

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A HOPE FOR THE CZECHOSLOVAK HUSSITE CHURCH

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To Alois Bohuslav Konečný,

my father

PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to show that there is a hope for the recovery of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church. The hope, as a conclusion of the research, is expressed in chapter 4.

To make clear the kind of recovery to which he is referring, the author needed to state a diagnosis, which he has done in chapter 2. The Czechoslovak Hussite Church is suffering from the theology of liberalism and Neo-Orthodoxy.

An overview of the history of the denomination was necessary to explain how and why the Czechoslovak Hussite Church opened herself to the destructive influence of such theology. Chapter 1, which gives the historical background, is the longest part of the work. This is appropriate in addressing an American audience which is not likely to be familiar with the Czechoslovak Hussite Church since it does not exist outside the Czech and Slovak territories.

Chapter 3 evaluates the history and the theology of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church by contrasting the Czechoslovak theology with the Reformed position, which is defended by the author.

All Bible quotations, unless specified otherwise, are from the New International Version.

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CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORY OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK HUSSITE CHURCH

What is the worth of human life,
unless it is woven into the life
of our ancestors
by the record of history?

Cicero, Orator

The History of the Name

The denomination originally named The Czechoslovak Church was founded on January 8, 1920. The name was changed to The Czechoslovak Hussite Church in 1971.

The Czechoslovak Church has actually changed its name several times during its short history due to political changes. In 1938 Hitler annexed Sudetenland, a predominantly German part of Czechoslovakia, reducing the country of Czechoslovakia by about a third of its area and population. The remainder of Czechoslovakia reorganized into a federal union of Czechia (made up of Bohemia and Moravia), Slovakia, and Carpatho-Ukraine. However, in 1939 Czechia became a German protectorate when Hitler took possession by sending in troops. Slovakia, with a priest, Joseph Tiso, as its head, became a puppet state, and Carpatho-Ukraine was given to Hungary.

During the period of the protectorate, when Czechoslovakia was divided, the Czechoslovak Church adopted the

name Czecho-Moravian Church. After the liberation in 1945, it returned to its original name, Czechoslovak Church.

At the sixth general council in 1971, the church added "Hussite" to its name (Usnesení 1983, 4). Although not declared officially, the obvious purpose for this change was to denominate a strong distinction from the Roman Catholic Church, which had just adopted sweeping reforms at the Second Vatican Council. Most of the reforms (especially the use of the vernacular language in worship services) had originally been proposed by the founders of the Czechoslovak Church.

The church keeps the official name "Czechoslovak Hussite Church" even today, although Czechoslovakia does not exist anymore. Some parishes of the denomination are still found in Slovakia and use Slovak as the worship language (Latourette 1961, 4 : 195-196).

The Czechoslovak Church in the European Context

In the context of the times that preceded the birth of the Czechoslovak Church and created the preconditions for it, at least two significant phenomena played roles in the process: (1) the efforts for reform (both recent and historical) and (2) the decline of Christianity in Central Europe.

The general situation of European Christianity before World War I can be characterized as a religious crisis and as an effort to overcome this crisis. The specific situation for the Czechoslovak Church was determined (1) by the

historical development of Christianity in the Czechoslovak nation; (2) by the home church crisis as a reflection of the European religious decline; and (3) by the church-reforming movement after the liberation in 1918.

Before the Foundation of Czechoslovakia

The Domestic Reformed Tradition

The efforts for reforming the church in Czech regions (i.e., Bohemia and Moravia) have deep historical roots.

Ninth Century: Cyril and Methodius

The tradition of worship in the common language goes back to the ninth century (863), when two missionaries from Soluň (today's Thessaloniki, Greece) accepted the invitation of Rostislav, the leader of the land, to come into Great Moravia and do work comparable to what the Wycliffe Bible Translators do today. They learned the spoken language, created the written form of it, and finally translated the Scriptures into it. The names of the two missionaries are Cyril and Methodius. Cyril later received the name Constantine. In Czech history he is known under both names.

Fourteenth Century: John Hus

John Hus is known as one of the predecessors of the Reformation. During his trial at the Council in Constance he actually (even if perhaps unintentionally) anticipated the Reformation and Protestantism in at least two ways. By

demanding that accusation of error or heresy be substantiated from the Scriptures, he was taking the highest authority away from the church and giving it to the Bible itself. Another move unacceptable to the Council was his appeal to Christ, which was actually an appeal to the right of the individual conscience in the interpretation of the Bible. There was no way that the Council could let such a heretic keep breaking the unity of the church.

Fifteenth Century: The Hussite Movement

Another reform tradition, one with an emphasis on social matters, goes back to the fifteenth century and the Hussite movement. After the death of John Hus on July 6, 1415, the great movement of resistance known as the Hussite movement arose in Bohemia. Several crusades were launched from Rome to destroy this "Bohemian heresy" but none of them succeeded.¹

Nineteenth Century: The National Revival

Still another source of tradition that played a role in the period of Catholic modernism was the time of the national revival in the middle of the nineteenth century. In

¹The Hussite wars are a period of time of which the Czech nation is proud. Unfortunately, since today the Roman Catholic Church is the strongest denomination in the Czech Republic once again, appropriate attention is not paid to these glorious times of independence and social justice.

1848 the Czech priest František Náhlavský called a meeting of the clergy in Prague and demanded church reforms (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 16).

The changes called for were as follows: the use of the national language in the liturgy, a division of the dioceses according to nationalities, election of the clergy, removal the celibacy requirement for priests, and a revision of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Historical Development of Christianity in the Czechoslovak Nation

In the multi-lingual and multi-racial realms ruled by the Hapsburgs from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, Protestants were minorities. The Hapsburgs and the large majority of their subjects were Roman Catholic. The Hapsburgs finally lost their possessions by the end of the World War I. The territorial parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, ruled over by the Hapsburgs for three centuries, were Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Austria, and Hungary.

The Protestant minorities were mostly German, however, some of them were Czech. Czech Protestants were remnants of the movements that began in pre-Reformation days and survived the persecutions and the counter-reformation missionary work of the Jesuits that accompanied and followed the Habsburg conquest of the seventeenth century.

The toleration edict of an exceptionally enlightened Habsburg, Joseph II, in 1781 brought a measure of relief,

but the Protestants received full liberty and equality of civil status with Roman Catholics by a decree in 1861 (Latourette 1959, 2:202), which was followed by a number of developments.

Help in restoring the Reformed churches came in the form of pastors from the Reformed Church of Hungary (Révész, Kováts, and Ravasz 1927, 50). In addition, the Moravians assembled at Herrnhut regarded freedom as an opportunity to strengthen their brotherhood in the land of the origin of their faith. One of the Moravian missionaries, a traveling preacher named Wilhem Hartwig, met with great success with his mission (Uttendorfer and Schmidt 1914, 435).

Also, Lutheran clergy, poets, scholars, and writers, had a large share in giving the Slovaks a literary language,² which allowed them to read the Bible in their own language.

A general synod convened in Austria in 1864 prepared for a comprehensive organization for both German and Czech Protestants. In 1871 separate structures were set up for the

²Before the formation of the Slovak language, the Slovaks were using the language of the "Bible Kralická," the first Czech translation of the Bible from the original languages. This translation was made around the turn of the seventeenth century (with a significance comparable to the English King James Version). Feelings of dependency on the Czechs, rooted in history, were one of the reasons for the split of Czechoslovakia in the beginning of 1993.

Lutheran and Reformed Churches, but both were under a superior church council that included Germans and Czechs. A common constitution was worked out for both confessions and given legal form in 1891. The constitution granted to the congregations complete freedom in their choice of pastors and accorded a degree of autonomy to the churches.

During the movement Los-von-Rom-Bewegung (Away from Rome) (1898--1913), which began mostly on nationalist grounds, about 75,000 Roman Catholics came over to Protestantism (Latourette 1959, 2 : 203). With the help of the Protestant Union of Germany, fifty-nine new parishes came into being. A Protestant theological faculty in Vienna helped prepare the ministry (Hermelink 1949, 3 : 175).

The Home Church Crisis

In the early twentieth century, Christianity was in crisis mainly because the historical development had reached a dead end. During the re-Catholization period (see glossary), Czech Evangelicals were forced to leave the country. The national government and the Roman Catholic church were controlled by the Germans. Communication with the Pope was always mediated through foreigners--mostly the Germans. The Roman Catholic mass was said in the Latin language, which the laity did not understand.

Although these problems were not enforced by law after the end of World War I, they remained. The Czech nation

wanted to have them solved, but the Roman Catholic Church was not open to any kind of reform.

At the same time the scientific revolution was captivating the minds of modern men. Nobody seemed to need "that hypothesis of God" (cf. Ferguson and Wright 1988, 626) anymore. The general term "church" was understood as being synonymous with the Roman Catholic Church, which only contributed to the assumption that the church was irrelevant in modern times.³

After the Foundation of the Czechoslovakia

"The Renewal of the Catholic Church in the Czechoslovak State"

In the middle of the year 1919, an important collective work was published: Obnova Církve Katolické v Československém Státě,⁴ (The Renewal of the Catholic Church in the Czechoslovak State) (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 20). Among other things, it contained several articles that dealt with the tension between the Roman Catholic doctrines and structure and the modernistic calls for changes.⁵

The conclusion of Obnova contained the request for assurance that the priests would ask that these demands

³For further details on the domestic church crisis, see The Memorandum to the Pope, appendix 1.

⁴For more details on Obnova, see glossary.

⁵For some of the most important articles of the Obnova, see appendix 3.

be discussed, as their conscience led them, for the glory of God, honor of the church and eternal salvation of souls (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 22).

Karel Farský took the publication as a basis for the organization structure of the future new church fellowship. In almost non-changed form it serves the Czechoslovak Husite Church until today.

Looking back from today, we find that most of the demands have been really met four decades later during the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Reforming efforts of the Czech clergy were once again ahead of the church hierarchy.

In June of 1919, the Association of Catholic Clerics gave the publication Obnova to all its members and asked them to vote on the demands. Out of 2,620 members of the Association, 1,788 voted for the reforms (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 23).

The Reformers' Defense Against the Catholic Opposition

Papal nuncio, who was in Prague from the beginning of the year 1919, informed Rome about the progress of the reformed movement. Soon the decision to oppose the reformed efforts came back from Rome. However, before the sanctions from the bishops could take place, Karel Farský published a brochure entitled Český Problém Církevní (The Czech Prob-

lem of the Church). It contained the instructions for the priests who demanded the reforms.

The review of the brochure was published in the very same issue of the Association periodical as the report about the meeting on August 7. Readers could compare the reserved approach of the papal Curia on one hand and the proclamations that the reforms would be forced via facti on the other. The situation reached a climax and needed a solution.

The remaining months of the year 1919 belonged to the preparation for starting a new church independent of Rome. It was important for the priests to have clear directions on what to do.

Why a New Church?

Two Evangelical groups under the Augsburg and Helvetican confession decided to merge together. The decision was adopted at the Evangelical synod on December 17 and 18, 1918 (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 29). The result of the merger was a new denomination--the Czech Brethren Evangelical Church. A logical question arose for the Catholic reformers: Why start a new church when the new Czech Brethren Evangelical Church had recently been founded?

Karel Farský comments on the question. He admits that the united Evangelical churches deserve an appreciation because, in the form of brotherly new-utraquism, they went back to the Czech Confession from 1575. During the three centuries of counter-reformation, not only did

the Catholic population not grow smaller, but most of the Utraquists were re-catholized.

