážďan; vznik táborství,” Ch. I of *Žižka a jeho doba*, I (Prague, 1927), pp. 1–31. The first two will be referred to as “Sedlák” and “Bartoš.” A sound summary of Sedlák's work, with some additional material, is offered by J. Th. Müller, “Magister Nikolaus von Dresden,” *Zeitschrift für Brüdergeschichte*, 9 (1915): pp. 80–109. Less valuable, because not an *outright* of Czech scholarship, is H. Böhmer's “Magister Peter von Dresden,” *Neues Archiv für Sächsische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 36 (1915): pp. 212–231; cf. Bartoš's review, *Časopis českého musea*, 91 (1917): pp. 336 f.

⁴ Sedlák, p. 4; Bartoš, p. 130 f. A note at the end of one of the texts of the *Tabule*, in MS Prague Cathedral Chapter A 79/5, f. 261, reads: “Ista scripta ad hunc sensum hereticum collecta sunt redacta in hanc formam per Draznenses, qui de Drazna expulsi, plurimos seduxerunt.” And an anonymous account, published by K. Höfler, *Geschichtschreiber der husitischen Bewegung in Böhmen*, III, *Fontes rerum austriacarum*, I. Abt., (Vienna, 1866), 7: p. 156, says: “Circa annum Domini MCCCCXII in civitate draznensi, Misnensis diocesis . . . Petrus et Nicolaus puerorum eruditores in ipsius nominata civitatis draznensis schola plurimas curiosas moventes questiones illas non sunt veriti juxta capita sua contra auctoritatem sacrae scripturae et sanctorum decretorum sinistre definire. . . . Que eorum doctrina cum ad aures viri clarissimi domini Joannis episcopi . . . pervenisset, mox ipsos Petrum et Nicolaum cum eorum doctrinae faventibus excludi jussit et eliminari de episcopatu Misnensi.” Bartoš shows that the account has the name of the bishop wrong, and indeed some of its other information is dubious (e.g., that Nicholas was Peter's associate in

of this school did indeed introduce theological and canonistic subject-matter into the curriculum of what was supposed to be simply a preparatory school teaching grammar and other basic arts; more to the point no doubt is the fact that the higher subjects were taught with a strongly anti-Roman tendency.^{4a} John Drändorf, a disciple of the school who fell into the hands of the inquisition in 1425, told his examiners⁵ that he had done his basic studies in Dresden, under Master Frederick and Master Peter, who had taught him, among other things, that Christ, not the Pope or even St. Peter, was the head of the Church Militant. He refused on principle to swear an oath, did not read his canonical hours, held that ordination as priest was sufficient license to preach anywhere, believed that priests should live without wealth, according to the manner of Christ, and should not exercise secular dominion, nor should the Church have accepted such dominion from the Emperor Constantine; he rejected the validity of Roman excommunications and the claims of the Roman hierarchy to obedience, and he held that it was necessary only to believe what was in the Bible. That Drändorf also confessed to a belief in utraquism—that communion should be given in both kinds to the laity—may be probably taken as an indication of what he had learnt in Hussite Prague; although there are sources that identify utraquism as among the doctrines of the Dresden School in Dresden, and indeed as a prime contribution of that School to Hussitism, these testimonies are suspect and, for the most part, late.⁶ But if Drändorf's confession be taken generally and as a whole, it suggests at the very least that an extremely radical anti-Romanism was cultivated by Masters Frederick and Peter in Dresden, an anti-Romanism that

Dresden; there is no mention of Frederick Eppinge—see below). A Czech rhymed chronicle also reports that the Dresdeners had been expelled from Dresden (ed. Palacký, *Stáří letopisové čeští, Scriptores rerum bohemicarum*, (Prague, 1829), 3: p. 472).

^{4a} See the anonymous account quoted in note 4. It specifies that among the “curious questions” raised by the masters in Dresden was “an laicis sit porrigenda communio duplicis speciei,” a probably incorrect report (see note 6, below), and it lists the doctrines they favored in Prague as: “purgatorium post hanc vitam animarum non esse. Quod sanctorum suffragia non sunt invocanda. Quod papa sive Romanus pontifex sit antichristus cum clero sibi subjecto et quod communio eucharistie sub duplici specie laicis sit administranda, et cetere plures . . . sinistre, quas docebant, fantasie.” Whether these heresies were also taught in Dresden is not stated: but compare Drändorf's confession, below.

⁵ The record of his interrogation, along with four of his agitational missives, is published by J. E. Kapp, *Kleine Nachlese einiger . . . Urkunden* 3 (Leipzig, 1730): pp. 33–60. Cf. the discussion by H. Haupt, “Waldensertum und Inquisition im südöstlichen Deutschland,” *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 3 (1890): pp. 357 ff.