Although most of our forefathers were of the Evangelical confession, it may be dangerous to cut off the top of the tree and to force all its strength to run into an old low branch. I do not see any other solution for this problem than to reform the Catholic Church from her foundation in the spirit of the new times. (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 29)

In Český Problém Církevní Karel Farský mentions seven points of the reforms, de facto identical with the original demands but enriched with new views. He adds some ideas about the correlation of the government and the church, expressing his desire for separation in the sense of a free church in a free state:

We priests feel too much in our ministry many dilemmas: the dilemma of the world-view, the dilemma of the free conscience, the dilemma of the Roman imperialism, the dilemma of the worship ritualism. We feel the unmaintainability of the official explanation of the beginning of the world . . . We feel the discrepancy between the original democratic organization of the Apostolic Church and the thousand-year long Roman imperialism. We feel the pedantic lifelessness of the overgrown ritualism that is being given more and more preferences before the thoughtful and moral religiosity, so for the less educated people it became a whole complex of liturgical formalities; ceremonial, non-understandable ritual. Overemphasizing of these ceremonies and rituals drops the religion down to the level of ancient religions where it becomes a mere cult. Should we ask for the solution from Rome? No! These problems have to be

solved by a zealous academic activity of which we are capable as well as Rome. (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 30)

Farský goes on to mention John Hus and his bitter complaints sent from the prison in Constance about the church Council not wanting to listen to the truth. Farský places Hus' quote side by side with Jesus' words: "Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!" (Jn 8:45).

In the conclusion Farský reminds his readers of the oath of the priests made on January 23, 1919: "If the reforms will not come from Rome we will force them via facti!" (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 30).

The Czech and Moravian priests were addressed in August 1919 by an episcopal pastoral letter, based on anti-modernistic church regulations, especially the encyclical Pascendi Domini Gregis from September 8, 1907. The letter warns against the growing modernistic movement and forbids the publishing and reading of the Právo Národa under the threat of church punishment. Church discipline, however, was not what it had been. The readers were not frightened: out of 3,300 receivers only 300 canceled their subscription.

The Nomination of a New Prague Archbishop

Important landmark in the development of the movement was September 9, 1919, when a new Prague archbishop was nominated. The new archbishop was Dr. František Kordač--a well known opponent of the reformed movement. The nomination came suddenly, even without the usual consultation with

the capitula. It was considered an insult to the efforts for democratization of the church (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 30).

Disappointed over the Pope's approach, the members of Ohnisko met on September 15 and decided to dismiss their group. It was clear that legal ways for reforms would not be found.

The Club of the Reformed Priests

The very same meeting gave birth to a new organization, the Club of the Reformed Priests. The club kept the organization of Ohnisko; the most significant difference was in the oath of the priests that had been made on January 23, 1919, to keep on working until the reforms come true. The intention to find the legal ways to achieve this goal was left behind.

The motto of the Club, via facti, was coming true slowly, step by step. The first worship in the Czech language was performed on September 28, 1919, Saint Wenceslas Day. The next Czech worship took place on the first anniversary of the liberation, October 28, 1919.

The Problem of Celibacy Solved "Via Facti"

Another expression of the rebellion against the episcopal authority was transgression against the celibacy rule. A new civil law from May of 1919 allowed priests to get

married, either at the civil office or at the church if another priest agreed to perform the marital ceremony. Many priests married without informing the bishop. Some of them, however, did not keep it secret, but made their wedding ceremony a public celebration. Often moves like that were very popular and the newly married priests received hundreds of congratulations (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 32).

The Debate in the Právo Národa

The October 1, 1919, issue of Právo Národa published an article by Karel Farský about the Czech liturgy in which the author insisted that it was impossible to wait for papal approval of the Czech liturgy. Since nobody in Rome understands the language, they would have to hire some Czech committee to revise the liturgy. He declared that this Christmas (1919), worship all over the country would be conducted in the Czech language, and from then on, the same practice would be kept permanently (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 32).

By that time Právo Národa had already become a platform for ecclesiastical matters generally, so it published different views on the reformation in order to keep the members of the club informed. Antonín Boháč was the author of an article, published first in Kostnické Jiskry (The Constance Sparks) and reprinted in the Právo Národa (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 32). In his article, Boháč invited reformed priests to join the Czech Brethren Church. He believed that the desire for a renewal would never meet success unless it

was supported by the people. He was afraid that the reformers were making a mistake by forcing the changes via facti and forgetting about the people. The people, according to Boháč, were committed to Catholicism, supported the bishops, and would surely stand against any priest who would want to shake the unity of the Roman Catholic Church.

Boháč sees the future in two possible ways: (1) All those who cared for Czech Christianity would leave the Roman Catholic Church and join the Czech Brethren Evangelical Church; or (2) a group of reform-minded people would be created within the framework of the Roman Catholic Church. This group would work towards the completion of the reformation, and then it would break off from the RCC and join the Czech Brethren Church as one body.

Boháč asked a radical question:

Do you really want Czech religious life and as a consequence a Czech Christian church, or do you stand on the foundation of the Roman Christianity and have in your mind only breaking what is the most insulting for the Czech citizens? If you want the latter, by just reforming the church but keeping her spirit, than you only multiply the Czech religious confusion, and you are even worse than your opponents in Rome because you only procrastinate with the real solution. You keep the Roman poison and only sweeten it in order to make it desirable. But if you want the former, then you have to start being serious about religion. You are either ideologically strong enough to make an attempt for a new Reformation inside the Catholic Church and thus you will become Protestants, or you will change the denomination and join the Czech

Brethren Church. (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 33)

These were strong words but at least they showed a possible solution. It is interesting to see that Karel Farský did not respond to this proclamation. It is a pity that the leaders did not find the opportunity to meet and talk when the situation needed it most urgently. Farský, who was determined not to compromise, did not trust the Czech Brethren Church.

The Eastern-Orthodox Crisis (1920-1924)

The Two Directions

In the early Czechoslovak Church, two different attitudes soon developed. Those who were concerned about the religious need of a modern man for atoning the general religious crisis without abandoning the Christianity focused on the freedom of conscience. Those who did not trust the ability of modern times to satisfy religious needs inclined towards the Serbian (Eastern) Orthodoxy.

There were other reasons besides the religious ones that made the Serbian Orthodoxy attractive for the new church that had recently broken away from the Roman Catholic Church. The number of the believers entering the new church was too large for the few former Roman Catholic priests. The question arose of where and how to recruit priests. One of the solutions seemed to be in turning towards the Serbian

Orthodox Church and ask for the consecration of the priests or, if need be, of the bishops.

It might have been possible to recruit new preachers in a style similar to that of evangelical churches. Their example was, after all, historically and ideologically closer and more justifiable. This suggestion was rejected, probably because of the anti-protestant mentality inoculated by the long-lasting Roman Catholic Counter-reformation. However, the fear that the Presbyterian or independent system of ordaining preachers without apostolic Succession would not be acceptable in the eyes of the laity after three centuries of the Counter-Reformation brainwashing, was probably justified.

The question of the consecration of the priests was not only practical but it had an ideological dimension, too. That was being overlooked by some optimists who thought that it would be possible to have consecrated priests and to maintain the freedom of conscience in the doctrinal issues at the same time. The fight for clarity of the doctrines eventually turned into a church crisis.

Besides these practical reasons for choosing the Serbian Orthodox Church, there were also national and political factors that led the Czechoslovak Church towards the Slavic Christianity, within which the Serbian Orthodox Church was the closest politically. Articles, books, and negotiations with the Serbians, especially from 1920, are

testimonies to the realization of the national relationship between the Czechoslovaks and the Serbians (Spisar 1936, 116).

It is natural that the inclination towards Serbian Orthodox Church was also motivated by the need for the support from other Christian churches. To be small can be depressing.⁶ Although the Czechoslovak Church differed from some churches, it also had a lot in common with many of them. The point of contact with the Serbian Orthodox church was not only Christ but also the Slavic family. In order to justify the Slavo-national reasons for cooperation, the work of Cyril and Methodius was remembered. These two missionaries brought Christianity from the East. Therefore, it was argued that by turning to the East once again the Czechoslovak Church builds upon a good foundation--her own national tradition, which was actually Eastern Orthodox (Spisar 1936, 116).

The Memorandum to the Serbs

⁶It is interesting to see how language can reflect geographical and quantitative dimensions of the nation that speaks it. The English folk proverb "He who pays the piper calls the tune" has its Czech equivalent in "Sing the song of him whose bread you eat!" The Czechs use to be a nation of good musicians but almost always under the rulership of someone bigger; thus the Czech folk proverb observes the same contract from opposite perspective than the English one.

It did not take long for the idea of negotiating with the Serbians to materialize. On September 6, 1920, the Serbian Orthodox Church was given the Memorandum with both the request for episcopal consecrating and the conditions in the form of the doctrinal commitment of the Czechoslovak Church.

The first part of the Memorandum with gratefulness remembered Cyril and Methodius and their missionary work for the foundation of the Slavonic, and especially Czech, Christian culture. It went on to recall the dominion of the German hierarchy established by the Roman Catholic Church. Next it mentioned Master John Hus, who in his teaching about freedom of conscience fought for the moral renewal of the nation, for splitting off from Rome, and for Christian tolerance. Emphasized was the respect for Hus and the impossibility of creating a sovereign church in the Slavic spirit. Only after the liberation could the nation have come back to Cyril and Methodius and to John Hus and to the great Slavic family from which it had received the light of the faith. The Czechoslovak Church, according to the Memorandum, was the bearer of these ideas.

In the second part of the Memorandum, the spokesmen of the Czechoslovak Church asked the Serbian Orthodox Church for exceptions in some areas of differences between the Czechoslovak Church and the traditional Orthodox churches.⁷

⁷For the list of the required differences, see The Memorandum to the Serbs, Part 2, appendix 4.

The process of creating the Memorandum was by no means calm and peaceful. Both streams of ideas (liberal vs., orthodox) clashed all the time. Instead of either finding the solution or realizing the impossibility of reconciling the two, both positions were presented in the Memorandum side by side. In the church committee, the orthodox group was in the majority. Therefore, the Memorandum sounded predominantly in favor of accepting Serbian Orthodoxy in its full width and depth; the only deviation from the orthodoxy seemed to be the issue of the worship and discipline (Spisar 1936, 117).

On the very day the Memorandum was to be passed, a short appendage was added following the list of commitments from the Czech party: ". . . with an exception of the liberty of conscience and free religious development." The Memorandum thus made broad commitments with little qualification, saying:

[The Czechoslovak Church] shows willingness to accept the dogmatic teaching of the United Serbian Orthodox Church, expressed by the seven ecumenical councils and by the prayer 'I Believe.' [It] will submit to the orders and laws of the Serbian Orthodox Church with the exception of the freedom of the conscience and a free religious development.

The Orthodox-oriented adherents did not even wait for the church convention to have the church vote on the Memorandum, as one would expect in a democratic church. The Memorandum was handed to the Serbian Orthodox Church

on the September 6, but was approved by the Czechoslovak Church only three days later by the synod of January 8-9, 1921 (Spisar 1936, 122).

The Quest for a Slavic Type of Christianity

According to Spisar, religion in its general features is unchangeable and eternal. Among these general features he lists (1) the absolute, or God as the foundation for all being, no matter what sort of name he is given by different cultures at various times; (2) the relationship of a man to the universe and to all mankind; (3) the moral order with the feelings of commitment and moral duty. These characteristics are common to all religions; the differences between religions are in the particulars. All religions including Christianity undergo development and take various forms. Within the framework of Christianity, they take the forms of different churches. The two main Christian churches are Eastern (Greek Orthodox) and Western (Roman Catholic). Protestantism, with its many Evangelical churches, grew out of Roman Catholicism and branched out. The Slavic nations belong to the Eastern part of the church. In the Latin church, the Roman nations built up their own type of church. Similarly Germanic nations built upon their Protestant type of church. The Slavic nations, however, were never that fortunate; there is no specific Slavic type of Christianity (Spisar 1936, 135-136).

Creation of the Czechoslovak Church was hoped to be the yeast for a kind of pan-Slavic church renewal for which the right conditions had historically never existed. That is why the Czechoslovak Church coined a motto saying that it would be: "1. of Christ, 2. Czech and Slavic (with the Czech Reformation in mind), and 3. modern" (Spisar 1936, 137).

The anti-Catholic mood can be sensed especially from the words like "modern." Some of the flyers and posters from that time bear witness to how unreconcilable the Czechoslovaks and the Catholics were, or at least wanted to be. As an example, we can look at the closing part of the text of one flyer from the pen of Alois Spisar:

To the Catholic Priests of Kroměříž
 Czech people, be alert! Learn from your history! Be ye faithful, as the Catholic priests of Kroměříž call upon you; yes, be faithful but first of all to yourself, to your national spirit, to your history, and to your ancestors! Be faithful to you Masters John and Jerome, to the bishop of your souls, John Amos Comenius, be ye faithful to you national revivalists and liberators from the Hapsburgian oppression, so you can be freed also from the oppression of Rome. Do not be afraid that you would betray Christ. On the contrary: being faithful to your history you will serve God and His Son the same way your glorious ancestors did. The crown of life will not miss you then. The life is in Christ--the death is in Rome! (Spisar, a flyer, 1920)

Typically for Spisar, there is no mention or reference to any kind of Eastern Orthodoxy in the flyer. However, its content truthfully expresses the temper of the times:

the joy of the liberation, the enthusiastic idolization of the national history, and hatred against everything Catholic.

First General Assembly of the Delegates (January 8-9, 1921)

It was necessary for the new church to be organized, both formally and ideologically. The Memorandum to the Serbian Orthodox Church had already been sent on its way although the representatives of the Czechoslovak Church had not had a chance to approve it; many did not even know about it. The doctrinal conflict (orthodoxy vs. liberalism) needed to be resolved.

The church could not call a general council because she was not yet organized on the basis of a Constitution; that was because the Constitution had not been approved or even submitted for approval. This was supposed to happen at the First Assembly of the Delegates in January 1921.

The program had three main parts: (1) The statute of the church (the Constitution); (2) the Memorandum to the United Serbian Orthodox Church; and (3) the dogmatic (doctrinal) directions for the future. Other reports (financial, liturgical, organizational) were also important, although perhaps not as crucial for the existence of the church as the three main ones.

The Statute

The statute of the Czechoslovak Church, the future foundation of her Constitution, were passed by the First Assembly of Delegates. The first article, in accordance with the Memorandum to the Serbian Church, declares:

The Christians, confessing the teaching of Jesus Christ according to the interpretation of the first seven church councils and the Nicene confession of faith, and following the tradition of the Slavic apostles Cyril and Method and Master John Hus, constitute the Czechoslovak Church. (Spisar 1936, 150-151)

Since Cyril and Methodius, as well as John Hus, confessionally agreed with the church of their times, this first article was not considered to be "progressive." It had to be changed later on⁸ by adding the line: ". . . all in the spirit of today's state of human culture" (Spisar 1936, 151).

The Memorandum

The Memorandum to the Serbian Church, after the explanation of the reasons for joining the Eastern Orthodoxy (see appendix 4) by Bohumil Zahradník Brodský, was unanimously accepted (Spisar 1936, 144).

The Dogmatic Directions

⁸After the Serbian negative answer to the First Memorandum.

Matěj Pavlík gave a report at the First Assembly about the ideological situation of the new church.⁹

From the very beginning it was obvious that sooner or later it would be necessary to adopt a standpoint concerning some parts of the Roman Catholic teaching, especially those articles of faith that were related to the practical life of the church--the liturgy. Some of such problematic issues were the Marian cult, the doctrine of transubstantiation, and veneration of the saints, their remains, and their pictures. It was crucial to find the answers to the questions of the Czech people, who had been reared in the Roman Catholic Church but did not believe with her.

Pavlík made one important point when he said that the assembly was not competent to decide about the dogmatic issues. He said that because the leaders and theologians not had time to study the doctrines; they were too busy popularizing and advertizing to work seriously on the matters of doctrines. Formally, the assembly was competent because the whole church was represented there; however, it was not able to decide because the materials had not been prepared.

According to Pavlík, the assembly could vote about the practical and liturgical issues but it had to limit itself to setting general directions in doctrinal matters. By doing this he allowed the assembly to make some decisions

⁹Matěj Pavlík was a future advocate of the Eastern Orthodox orientation of the church.

as the church's formally-constituted representative body. Later on, however, when the church seemed to start taking the direction toward liberalism, it was Pavlík himself who argued that the assembly was not competent to decide about the doctrinal issues at all (Spisar 1936, 145).

Dogmatic Directions, as presented by Matěj Pavlík, later became the foundation for the church's standpoint concerning the old church dogmas and the articles of faith.¹⁰ It is surprising that Matěj Pavlík, a protagonist of orthodoxy, would formulate the directions for the new church in such liberal way. The content of the Directions is, according to Spisar, "a compromise, not a synthesis of the two tendencies" (Spisar 1936, 149) fighting against one another within the Czechoslovak Church. While in the Memorandum the orthodox viewpoint was more emphasized, here in the Directions the liberal ("progressive") orientation was prominent (Spisar 1936, 149). The freedom of conscience that was but a little appendage in the Memorandum was the Alpha and Omega in the Directions.

Pavlík used the vague term "reassume." However, no one knew for sure what "to reassume with the Nicene Creed and seven ecumenical councils" (see The Dogmatic Directions, item 18, appendix 5) really means. Doctrines can either be accepted or rejected. What Matěj Pavlík had in mind was their complete acceptance (Spisar 1936, 149), but this was

¹⁰For the Dogmatic Directions, see appendix 5.

in sharp contradiction with other statements concerning freedom of conscience (item 19), critical revision of Christian terms and concepts of Christian thought (item 5), absolute freedom of science (item 2), etc. Therefore, the Directions look more like an attempt for an compromise than a solution of the dilemma. The two non-reconcilable streams of thought were still there next to one another as if nothing was wrong about it.

Other Assembly Reports

Of the several other reports delivered on the First Assembly of Delegates, one written by Alois Tuháček deserves attention because of its contribution to the debate concerning doctrinal issues. Tuháček is well-known in the church today because of his work on the Czech liturgy that he coauthored with Karel Farský.

Tuháček's report dealt with the liturgy. However, in his opinion, the liturgy and dogmatics are sisters. Moreover, the liturgy is the dogmatics in practice. Therefore, he also presented some of his ideas about dogmatic orientation of the church.

Christ did not proclaim only one God, God the Spirit, but He gave us directly God the Father who loves all His children with the same love. If we realize this Fatherhood of God the Father in our hearts, then the brotherhood of men as the children of this heavenly Father will also be realized. (Spisar 1936, 152)

The Serbian Answer to the Memorandum

The Serbs' response to the Memorandum was awaited with a great enthusiasm. Although months seemed too long for some, most understood that something as important as this needed time. Both wings of the Czechoslovak Church worked on their stabilization and growth, and none of them in their optimism expected the disappointment that the answer caused when it finally came.

The answer came by the end of March 1921. They were glad to offer the Czechoslovak Church the transition to Eastern Orthodoxy, and they did welcome the Czechoslovak Church among the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The Serbians completely ignored the appendage to the Memorandum concerning the freedom of conscience and religious development. The Serbian Church did not want to refuse the petition of the Czechoslovak Church, however, being unwilling to agree with such a liberal condition, she kept silent about it.

The response from the Czechoslovak side was as expected: the Serbian offer was unacceptable. On March 23, the Central Council of Elders decided to send another memorandum to the Serbian Church.¹¹ This Second Memorandum evaluated the Serbian answer to the First Memorandum and stated what could and could not be accepted. In addition, the Czechoslovaks asked the Serbians to consecrate the bishops in Christian love and brotherhood. This would help the

¹¹The Central Council of Elders was the temporary highest institution of authority in the church.

Czechoslovaks to reach the independence, which would then enable the desired brotherly relationships to come true (Spisar 1936, 158).

The new Memorandum was finished and approved by April 3, 1921. It did not contain any promise of any commitments from the Czechoslovak side. The Second Memorandum was just a demand for consecrating the bishops with the hope that in the future, perhaps the two churches would work out a mutual relationship.

The Second Memorandum was a request for help from the Orthodox Church in the consecration of the first few bishops; after that, with her own bishops, the Czechoslovak Church would become autocephalous, and the election and ordination of the bishops would be only her own internal affair. The church herself would then be independent, not only in terms of administration (the authority of the bishop), as all the Eastern orthodox churches are, but also in terms of dogmatics. Her relationship with the Serbian Orthodox Church would be based on brotherly friendship, not on the unity in the dogmatic issues.

Eastern Orthodox concept of autocephality, however, does not allow the churches to be independent in this sense; they all must be bound by the conclusions of the first seven church councils and the Nicene Creed. Otherwise they cannot call themselves Eastern Orthodox. The Czechoslovak optimists forgot that no church with an apostolic succession

would consecrate someone with no conditions or requirements.

Olomouc Resolution

On April 21, 1921, the meeting of Moravian delegates with the bishop Dositej was organized in Olomouc. The purpose of the meeting was to make some of the problematic questions clear for both sides. Matěj Pavlík (by that time a temporary administrator of the church) pointed to the Directions (see appendix 5), to the principle of the freedom of conscience and scientific research, and to the Czech Reformation--the pride of the nation. He asked for the freedom of religious creativity and for the contacts of theological cooperation with the Czech Brethren Church.

Surprisingly, bishop Dositej took a favorable approach to all of these. When asked whether the acceptance of the Nicene Creed and the seven church councils would be efficient for the consecration of the bishop, he answered positively. After that, the Resolution was accepted in which the Serbian Church was asked to consecrate a bishop for the Czechoslovak Church.

Bishop Dositej was giving the Czechoslovak priests more hope than he was authorized to. His word, even in writing, was not necessarily identical with the official position of the Serbian Church.

The formulation of the Olomouc Resolution was not satisfactory, especially for those who demanded freedom

of conscience. It was not clear whether "the acceptance of the Nicene Creed and seven councils" meant that freedom of conscience applied also to the interpretation of these documents. If it would not, the conditions were unacceptable for the Czechoslovak Church once again--it was impossible to simply accept the Eastern Orthodoxy, lock, stock and barrel.

Prague Resolution

In the Resolution from May 7, 1921, the Central Council of Elders virtually accepted the Eastern Orthodoxy completely in the sense it was formulated in the Olomouc Resolution. Although during all the negotiations with the Serbs the principles of freedom of conscience and free religious development were stressed, in this document, the Prague Resolution there was no mention of them whatsoever. The Council declared that the church is ready to accept the seven ecumenical councils and the Nicene Creed as the confessional foundation for her dogmatic position. Was the "confessional foundation" supposed to mean something different from simply "accepting"?

The Second General Assembly of Delegates (August 29-31, 1921)

The main purpose of the Second Assembly was to acknowledge the Constitution of the church and act on the basis of the Constitution to start the organization of the church by electing bishops and diocesan councils.

Another task of the Assembly was to approve the Prague Resolution of May 7, 1921, that had already been sent to the Serbian Church. During the debate, the two wings, as expected, continued to clash.

The Serbian Church acknowledged the Czechoslovak Church as independent and autonomous and was willing to help her to achieve the autocephality concerning the bishops and ordination of priests. Bishop Dositej promised that consecration of the elected candidates would take place as soon as the [Serbian] board of bishops had a list of the candidates (Spisar 1936, 166).

No one clarified the meaning of the terms that were being used. Therefore, the words "independence," "autonomy," and "autocephality" may have meant one thing on the Czechoslovak side, but they meant something different on the Serbian side. The Assembly did not disperse the misunderstanding; the same words kept their different meanings, as they already had for a whole year of negotiations with the Serbs. However, there was no debate about the freedom of conscience and religious development; all talks were led in the context of the Prague Resolution of the May 7, 1921 (Spisar 1936, 167).