⁶ The best study of this question is Bartoš's “Počátky kalicha v Čechách,” *Husitství a cizina*, pp. 59–112, esp. pp. 75–80. Cf. Sedlák's “Počátkové kalicha,” *Časopis katolického duchovenstva*, 52 (1911): p. 247 & *passim*; also Böhmer, *op. cit.*, for a systematic discussion of the main Latin sources.

reminds us of nothing so much as the doctrines of John Wyclif,⁷ the very doctrines then being advocated in Prague by the more radical members of Hus's party. Pursuing this point further, we may observe that Master Peter of Dresden may have been among the Germans who had left Prague in 1409,⁸ that Master Frederick—Frederick Eppinge, to give him his full name—probably had been,⁹ and so, by his own statement, had been Drändorf.¹⁰ And these are the only names that we can identify certainly with the Dresden period of the school's activity. The most reasonable supposition would be that in the decade preceding 1409 some of the German masters and students at the University of Prague agreed with the Czech reformers rather than with most of their own compatriots, that these German radicals read the works of Wyclif with the same sympathy, perhaps enthusiasm, as was displayed by Hus, and that for some reason, when the time of exile came, these men gathered at Dresden, which thus became a heretical counterpart to Leipzig as a place of refuge,¹¹ and a German parallel to Prague as a center of Wyclifite anti-Romanism. In any case, according to this reconstruction, the abnormal situation in Dresden lasted only for about a year and a half; when action was taken against the German radicals by Bishop Rudolph they naturally returned to Prague, which had become even more of a center of radical reform.

Once in Prague, the Dresdeners quickly formed or

resumed ties of friendship with the Prague masters of Hus's party. The University's Czech Nation, dominated by this party, gave the Germans a house, "At the Black Rose," close to the Carolinum, the main University building,¹² and in a very short space of time, by July/August, 1412, Frederick Eppinge appeared as the associate of Hus, Jakoubek of Střibro, and others in defending Wyclifism against the Czech Romanists.¹³ The controversy then turned on several articles of the list of forty-five Wyclifite doctrines that had been composed in 1403 and had formed the main subject of doctrinal conflict in Prague since that date;¹⁴ Eppinge either chose or was assigned the defense of article eleven: "No prelate should excommunicate anyone unless he know that man first to have been excommunicated by God. Otherwise, in excommunicating him, the prelate becomes a heretic or excommunicate himself." The text of the defense, "Credo communionem sanctorum," survives in several copies,¹⁵ and, dating so soon after the move from Dresden, may be taken as further evidence of the kind of radical doctrine cultivated at the school even before it had come to Prague. The theory behind it was, in a general way, quite familiar to the Hussites: distinguishing between the "communion of the saints" and the "congregation of all believers in Christ," the former the invisible community of the just, the latter the actual church including both good and bad, Eppinge noted that exclusion by God's decree from the former communion was the effect of mortal sin and was brought on himself by the sinner, while exclusion from the actual church was the effect of judicial sentence passed by the church's judges. At best the two might coincide, and the church's excommunication would then be declaratory of God's prior judgment, but if this were not the case, if the church's sentence was erroneous, perhaps even prompted by unworthy motives, then it was negligible in its primary significance and should be feared only because of its secondary effects. Hus had developed a similar argument in his commentary on the *Sentences* (1407/1409), and most of his canonistic authorities, about a dozen, were used by Eppinge; the latter, however, was a Bachelor of Canon Law, and was able to add a great deal more canonistic documentation to his argument, which in any case did not follow that of Hus in its detailed disposition. There was undoubtedly some collaboration between the two, but most of Ep-

⁷ Although Wyclifism shared its basic points of anti-Romanism with other reform tendencies of the time, it was especially distinguished by its emphasis on the primacy of the Bible, the *Lex dei*, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the internal contradictions in both the theory and practice of the juridical ecclesiology of the High Middle Ages. The elaborate and often penetrating use of *standard* sources—the Fathers, the scholastics, the canon law and the canonists—in an anti-Roman sense is also characteristic of Wyclifism. On all these points the Dresdeners seemed close to the Englishman's system; but much more work of textual analysis will be necessary before a more definite conclusion can be pronounced.

⁸ Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, *Historia bohémica*, ch. xxxv: ". . . Petrus Dresdensis . . . qui cum aliis Teutonibus paulo ante [*scil.*, before 1414] Bohemiam reliquerat." To be sure, Aeneas says that Peter was infected by Waldensianism, not Wyclifism.

⁹ In his *posicio* on excommunication (note 15, below) he wrote, "Ideo ex permissione matris mee, alme universitatis studii Pragensis, iuxta conclusionem eiusdem assumpsi tractandos articulos duos . . ." (p. 107).

¹⁰ Kapp, *op. cit.*, pp. 37 f.: "Item interrogatus, ane studuit in aliquibus studiis privilegiatis. Respondit quid sic, scilicet in studio Pragensi & Lipzensi." Most of the Germans who left Prague in 1409 migrated to Leipzig. Since Drändorf was in Prague by 1412 (note 135, below), and had studied in Dresden under Frederick and Peter, who also came to Prague at that time, we cannot refer his Leipzig studies to a period after that date; since he was only eighteen years old in 1409 (*loc. cit.*), he could hardly have studied at both Prague and Leipzig in the period before that year, nor indeed was Leipzig a university before 1409.

¹¹ See the preceding note.

¹² Bartoš, p. 130 f.; cf. Sedlák, p. 2 ff.

¹³ The best account is in V. Novotný, *M. Jan Hus, Život a dílo* (Prague, 1921), 2: pp. 123 ff.

¹⁴ Novotný, *op. cit.* (1919) 1: pp. 103 ff.; Sedlák, *M. Jan Hus* (Prague, 1915), p. 92 ff.

¹⁵ It is included in the *Tractatus responsivus* composed by John Hus or Jakoubek of Střibro, and edited by S. Harrison Thomson (Prague, 1927), pp. 103–133. On the question of authorship of the *Tractatus* itself, a question turning in part on the author's relationship to Eppinge, see Bartoš, "M. J. Hussii tractatus responsivus," *ČČM*, CI (1927), pp. 23–35. See also: Bartoš, p. 131, n. 56.