Serbian Answer to the Resolutions

So the Serbian Church received the Second Memorandum and the two Resolutions, the Olomouc and the Prague. The Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church answered the

Resolutions but never responded to the Second Memorandum. The answer was dated on May 31, which in Eastern calendar is equivalent Western June 13, 1921.

The Serbs could not imagine any way for the Czechoslovak Church to have the bishops consecrated other than to join the Eastern Orthodox churches as one of them. Thus the Serbian Church kept talking only about making the Czechoslovak Church one of the Eastern Orthodox churches, with the acceptance of the seven ecumenical councils considered to be efficient condition for such a merger, while the Czechoslovak Church focused on the consecration of the bishops rather than on the connection to the Eastern orthodoxy; as a matter of fact, she rejected the connection.

Bishop Dositej added his own note to the Serbian answer to make clear why the Serbian Church does not want to hurry with the consecrating of the Czechoslovak bishops. He explained that in order for the bishops to be consecrated, they would first have to be approved by the General Council of all the Serbian archbishops. Since the council had just met, it would not meet again very soon.

The First Consecrated Bishop

In the light of all these understandable obstacles that the Serbian Church had against quick ordination of Czechoslovak bishops, it seems rather surprising that Matěj Pavlík was consecrated in September 1921 in Bělehrad. He was not even legally elected as a bishop, since the church

did not have a constitution yet. It was a year later (in November 1922) that he was legally elected as a bishop of the Moravian diocese.

There were other candidates for consecration, too: Karel Farský and E. Dlouhý-Pokorný (Spisar 1936, 163). Pavlík was the only one consecrated on the basis of the seven ecumenical councils and the Nicene Creed. The other two candidates were more of the liberal position; they insisted on freedom of conscience and free religious development. Therefore, the Serbian Church did not rush to make them bishops. Bishop Pavlík adopted the name Gorazd, and from his consecration on he tried hard to make the whole church, or at least the Moravian diocese, of the Eastern Orthodox type.

The rest of the history of the so-called Eastern Orthodox Crisis was marked by a permanent fight between the orthodox and liberal wings. The Moravian believers liked the Eastern style of worship, probably because it was different from the unpopular Roman Catholic one.

The First Czechoslovak Catechism

The liberal wing did not waste time either. The release of the Czechoslovak Catechism in August 1922 changed the atmosphere, although it did not contain anything new that was not said before. Perhaps it was the brief and plain form of a catechism that made the position of the church clear for everybody; perhaps the title "Catechism" itself

attracted the attention of all the churches around, including the Serbian Orthodox. One thing is for sure--it meant the end of the negotiations with the Serbians once and for all.

The authors of the Catechism were Karel Farský (content) and Kalous (formal and technical details). The primary purposes of it were to offer a school textbook and to speed the solution of the Eastern Orthodox crisis.

The outline of the Catechism is as follows:

1. Religion

- a) The life of the world
- b) Knowing God
- c) The Teaching of Jesus Christ (Christianity)
- d) Jesus--a Heroic Sufferer of Mankind.

2. Commandments and Heritage

- a) The law of God
- b) The Commandments

3. Worship

- a) About religions as a private thing (prayer)
- b)

About religion as a public thing (worship, liturgy
and the Eucharist)

- c) About the rituals
- d) About the sacraments

4. Church

- a) The church generally
- b) The Czechoslovak Church

According to the part 1, God is the law of the world (Spisar 1936, 187). Here Farský changed a little bit his original definition from Stvoření, "Creation," where "God in nature is the living law of the world" (Spisar 1936, 187). The Catechism definition seems to portrait God in a more transcendent and less pantheistic way.

The traditionally unusual term is "unification with God." One of the strongest reprimands against Farský's concept of God was the absence of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is described as "a divine excitement in a man," and Jesus Christ is neither God nor the Son of God nor the God-man but rather "eternally alive law of morality and religion for a Christian." The sons and children of God are called all those people that understand the truth of God. The claim that Jesus is "our greatest prophet" and the fact that He was placed next to other famous prophets was taken by the traditional churches as the most outrages insult. Spisar defends the Catechism by stating that "there have been Christians-Unitarians around already for several centuries" (Spisar 1936, 188).

Jesus' work of atonement is also redefined in a modern, "free" way. Jesus by His death on the cross has overcome human weakness and malice. He is the Savior because He

has proved that man is able to overcome world's weakness and malice. Hell is life in sin, without the law of God; repentance is the sinner's decision to return to the truth of God. Through the repentance one can achieve the union with God which is forgiveness. What a man has to do with his sin is to recognize it, acknowledge it, give it up and atone it. The resurrection from the dead means being cleansed from sins.

The very title of the section 1c, which equates Christianity with the teaching of Jesus Christ, reveals something about the theological background of the authors.

Since the Catechism was not meant to be a systematic analysis of the theological concepts but rather a tool for school education, some of the terms, if they were presented in clearer form, would not cause as much misunderstanding as they actually did.

Part 2 also contains some interesting messages. Section 2a teaches that the law of God is being revealed to the people through prophets. Those who understand and live the truth of God are the saints. The Christians' greatest prophet is Jesus Christ; only He himself is our Lord. Those who acknowledge Christ as their Lord and Savior are Christians. There is always the need for new prophets because the previous prophets either did not reveal the whole truth or their prophecy was not preserved completely or uncorrupted. In the section 2b, which deals with the commandments, the

Moses' Decalogue is listed together with Jesus' two commandments of love. Some references to the heritage of Czech heroes follow: Comenius, Hus, national revivalists. Worthy of mention is the fact that together with the main principle of the Czechoslovak Church (freedom of conscience and the harmony of the faith and science) comes the slogan "In work and knowledge is our salvation" and the motto of the Czechoslovak Republic, "The truth wins!"¹²

In the part 3, only one thing is significantly different from the conservative Protestantism: the Czechoslovak Church recognized seven sacraments (the same ones as in the Roman Catholic Church). They are the sacred acts whereby the people to get united with God in the Spirit of Jesus.

Part 4 talks first about the church generally. The church is a body of Christians. Its head is Jesus Christ, it is founded upon the adamant faith in the Gospel. There are many different confessions. The Czechoslovak Church, one of them, is made up of the Christians who profess the teaching of Jesus Christ according to the interpretation of the first seven ecumenical church councils and the Nicene confession of faith and who follow the traditions of the Hussite movement, all in the spirit of the contemporary state of human culture.

¹²The slogan rhymes in Czech: "V práci a vědění / je naše spasení."

In his critical response to the Catechism, bishop Dositej¹³ very excitedly refused the liberal tone of the Catechism. He referred to the Second Assembly of Delegates (that was more Orthodox-oriented than the first one). He saw the Catechism as a contradiction of the Assembly's decisions, and concluded that

The Catechism by Dr. Farský and Prof. Kalous may perhaps contain their personal opinions but these opinions stand completely outside all the Christian Confessions whatsoever. (Spisar 1936, 191)

Bishop Dositej's comment that Farský's and Kalous' opinions are outside all Christian confessions was, regrettably, correct. From today's perspective it looks surprising that some theologians would believe that they are able to create a new type of Christianity by throwing away the historical, traditional, and biblical Christian faith.

Bishop Gorazd's Break from the Church

The fight between the two wings continued. Both sides published articles and argued against one another. The strongest move from a liberally oriented theologian was the creation of the new worship liturgy by Karel Farský in 1923.

¹³Bishop Gorazd had been in the U.S.A. since July 1922, trying to raise support from the local Czech and Slovak communities. He returned to Czechoslovakia in January 1923 (Spisar 1936, 204).

To have a new liturgy was important for the liberals especially in order to be able to compete against the Eastern Orthodox Mass that was being introduced by bishop Gorazd all over Moravia. The Roman Catholic liturgy, even in the Czech language, was not sufficient anymore.

Formally, the new liturgy was a composite of both the Eastern and the Western elements, permeated by the spirit of the "progressive" orientation, namely theological liberalism. The presence of the Eastern elements was understandable given the contemporary strong Eastern orthodox influence. The Western elements are in the structure of the liturgy as the four parts of the mass rite (Thompson 1962, 54).

Conceptually the liturgy differs from the Roman Catholic repetition of sacrifice in that it presents the work of Christ and His life. The Eucharist is not the transubstantiation of the elements but rather the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The organization of the church--the establishment of the local congregations, boards of elders, and dioceses councils--went on faster in Moravia than it did in Bohemia, mainly because of the purposeful pastoral activity of the Bishop Gorazd.

The election of the patriarch in June 1924 was considered to be an important event because the most promis-

ing candidate was Karel Farský. If he won, the liberal anti-eastern orientation would take over the entire church.

The majority voted for Farský. Seven Moravian congregations abstained from voting, plus one from Bohemia. Some of the congregations did not send their votes in time. Farský's victory was sealed (Spisar 1936, 217).

Under the impression of the election's results, Bishop Gorazd decided to make his last step: to leave the church (Spisar 1936, 217).

After he left the Czechoslovak Church, Bishop Gorazd started to organize the Eastern Orthodoxly oriented churches in Moravia, making them a part of the Czechoslovak Orthodox Church, which would cover the entire territory of the Czechoslovak Republic from Bohemia to Carpathian Ruthenia¹⁴(Spisar 1936, 217). The withdrawal of Bishop Gorazd made one thing clear: the church was never going to turn back to the Eastern Orthodoxy. The meeting of the First General Council only restated officially what was already true in reality.

The second session (March 28-30, 1931)

The General Council had established the main elements for the church's orientation at its first meeting in 1924. However, at a second meeting, held on March 28-30,

¹⁴During the World War 2, Carpathian Ruthenia was given to Hungary by Hitler. After 1945 it was taken by the Soviet Union.

1931, the dominance of the liberal position was stabilized, with no more disturbance from any conservative orthodoxy. Several new things emerged that are important for our analysis.

The question of teaching was the primary issue at the meeting. Alois Spisar, the reporter for the doctrinal committee, acquainted the audience with the content of the "teaching," i.e., the doctrinal orientation of the church.

Concerning the question of religious epistemology, the church rejected the opinion that religion is only a product of pure reason, i.e., top of the philosophical speculation. On the other hand, it also rejected the opinion that religion is given or revealed as the completed truth once for ever, closed either both in the Scriptures and oral tradition, as the RCC teaches, or just in the the Scriptures, as taught by the Reformation. The position of the Czechoslovak Church was the living religious experience that combines both action of God (revelation) and action of man (faith). "We underline both objective and subjective elements and we hope that God is given what is God's and also man is given what is his, according to the will of God" (Spisar 1936, 252, emphasis mine).

As a consequence of this position, the faith of the Czechoslovak Church was not something determined by outside authority but rather grew spontaneously from inside through

the action of God in a synergistic way. Thus the Czechoslovak Church rejected the blind faith humanly mediated, as is found among the Catholics, and recognized the faith as a gift of God's grace, sprouting up under the influence of God's love. This means the acceptance of the Evangelical testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum, "the internal testimony of the Spirit of God" in ourselves. However, the Czechoslovak Church did not bind faith to the external word of Scripture.

The church did not view the Scriptures as being the sum of the Word of God but rather the testimony about the religious experience of those whom God chose to call forth through faith in Himself. Of the Scriptures, the highest place belonged to the Gospels, critically interpreted, as the standard of the religious and moral life for the Czechoslovak Church members.

According to Spisar, the Czechoslovak Church did not neglect the tradition, as the Evangelical churches did, but it also did not overemphasize it like the Roman Catholic Church. The Czechoslovak Church learned from both the general and the domestic Czech tradition, as well as from the Reformation; however, the church always measured it by the standard of the Spirit of God in Christ.

Thus the the Czechoslovak Church claimed to submit under the Spirit of God in Christ, who interprets the world and everything in it in the best possible way and gives

us the most perfect fulfilment for life, God as the Truth and Good. This also determined the view of revelation as an internal power always living and acting; the Czechoslovak Church rejected the Catholic concept of revelation as something limited by time and space. But even the internal revelation was not understood as an announcement of the completed truth given once forever in certain writings or through certain persons; it was rather a stimulating and fertilizing of the human spirit in order to achieve the most perfect activity in man in the process of getting to know God, the foundation of all truth, and in the process of reaching perfection according to God's will.

According to Spisar, the teaching of the Czechoslovak Church differed from the philosophy and science by acknowledging God's revelation; it differed from the Catholic doctrines by having the internal and permanent revelation; it differed from traditional Evangelical churches by not seeing the revelation as unchangeable truth but as an empowering of human spirit towards the truth and good. "Nevertheless, we hope that we do not stand outside God and His revelation neither generally, nor especially in Christ" (Spisar 1936, 253, emphasis mine).

Concerning the question of God, the teaching stood firmly against atheism and against any attempt to limit God with the world; but it also stands against the old church opinions about God in the three persons.

We believe that God is a perfect and fulfilled life. The old Christian church used to express this fulness and perfectness of the life in God by the doctrine about three persons in God. However, it did so on the basis of the philosophy, theology and culture of the first centuries after Christ. We, acknowledging this perfectness of God's life and fullness of His relationships to the world, want to express it in the way that is understandable in our times. Therefore, rejecting the three persons, we speak about God's threefold activity in the world as the Creator, Revelator, and Sanctifier; and about threefold life in God as the Originator or Father of all perfectness, the Word or a thought and a content, and the spirit of all perfectness. We hope to stand closer to the Scriptures than the doctrine of Trinity, being not understandable for us and dead for our religious and moral life, can ever claim to stand (Spisar 1936, 255, emphasis mine).

Spisar's report went on explaining the reasons why the church should reject faith in Jesus' divinity (Spisar 1936, 256); why the Resurrection never actually took place; and why morality should be connected to religion in order to explain the reality of moral commitment, while the content of the morality is the subject of the development and empirical experience (Spisar 1936, 257).

The Council accepted all the statements concerning the teaching of the church. Since then, the liberals had the undisturbed freedom they longed for. This shifts our focus to the next important issue: the theology of the church.

CHAPTER 2

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK CHURCH

Truth exists,
only falsehood has to be invented.

Georges Braque, Pensées sur l'art

We will consider the three main figures that in various ways influenced the development of theological thought in the Czechoslovak Church, thus significantly contributing to the determination of its future direction. These theologians are Karel Farský, Alois Spisar, Zdeňek Trtík. We can omit Matěj Pavlík-Gorazd with clear conscience because his Eastern orthodox orientation and an influence with only a temporal impact are described in deep enough detail in the historical part of the paper.

The theology of each of the three main theologians of the church is presented here in small fragments only. Each of them wrote a number of books; we will limit our interest only to a few portions that are important for understanding the theological position of the Czechoslovak Church today.

The Theology of Karel Farský

The Dialectical Character of Farský's Theology

Like many others in the beginning of the twentieth century, Karel Farský adopted the dialectical world-view

that was influenced by the philosophy of Georg Friedrich Hegel. Therefore, Farský's theological system is full of apparent inconsistencies and contradictions, although Farský himself does not seem to think that there is anything wrong with them.

Both critiques and followers of Karel Farský focused on these problematic propositions and statements that seemed to prove that Farský was the denier of the central certainties of the traditional Christian confession. The former rejected him because of their Christian faith, the latter accepted him because of the position of theological liberalism that they held.

They both, however, probably did him injustice, to a higher or lesser degree, by overlooking the dialectical character of his system. He himself would not see his contradictory claims as a denial or a questioning of the Christian faith but rather as step-by-step growing disclosure of the truth in the sense of the Hegel's triads (thesis--antithesis--synthesis). Thus one can find in the writings of Karel Farský the provoking claims about the Eucharist, about the Holy Spirit, about God, or about Christ.

The Eucharist

"The spiritual act of this sacrament [the Eucharist] consists in the communing man who makes Jesus Christ and all His work present in himself" (Farský 1925a, 41). If we take this statement out of the context we can easily accuse

Farský of the heresy of making the sacrament merely the work of man. But what he had in mind was only the human part of the divine action, as his Liturgy shows:

We believe and we confess that in this mystery You make Yourself present to us so we can dwell in You and You in us, having the power to be the daughters and sons of God together with You, the most beloved Son of God. (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 84)

From this confessional prayer, it is obvious that Christ's presence is not merely the act of our remembrance (although it cannot do without it) but the real and free personal presence of Christ.

The Holy Spirit

Similarly, sometimes Farský talks about the Holy Spirit as if He was an impersonal divine force:

To those who can understand all this, Jesus promises living enthusiasm of God, the Holy Spirit, i.e., the joyful filling of man with the divine power. (Farský 1925a, 22)

But in Farský's estate we find the other, complementary view: "Who can this divine Counselor, the Spirit of the Truth, be identified with? Is it just the living force of God or is it God Himself, manifested in mankind?" Farský's complete opinion about the Holy Spirit is, according to Trtík's view, in agreement with the Christian tradition (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 84).

God's Nature

In some places of his writings, Farský seems to see God in the nature as the order of the natural laws. This was the reason why Farský was criticized as a pantheist. However, in other places he explains the natural order in the sense of the all-embracing love and sacrifice of God, which excludes the identification of God with nature because a loving God can only be a personal God.

The Gospel

In reference to the Czech Catechism, he wrote that "Christ's Gospel is not the last stage of the religious development" (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 84). In the Catechism itself, however, we find that the evidence of further development after Christ's Gospel is the heritage of John Hus, John Amos Comenius, national revivalists, the emphasis of the Czechoslovak Church on the freedom of the conscience, the agreement of the faith and the science, and the duty to work in the service of God (Farský and Kalous 1922, 2 : 22-37). This implies that by the further "development," Farský does not understand a gospel higher than the one of Christ, but only an advancement and the consequences of the Gospel of Christ. The Christ announced by the gospel, according to Farský, cannot be surmounted by any development because He is the definite norm and salvation as the Spirit of Christ.

The Universal Fatherhood of God

The question of the universal fatherhood of God may be similarly confusing. According to one article by Farský, "people are the children of a living and good God, Father of the universe, all without difference." But this "are" means "ought to be." All people ought to be loving brothers and sisters. In reality, however, they still are under the dominion of a deadly and violent malice of all temptations (Greek "devils") that are hidden in man. Only Christ has overcome Satan (i.e., the human hereditary evil), which means that only in Him the general childhood of God has its beginning (Farský 1925a, 19).

Christ as Messiah

The same principle applies to Farský's view of Christ the Messiah. If we only notice the claims that Jesus "ought to become the Messiah," our interpretation of Farský will be in contradiction with the whole concept of his Christology. If we, on the other hand, emphasize that "all people are the children of God" and overlook that they "ought to become the children of God," we explain Farský as a speaker of the theological liberalism and we abstract him from the Bible, according to which the sonship of God "is" the creatorily design for every man, but "ought to be" realized and takes place only through Christ (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 86).

Theology and Science

Farský introduced the respect for the scientific knowledge to the church. This means that the church has to accept the scientific truth about reality, which makes the content of the created universe. The demand for objective truth goes back to John Hus who wrote:

In the religion of Christ we have to follow all truth; and only this is the truth that we know through bodily senses, or through the reason, or what we know from the revelation, or what is written in the Scriptures. (Hus 1965, 108)

In light of the limited medieval knowledge, this was a revolutionary claim. This became even more obvious against the background of the Council of Constance where the Cardinals asked Hus to submit to their authority, against all empirical and rational knowledge. The battle between the church and science caused not only rejection of Christianity as it appeared in church life, but also of the Gospel itself, especially with the people with a developed sense for truth.

That is why, according to Farský, a necessary condition for proclaiming the Gospel is the knowledge of the results of scientific investigation. The truth of the Word of God must not contradict the discovered truth of the natural sciences. The respect for science means for Farský also to grant science unlimited freedom in religion and demanding the scientific method in theology (Farský 1925a, 57).

There is an interesting development of thoughts in Farský's writing concerning the relationship of theology and science. In his early paper Stvoření he expresses a speculative opinion that God can be known from nature "step by step, law after law," and therefore all serious science in all fields is theology, and every real scientist is a theologian.

After the foundation of the Czechoslovak Church, Farský kept this position and defended it for a period of time, but occasionally limits its validity and finally completely abandoned it.

In writing the CČS he repeats the opinion from Stvoření, but already changes it a little: ". . . eternally alive law of the universe--God in nature--is through human spirit and emotion [instead of the original 'human natural science'] more and more knowable" (Farský 1925a, 6).

Another limitation is in the expression: "This interpretation does not mean that the essence of God can be exhausted by the order of the knowable universe." The demand for the scientific method in religion is limited to the point where religious thoughts are accessible to science and scientific understanding" (Farský 1925a, 7).

In the CČS, Farský not only limits his original conception, presented sixteen years before in Stvoření, but also moves away from it. He introduces a new explanation of the natural order in terms of love and sacrifice (Farský

1925a, 8), an interpretation that has nothing to do with the scientific investigation of the natural laws; moreover, it is a re-evaluation of the Darwinistic theory of natural selection of the species.

The definite evidence for neglecting of Farský's original understanding is in the introductory essay "God?" in the CČS. There Farský rejects any evidence for God and transfers the knowledge of God from science to "inner experience." Although this experience relates to all reality it is nevertheless of a different kind of knowledge than the scientific one.

Thus the relation of theology and science reaches its proper dimension: it is possible to know God only as long as He reveals Himself; therefore, this kind of knowledge is not scientific. Farský's call for a scientific method in theology means that God's self-revelation takes place in the worldly realities like the history of Israel, the prophetic word to Israel, Jesus Christ, the testimony of the Scriptures about Him, the Christian tradition that relates to Him, the Christian message and faith. Since theology depends on this worldly means of God's revelation, her duty is to investigate them scientifically and also respect the scientific information from all fields about them. But the knowledge of God does not come from these scientific researches but through the spiritual experience of faith, which is grace. Without such grace, scientific research is

not theology. Since God is known in the act of faith as the Lord and the Creator of all reality, theology needs to know this reality and thus is dependent on scientific information about it. But the theology places this information in the light of the revelation of the ultimate origin, meaning and purpose of the universe and of the human existence (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 89).

Demythologization

Farský's theology can be characterized as an attempt to demythologize the Gospel. The term "demythologization" leads to the issue of the relation with the program of Rudolf Bultmann for demythologizing the New Testament by an existentialistic interpretation that explains outward realities described in the Gospels (the cross, the Resurrection, the last judgement, the end of the world) as inward acts and changes inside the believers. Farský is trying to do basically the same although in different ways and with different results.

Farský denies the reality of Christ's death but unlike Bultmann, he keeps the reality of the work of Christ (Christ's suffering on the cross) as the necessary means for salvation.

Farský distinguishes between the "resurrection" and "raising from the dead." When the New Testament talks about the resurrection, what is meant, according to Farský, is just waking up from apparent death. But the term "raising

from the dead" is related to the future victory of Christ in the history of mankind; the raising-from-the-dead of Christ will be the raising-from-the-dead of. It is an ethical program; Christ has to start living in humankind (Farský 1925b, 247).

The Theology of Alois Spisar

Theology as a Science with no Limitations

According to Spisar, the churches interpret the Christian religious experience; moreover, the differences among the individual churches are determined by the difference in the ways they interpret the religious experience (Spisar 1939, 50). The tool for that interpretation is theology. That sets up the relation between the church and the theology.

Against the background of the discreditable past of some church practices, Spisar points out that in the church and in theology one principle must be held, i.e., argument against argument (Spisar 1939, 51). By this he means that if the church uses only its power to declare what is truth and to condemn what is false without giving a reasonable explanation why one thing is true and another false, the church does not act correctly. Obviously, Spisar feels the need to emphasize this because such practices not too long ago created an actual problems in Czechoslovakia. Besides this, all the history of the Czech nation is marked by the fight

for the truth against blind trust in unworthy human authorities.

Spisar therefore concludes that theology has to have the same freedom for investigation as other sciences do because the truth cannot be determined by a vote or an order or a prohibition.

Rejection of Catholicism

In the Roman Catholic Church, theology is totally dependent upon the Pope, which is the highest teaching office, and on the theological tradition in that the opinions of the older theologians are authoritative for the newer theology. New acceptable Catholic theology is merely repeating of the old one; it does not bring any new interpretation of the religious experience.

The mistake of the Roman Catholic Church, according to Spisar, was that the church's teaching, made up out of two components--the Scriptures and contemporary culture and science, was pronounced to be infallible and unchangeable. Thus the task that is left for theology is not a creative work, but the defense of the traditional theology at all expenses, no matter whether science is in agreement with it or in contradiction. This is the source of the ideological discrepancy between the teaching of the church and the philosophy, thus creating the church and religious crisis (Spisar 1939, 52).

Rejection of the Protestantism

Protestant theology, according to Spisar, is in better shape than Catholic, at least concerning the freedom for the scientific work and research. In the Protestantism, there is no such thing as an infallible church teaching of-fice. Each Protestant can interpret the Scriptures alone, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The freedom of conscience applies primarily to theology. As a consequence, the Protestant theology is not dependent on the church. On the contrary, it leads the church. Since there are many different theological schools within Protestantism, theology is in progress; the scientific method and the competition makes it alive. Therefore, the difference between theology and culture is not as remarkable in Protestantism as it is in Catholicism.

However, the Protestant churches do not adopt new theologies too quickly, they remain conservative and keep the Reformed Confessions and their traditional interpretation. Thus the Protestant churches also sometimes find themselves in conflict with new times, with science, and with the new world-view that influences the believers who then emancipate themselves from the church leadership and influence (Spisar 1939, 53).

The Protestant doctrine is based, according to Spisar, on two principles: the material and the formal. Material principle is the Scriptures itself, the formal prin-

ciple is its individual interpretation under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The variability of different interpretations is understandable if every Christian (and every Christian denomination) is allowed to interpret the Bible for himself or herself alone. The formal principle (the individual interpretation) is typical for all Protestant churches. Therefore, one can find the whole spectrum of various drifts from pedantic orthodoxy to pure subjectivism (Spisar 1939, 79).

Spisar uses the Protestant twofold dogmatics to explain his reason for rejecting the Protestantism as a unsatisfactory theological system. Concerning the material principle, the Scripture cannot be the source of the doctrines, as if one could pick them up straight from the text as the Roman Catholic Church does. God's truth is not definitively formulated forever in the Scriptures, but the Scriptures contain God's Word as it was understood by certain persons in certain times. The Scriptures contain God's revelation in the contemporary formulation and in human understanding. It is not possible any other way, since without human articulation and interpretation, God's Word exists only in God. The Scripture can only be an example of how it is possible and necessary to record God's Word and to formulate it for a certain time. After all, if the dogmatics should take its material ready from the Scriptures, where would be its scientific work? It would already be done forever.

Without any limitations, the formal principle itself cannot be a satisfactory source for the dogmatics because it can very easily move away from the religious foundation, as every Protestant doctrine has in some of its followers. Dogmatics have to proceed from religious experience based on the New Testament Scriptures. However, it is based not verbally but through the God's Spirit, as is preserved in Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures. Christian dogmatics, if it is to be a science, must elaborate on religious experience, stimulated and oriented in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and thus formulate the religious and moral questions for each epoch.

Today's theology must do this for today. The Spirit of Christ, who is the Spirit of God, as preserved in the Scriptures, connects the Christian dogmatics with the Christianity of Jesus Christ (Spisar 1939, 82).

Catholic theology, fertilized by modern philosophy and Protestant theology, attempted to reconcile the church and an individual freedom, reason and faith, science and religion, and was at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries called "Catholic Modernism." It was forbidden, prohibited, and condemned by the Pope in 1907. The Protestants saw it as a half-way effort, therefore destined to fail from the beginning. Catholic Modernism tried to put together what could never stay together as it attempted to

save too much from the Catholic Church while adopting the Protestant principle of the freedom of research.

Spisar's Influence Upon the Czechoslovak Theology

Alois Spisar, being a professor of systematics, contributed much to the liberal-orthodox debate. Under his leadership, the theology of the Czechoslovak Church, although still in its beginning in 1939, undertook the determining role that belonged to her: the theology determined the foundation of the church, the solution of the Eastern-Orthodox crisis, and the teaching of the church.

Spisar expressed the hope that the church would always grant theology its proper place in order to be able to fulfill the ideological task of the Czechoslovak Church, to reconcile the Gospel in its essence with the guaranteed results of contemporary science, to reconcile the Czech conscience with the Czech past, to bring the discrepancy between the faith and science to its end, as well as the discrepancy between the today's Czech man and the history of the Czech nation. Although a tension will always exist between science and faith, a discrepancy, a gap does not have to exist (Spisar 1939, 53).

According to Spisar, the Czechoslovak Church arose from the conviction that the cause of the religious crisis in European Christianity was in the churches and their theologies. It arose from the conviction that there cannot be

a discrepancy between science and religion (they can complement one another) but rather between theology and philosophy, faith and the modern world-view.

The Czechoslovak Church made her own ideological task to formulate Christian teaching in the way that today's man with sense for both science and religion could understand it and accept it. For this reason the Czechoslovak Church and her theology seeks the roots of religion in the religious experience that originates inside man by the action of God (grace) and to which man responds (again under the leadership of God) by faith. Such religious experience is then studied and examined scientifically and logically, by the way of reason (Spisar 1939, 83).

Spisar's View of the Dogma

The dogmatics of the Czechoslovak Church neglect neither religious experience nor the Scriptures, tradition, or the dogma of Christian theology. However, the dogmas for the Czechoslovak Church are not precepts of faith that have been formulated once forever, but they are contemporary articles of Christian thoughts about religion. Therefore dogma must repeatedly be re-formulated to fit the new times.

The Scriptures and tradition are the testimonies about religion of certain people and certain times in the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Doctrines must be formulated on the basis of the religious experience oriented

by the Spirit of Christ as preserved in the Scriptures, tradition. The doctrines must be formulated in a way that they do not disagree with the guaranteed results of the science and with the justified moral demands of each epoch.

Thus the subject of scientific investigation in the Czechoslovak Church is the study of religious experience in the Spirit of Christ. The formal principle is the same as in other sciences: description, observation, analysis, interpretation on basis of sufficient evidence, all by the way of rational deduction. Revelation does not give the finished truth but rather offers the starting point and the direction for theological work (Spisar 1939, 84).

Dogma is not the most important thing in Christianity. Dogmas grew up from human speculation about God, about Christ, and about man and how he relates to the world, to God, to the universe, to the people, and from thinking about the ultimate goal of all things. In the process of creating the dogmas, the level of education was always crucial. The teaching of Christ, recorded in the Gospels, always appeared in the specific way of the light of each epoch; the results of this were formulations of the dogmas, the articles of faith. These dogmas and articles of faith are therefore the fruit of the past; they cannot satisfy a modern man whose state of culture has been changing throughout the centuries. So long as man lives and keeps thinking about God

and Christ, about his own purpose and end, about his relation to the universe and to other people, there will be always new dogmas being created but the church must never declare that they are unchangeable and infallible, as the Roman Catholic Church did with her dogmas. The dogmas have to be changed along with the progress of education.

Therefore, we ourselves cannot set the new dogmas now, in the beginning of a new church. They have to grow up through the progress of time and education from our thinking about religion. We must not make an infallible dogma out of what was the fruit of the education of the time. We have to take the eternal truth of Christ, deprived of the framework of His time, and work it in our concepts that are the possession of the modern time. Christ's teaching was life, not the dead formulas. Those who see in Christ and his morals the highest point of the religious and moral development of the humankind, the ideal still not yet reached, can be the members of our church. Our church will be of Christ; her foundation will be Christ and his love to both God and people. In the spirit of our domestic reformation the emphasis will be put on the special aspect of Christianity. We will build our church in the spirit of our religious giants, and we will also not overlook the great Slavic thinkers and reformers like Tolstoj or Dostojevskij and others. Thus a new type of Christianity will be created that will influence the rest of the Europe. This church will be modern; her highest principle will be the freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, research, and science. (Spisar 1920, 7-9)

The Theology of Zdeněk Trtík

Zdeněk Trtík is considered to be the one who actually won the battle over the liberalism in the Czechoslovak Church. His victory, however, was just a shift from classical liberalism to Neo-Orthodoxy.

Trtík's compromise was a reflection of Karl Barth's own negative attitude towards liberalism. Barth calls Schliermacher's theology a "betrayal of Christ" (Barth 1933, 255); however, Barth's totally transcendent God was no more able to communicate knowledge of truth than the immanent deity of Schliermacher (Nash 1982, 36).

Trtík builds on the work of his predecessors, especially Alois Spisar. He sometimes agrees with what they had to say and sometimes polemically argues with the methods or approach they used or applied.

The Religious Experience

Trtík's writing style reflects the fact that he is an empiricist, because he emphasizes the "religious experience" more than anything else--including a rational effort to define the terms in a clear way. Sometimes the same terms are defined in different ways; sometimes different terms are used to express the same meaning. The religious experience for Trtík is the clue to understanding everything from the beginning of religion generally to the essence and the norm of Christianity. He often uses the phrase "religious

experience and faith" as if the two were dependent on one another. In fact, he insists that there is no faith possible without previous religious experience, although he differentiates between the two (Trtík 1945, 3).

While in his unpublished manuscript Zjevení, Náboženská Zkušenost a Víra (Revelation, the Religious Experience and Faith) he states that the religious experience is a fact that can be scientifically investigated (Trtík 1945, 3), in Duch Kristův The Spirit of Christ he contrasts religious experience with other normative fields: logics, ethics, aesthetics, and law. He goes on to say that every normal person has a sense of logical, ethical, aesthetical and legal norms but the access to the religious norms (because of their transcendental character) is dependent on the religious experience. Therefore, the norms of the Christian faith are not demonstrable to anybody in general but only to a believer who has religious experience.

Philosophically speaking, the religious norms can be explained by the existential teaching about dimensions: they belong to the last dimension of reality, the dimension of eternity that does not open to everybody and does not open whenever the will or the reason want it to open. Thus theologically, it is the revelation, philosophically, it is the opening of the last dimension that is necessary for acknowledging the norms of the Christian faith (Trtík 1943, 22-23).

One wonders how is science going to investigate something that is open only to the "initiated"--to those sensitive enough to be able to percept the "last dimension of reality." At the same time, this last dimension is said to be scientifically observable. Contradictions like this are to be found throughout Trtík's writings.

The Essence of Christianity

As a starting point, the systematic theology must define Christianity itself in order to identify the subject of its investigation. Trtík uses the concept that Alois Spisar borrowed from Adolf Harnack's Das Wesen des Christentums (The Essence of Christianity).

According to Spisar, in order to find the essence or substance of Christianity, we must search neither in the Christian churches (because they interpret the religion of Jesus Christ in the dependence on the philosophy, theology, and culture of their own times) nor in the New Testament record itself for the same reason (the Gospel writers could not help seeing and interpreting Jesus and his life through the filter of their environment-dependent point of view). Therefore, the essence of Christianity can be found only in what Jesus brought new--something that makes Christianity different from all other religions including Judaism. Only such "new" can be the eternal essence of Christianity (Spisar 1939, 201-211).

Trtík elaborates on these Spisar's statements in Duch Kristův, "The Spirit of Christ." He notices that the comparative method, used here to find the essence of Christianity by comparing it with other religions, is not the only possible way to find the essence of Christianity. There may be other methods, such as the normative method. Trtík quotes Spisar's Úvod do Věrouky (The Introduction to the Doctrines) in order to contrast Spisar's comparative method with his own normative approach.

Trtík points out that reducing the historical Christianity with its dogmas and symbols to time-dependent interpretation is too severe simplification of reality. Understanding the relationship between the religion of Jesus Christ and the historical Christianity (beginning with Paul and ending with today's churches) is as much a matter of grasping and accepting obligation as it is a matter of interpretation. What binds the two together is religious experience and faith.

The religious experience about Jesus Christ and the faith in him is the fact from the beginning of the apostles' mission until today. If it was only an interpretation, the apostles would hardly find the strength and courage to face martyrdom. The religious experience is an obligatory knowledge--a commitment.

Spisar concludes that the essence of Christianity is the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Spisar 1939, 211). Trtík

comments on this, saying that the essence of Christianity cannot be found in something that can be measured and eliminated by the comparative method, but rather is found in something that can be known by religious experience and faith as a normative, viz., God's revelation, the Word. "This, then, is certainly the Spirit of Christ" (Trtík 1943, 8-9).

Thus Trtík keeps the same term ("the Spirit of Christ") that Spisar used for his definition of the essence of Christianity. The difference is, however, that Trtík binds the Spirit of Christ to the religious experience, which is supposed to be normative, obligatory.

The Spirit of Christ

Trtík rightly recognizes the absurdity of the claim that "eternal" in Christianity can be only what Jesus brought "new" in it (Trtík 1943, 10). He admits that in Jesus' concept of God not only some attributes, such as love or Fatherhood, are essential for Christianity but all of them are, including the Old Testament characteristics such as justice, holiness, transcendence, omnipotence (Trtík 1943, 11).

Since according to Trtík, the norm of faith is supposed to control and determine faith, it cannot be anything purely historical, discoverable by historical method only or speculated out by human reason. The real norm of faith, obligatory in the conscience of a Christian, is marked by

its imminent presence and by its living appeal to the conscience. It is living and holy Truth; it is the reality from the living and holy God (Trtík 1943, 28).

However, Trtík realizes that even if we could say that the norm of faith is God himself, it would not help much because such concept of norm is too wide and non-definable. Therefore, he keeps looking for the best formulation and specification of the norm of faith.

He polemically contradicts the Catholic argument against the Protestants, that the church is prior to the Scriptures both chronologically and normatively. According to Trtík, the testimonies of biblical writings came about from the necessity higher than the Church can contain in itself. By their obligatory commitment these testimonies stand normatively supra, before the Church. Their origin, content, and obligation cannot be explained and understood only from the activity and sovereignty of the church. It can be understood only on the basis of the obligatory character of religious experience and faith. Only under this obligation of the religion experience and faith can the Church step on to the redaction and canonization (Trtík 1943, 29).

Religious experience and Christian faith show that the center of the normativity of the Scripture is Jesus Christ and the New Testament testimony about him. That which grabs us out of the biblical testimonies is precisely this

living norm that covers the entire Scriptures. The Old Testament is the beginning, Jesus Christ is the peak and the center, and the New Testament is the powerful and living resonance of the norm of the Spirit of Christ (Trtík 1943, 33).

Trtík claims that other characteristic of Christian faith (besides being empirical) is the conceptual clarity. No other religion has as precise theological system as Christianity.

Now Trtík recognizes the possible objection that the norm of the Spirit of Christ can be hard to define in clear terms like other Christian concepts:

If we realize precisely and clearly this character [of the norm of the Spirit of Christ] we find out that we are not dealing with the conceptual inaccuracy but rather with an extraordinary contextual richness and deepness that are typical for the living Word of God and that escape any attempt to formulate them in immediate, brief, and simple ways that we used to know from, for example, legal norms. (Trtík 1943, 36)

Thus Trtík, instead of defining the norm or at least admitting that the non-definable norm is an obvious problem-maker, turns the negative side of the coin into a positive one. The impossibility of articulating what our norm is clearly is the very feature we are proud of. The norm that cannot be defined gives more glory to God because it reflects the richness and deepness of His Word.

Life Without a Norm

It is a well-known truth that a person's theology (belief-system) determines the way he or she lives. The consequences of a theological norm expressed in a foggy, undefinable term is the life without a norm. This may not have been the case at the time when Trtík introduced his Neo-Orthodox compromise to the Czechoslovak theology, but it was definitely the direction the church took. Today, in the nineties, one can see the fruit that has been planted decades ago.

Jana Šilerová, a priestess of the Czechoslovak Husite Church, writes:

Everything Is Permissible...

I serve in the church over twenty years now. I am not a pessimist. On the contrary, it is a joy to be a priest in our congregation. However, I am worried about one thing. I know that everything is permissible to me. Everything that is not beneficial for God, nor for the church, nor for myself

. . . I can be lazy. Who is going to notice when I am the master of my time? I can steal. Who is going to find out when my reports are in order? I can drink to death. Who cares? I can divorce, leave my husband and find myself another if I want to. And I can have the wedding

in the church because God is supposed to bless me. I can even be a non-believer. What matters is that I know how to explain everything theologically

. . . I will be graciously forgiven. Nothing really matters. I can be a priest and administer the sacraments even if I do not have a degree from a theological school and if I do not study any. That I do not know what "passions" or "synoptic Gospels" mean? The important thing is that the church has its priest. Is it comforting to see the same happening in other churches, too? (Šilerová 1995, 5)

CHAPTER 3
EVALUATION FROM THE REFORMED STANDPOINT

What we obtain too cheap,
we esteem too lightly:
it is dearness only
that gives everything its value.

Thomas Paine, The American Crisis

The theological position that the Czechoslovak Hussite Church has reached can be described as the Neo-Orthodox. The theologians of the Czechoslovak Church have tended to be inconsistent in their reasoning. First they rejected all the historic Christian doctrines and dogmas together with the problematic Catholic ones. Then they rejected liberalism as a rational extreme, but instead of fighting against it on the field of rationalism, they stepped back to the empiricism, believing that Neo-Orthodoxy is a good enough solution. During the history of the church, the theology has been directly influenced by German and Swiss scholars, the only exception being that of the so called "Eastern-Orthodox Crisis."

Therefore, contrasting the Czechoslovak theology with the Reformed one (which puts a strong emphasis on rationality) may not only show the errors that the Czechoslovak theologians have made but perhaps point out possible solutions for recovery.

It would be easy enough simply to point to the all the places where the doctrines of the Czechoslovak Church differ from the Reformed conceptions, e.g., "Before the Holy God can stand only that which always struggles for higher perfectness" (Trtík 1943, 36), and to say: "See? This is wrong! You have to change this and you will be alright!" Although it is true that in most such cases only one alternative can be possibly correct, this kind of approach is not very helpful. It would address the symptoms rather than look for the diagnosis.

Evaluation of the History

As we try to evaluate the historical circumstances that determined the development of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, there are several points we must not overlook. First, the past. The founders of the the Czechoslovak Church were Catholic priests who had been educated in Catholic seminaries. Three centuries of forceful re-catholization of the country easily made the pendulum of antipathy swing to the opposite extreme: to reject all Christianity. The attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church and the later attempt to create a new church different from the Roman Catholic Church were actually an effort to save Christianity from being generally refused as something obsolete. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was in pieces; the Czechoslovak Republic appeared on the map of Europe as a brand new state. The nation was finally free. What religion was there to offer the

Czech and Slovak peoples when Roman Catholicism did not seem to work anymore?

The forceful approach of the Roman Catholic Church contributed significantly to the need for change. The young Czechoslovak Church, however, did not have theologians who were able to find the solution for themselves; they needed to rely upon something that already existed. Therefore, they first tried the United Serbian Orthodox Church and later they shifted to the German liberalism which seemed to better satisfy the need for a scientific approach.

The second factor was the spiritual environment. The science, right in the middle of its revolutionary heyday, was exuberantly optimistic that it would soon have the answers to all questions. Nobody needed the hypothesis of God anymore; the access to the absolutes was lost from the time of general acceptance of Hegel's philosophy of synthesis. Theological liberalism was taking over.

Third was the geography of this small nation in the center of Europe. Surrounded with the Eastern Orthodoxy on one side and German liberalism on the other, the Czechoslovak theologians had few options from which to choose.

It also could be argued that their way of thinking reflects the mentality of the geographical area. There is a difference between the Eastern and Western mentality. Western man tends to think, organize, work, and seek the so-

lutions, but the Eastern man sits, meditates, stares, and says: "I don't care!"¹

Czechia (made out of Bohemia and Moravia) has always been the intersection between East and West. ²The theologians of the the Czechoslovak Church have attempted many times to express themselves accurately in propositional statements (Western influence), but they are too often satisfied with an inconsistent solutions (Eastern influence). They seldom pull what they say all way down to its consequences. A good example of this is the church's norm of faith that cannot be defined (the Spirit of Christ). What then are believers supposed to believe? The answer is the freedom of conscience: they can believe whatever they want to. What then is the difference between such a church and the world? Nobody goes so far to ask a question like this, although the answer may bring some light to the old problem of why the liberal churches are empty as if nobody needed them anymore.

¹The credit for this insight belongs to Dr. O. Funda, former Professor of philosophy in the Hussite Theological Faculty of Charles University. The quote comes from one of his lectures on T. G. Masaryk.

²Slovakia seems to show more resemblances with the East. This is evident, for example, from the fact that after the split of Czechoslovakia, the Communist-type of government won the election there (although under a different name). Thus Slovakia had enjoyed the political freedom for just three years (1990-93) and now has the dictatorship back again.

Even with all these circumstances in mind, one wonders why it was necessary to abandon so quickly faith in the living Jesus Christ, in the Holy Trinity, and in the authority of the Scriptures. Another striking question is, why would the Czechoslovaks not simply accept Protestantism? It is understandable that Catholicism, especially in its Roman form, was not acceptable any longer. But Protestantism was not in crisis. Moreover, it would actually have been a step in the direction of a good domestic tradition.

A quote from Masaryk may give a clue: "Even Protestantism is not enough for us because it keeps the Catholicism by its orthodox dogmatics and a church hierarchy" (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 85). It would be worth further investigation to find out what Masaryk had in mind seeing the Protestant church hierarchy as keeping the Catholicism; Protestant churches usually have structures that are very different from the Catholic ones. For our purposes, however, it is enough to acknowledge that Farský's intellectual dependence on Masaryk was probably one of the reasons for the rejecting of classical conservative Protestantism. This is actually another example of an inconsistency: if they were to reject the Protestantism, why would they accept the theological liberalism that came from Protestantism?

Orthodoxy

The first six of the seven ecumenical church councils cause no problem for any conservative Christian--Catholic,

Orthodox, or Protestant. Some of the Czechoslovak priests (e.g., Matěj Pavlík) chose Eastern Orthodoxy which could be considered a wise move in some respect. When the only two options to choose from are Eastern Orthodoxy or Western liberalism, Eastern Orthodoxy is at least a preserver of a Christian faith. It is better to accept the faith and decisions of the seven ecumenical councils and to confess with the Nicene Creed than not to believe in anything and confess freedom of conscience.

But why did they look back only to Eastern Orthodoxy and not keep step with the growing conservative knowledge of the revealed truth? In Central Europe, there is little knowledge of this kind available! There are few places East of the U.S.A. where one can find the right responses to liberal arguments. The founders of the Czechoslovak Church were defenseless against German theological liberalism.

Optimism

The founders of the Czechoslovak Church had a great vision with many aspects to it. Concerning some of the issues, however, their megalomaniacal optimism seemed to be out of place. First, they were overly optimistic concerning the negotiations with the Serbian Church. The Eastern Orthodox churches have sisterly relationships with one another in which they keep not only the same doctrines but also the resemblance in visible matters.

The Serbian Orthodox Church did not insist that the Czechoslovaks keep all the Eastern Orthodoxy. The Serbs were satisfied with the seven ecumenical councils and the Nicene Creed. This should be appreciated as broad-minded tolerance.

But there was no reason to think that the Serbian Orthodox Church would consider the Czechoslovak Church to be a sister when the Czechoslovak Church wanted to differ not only in the style of worship but also in the doctrinal teaching.

Second, in addition to departing from the Roman Catholic Church, the theologians of the Czechoslovak Church longed to solve the religious and moral crisis of modern man. But their first theological principles failed to provide a permanent foundation for morality. One result was a demand for the freedom to divorce and re-marry as many times as desired, which applied even to priests! (cf., The Memorandum to the Serbs, item 5, appendix 4). They did not realize that the desire for independence and freedom from everything--including God--was part of the problem rather than part of the solution. In fact it was the very cause of the moral and religious crisis.

Third, they combined hopes that were too high with insight that was too limited. They hoped to establish a new type of Christianity that would bridge the gaps between science and philosophy (Spisar 1936, 95), monism and dualism,

materialism, spiritualism, and syncretism, mechanism and vitalism, philosophy and religion, creationism and evolutionism, liberationism and pacifism (Spisar 1936, 196). Such dreams seem even more unrealistic if we consider that their proclaimators did not realize even the simple fact that no church with the Apostolic Succession would ever consecrate anyone without certain commitments. The spasmodic clinging to Apostolic Succession also sharply contrasts with the high ambitions of the church founders, who denied the validity of all dogmas.

Unfair Orthodox Moves

The defenders of the Eastern Orthodoxy were not always 100 percent correct in their arguments. Sometimes their position looks more like an end-justifies-the-means approach rather than a simply Eastern tendency to relax and not worry about the details too much. It is not true, for example that Cyril and Methodius brought the Eastern Orthodoxy. They came to Moravia in 863, two centuries before the church had actually split into Eastern and Western branches. The two missionaries brought undivided Christianity.

Similarly, the Orthodox-minded priests argued that Eastern orthodoxy is Slavic. As Alois Spisar rightly points out, Eastern Orthodoxy is Greek, not Slavic. Did the supporters of Orthodoxy apply a liberal approach of freedom towards the truth?

Bishop Dositej explained that it was impossible to consecrate the bishops soon because the Serbian Council had to approve them first. Not too long after that, Matěj Pavlík-Gorazd was consecrated a bishop (Spisar 1936, 163). A misunderstanding? A mistake? A strategy? A lie?

Evaluation of the Theology

Starting with a wrong presupposition usually leads to wrong conclusions. The Czechoslovak liberals believed the human knowledge develops in the steps of thesis-antithesis-synthesis; therefore, they saw the obvious contradictions not as non-reconcilable opposites but as logical (and necessary) steps leading to a higher degree of knowledge.

The validity of the logical law of non-contradiction was not so important because the emphasis was on the empirical aspect of the perception, not on the rational one. Trtík, for example, does not hide his distrust for reason. He writes:

For a believing Christian, God is first of all living and present holy reality and truth, never just an idea, hypothesis, or a concept. For a Christian's faith nothing can have peremptory meaning what lacks this character of living, present, and in each moment obligatory holy reality and truth. His faith cannot be grasped by anything that has only a historical, philosophical, or conceptual character; anything that is a creation or a construction of pure reason or pure human will. (Trtík 1943, 27)

Nobody would dare say that all human knowledge comes through reason, but at least some does (Nash 1982, 45). If Trtík was not so strict empiricist and had left reason to its appropriate role, he would perhaps be able to recognize the falsehood of the liberal presuppositions as well as the weakness of the Neo-Orthodox compromise before he introduced it into the theology of the Czechoslovak Church.

However, it would not be fair to simply condemn him for his empiricism. We must not forget that Trtík worked in the environment in which the term "rational" was synonymous with "liberal." Thus, his tendency to "escape from reason"³ should be qualified as an effort to save the faith from the deadly poison of liberalism.

The Mix of True and False

It is true that the Unitarians have been around for a while but how does the simple presence of the heretics prove that they are right? In the Dogmatic Directions, item 17 (see appendix 5), the Czech Brethren Evangelical Church is looked to as a mediator of the Western theology. Unfortunately, this came true in the sense that the "Western theological work and religiosity" mentioned turned out to be German theological liberalism. Today, the Czech Brethren Evangelical Church and the Czechoslovak Hussite Church are

³The coincidental match of this phrase with one of Francis Schaeffer's works has its significance: Schaeffer knew that this was a dead-end street (Schaeffer 1968a, 43).

the two main channels through which German liberalism flows into the Czech Republic. æ

Self-Referentially Absurd Claims of Liberalism

Statements that are "self-referentially absurd" or "self-defeating" are statements or theories that turn out to be nonsense if they are applied to themselves. An example that is often quoted is the "confession" of agnosticism. A logical response to the agnostic claim that "no propositional truth about God can be known" would be to ask, How do you know this propositional truth about God?

Theoretical presuppositions of theological liberalism teem with similar claims that deny themselves. For example, the Spirit of Christ is said to be preserved according to Scriptures and Christian tradition, but the Scriptures are not inspired Word of God (Spisar 1939, 83). How, then, is the Spirit of Christ (who is identical with the norm of faith) to be found?

Not only classical liberalism itself but also Neo-Orthodoxy is based on self-referentially absurd statement e.g., that the Bible sometimes becomes the Word of God:

Divine Revelation is not a book of doctrine; the Revelation is something that happens, the living history of God in His dealing with the human race. (Brunner 1946, 8)

Thus, somebody may say that 2 Tim 3 : 16--"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness--became the Word

of God for him. Therefore, we can safely conclude that Neo-Orthodoxy is not sufficiently helpful for pointing out the errors in the foundation of liberalism. What may be helpful is strict and consistent rationality. The neglect of it opens the door for all kinds of heresies.

Sometimes the absurdity of a liberal claim is obvious, but sometimes it is more obscure. Trtík's celebration of conceptual clarity may serve as a good example of the case in which the self-defeating character of the proposition is not evident at the first sight. In Duch Kristův Trtík declares that one of the marks of the Christian faith is the clarity of its concepts and terms. According to him, this feature of Christian faith finds its expression in accurate thinking of Christian theology. Since no other religion has as precise system as Christianity, it is only the Christian theology that can claim to be scientific (Trtík 1943, 35).

Trtík seems to forget that the "precise system" of Christianity are the work of rationalists--those who realize the importance of "accurate thinking" in theology. He himself, however, is not one of them; on the contrary, he throws reason, the creator of theological speculations, in one pot together with imaginations of unbound fantasy and cultic forms based on these imaginations. He does so with the intention of separating something temporary and passing (reason, fantasy, and cultic forms) from something living and lasting (religious experience) (Trtík 1945, 4-5). Does

he not see that the laws of reason are unchangeable, unlike any kind of experience?

One of the obvious nonsenses is the proposition that the eternal essence of Christianity can only be that what Jesus brought new in it (Spisar 1936, 225). How can something eternal at the same time be new in the sense that it is something that was not here before?

Hand in hand with the definition of the essence of Christianity as something that Jesus brought new goes the impossibility to find the so-called historical Jesus. The liberals wanted to separate Jesus from everything supernatural in order to find the real, historical one. Since Jesus cannot be separated from his divine attributes, after their removal nothing was left. No "historical" Jesus can ever be found and today even some liberals do admit it (Schaeffer 1968b, 52).

However, even if we agree to define the essence of Christianity as that what He brought new, the question arises, Who? The historical Jesus is not to be found through scientific method; who, then, brought about the essence of Christianity?

Another contradictory act of the Czechoslovak liberals was their seeking the consecration of a bishop for Apostolic Succession. The founders of the Czechoslovak Church were quick to reject not only exclusively Roman Catholic dogmas, but all the Christian dogmas and doctrines including

the traditional biblical ones, e.g., the doctrine of Resurrection. Why, then, did they keep the non-biblical dogma about the Apostolic Succession?

Another inconsistency in the liberal position is found in Spisar's claim that "we stand against atheism and against every limitation of God by the world" (Spisar 1936, 255). Just one page earlier in the same document, he declares that "God's activity does not break the laws of the world . . . but through them achieves His goals . . . " (Spisar 1936, 254). In other words, the Omnipotent God, not being limited by the world, cannot step outside the natural laws, and therefore cannot act supernaturally.

The Czechoslovak Church kept the seven Catholic sacraments (Trtík 1958, 92-99), including marriage, but at the same time proclaimed the freedom to repeat the sacrament of marriage as many times "as necessary" (see The Memorandum to the Serbs, item 5, appendix 4). The Protestant churches treat their marriages as if they were sacrament although they do not call them that. The liberal church that calls it a sacrament suggests to administer it on regular basis as they do the Eucharist!

There is one more statement that also belongs to the category of self-referentially absurd sentences. However, this one is perfectly in the right place when applied to the liberalism itself: "What is dry and brings no sap anymore, let it die!" (cf., Dogmatic Directions, item 5, appendix 5).

Unfair Liberal Moves

Similar to the supporters of Eastern Orthodoxy, the Czechoslovak liberals have not always been 100 percent precise in what they said. In the Directions, item 16 (see appendix 5), we are told that the Serbian Orthodoxy looks for modern orientation and wants to get rid of the stiffness of thinking. This is not true. On the contrary, it was the Czechoslovak Church that made the proposal, not the Serbian. The Serbian Orthodox Church would be just fine without the Czechoslovak Church; as a matter of fact, it has finally turned out that way.

It was argued in the first session of the First General Council that the difference between the Czechoslovak Church and the Evangelical churches relies in the fact that the Czechoslovak Church, unlike the Evangelicals, does not neglect the Apostolic and the early-church traditions. The very opposite is true. The conservative Evangelicals do respect the tradition of both the Apostles and the early church; moreover, it was the Czechoslovak Church that, by stating that each epoch has to re-articulate its own new dogmas actually denied the validity of the early traditions.

Spisar, referring to the Bohemian history and reform traditions, concludes that John Hus favored the agreement of faith and science (Spisar 1936, 226). This is not true at all. Hus did look for the truth in the Scriptures, reason, and experience, but to say that for him, the reason and

experience meant science is too big a leap. A plea for and agreement between science and faith can be found nowhere in Hus' writings. As a matter of fact, the tension between the scientific discoveries and church dogmas became an issue more than one hundred years after his death.⁴

As is typical of liberal definition of freedom, the Christians of the Czechoslovak Church were free to believe in anything--except the seven ecumenical councils and the Nicene Creed. It would be more proper to say that the liberal concept of freedom of conscience means freedom not to believe. To believe what other Christians believe is taboo in many liberal churches even today.

The Highest Authority

Theological liberalism attacks God's divinity. The people who believe in liberalism differ from other Christians on issues that are not of minor importance. The greatest difference is the loss of the highest authority. Even the fundamentalists who believe in a literal interpretation of everything in the Bible are in a better state than the liberals, because they have not lost access to the highest authority.

Liberal approach to the highest authority is well expressed in Trtík's comment on positive Christianity:

⁴Nicolas Copernicus published his De Revolutionibus Orbium Caelestium (On the Revolution of the Celestial Orbs) in 1543. (Flew 1979, 76)

Positive Christianity, church, and theology know that in spite of some unacceptable opinions of the Scriptures there is no higher authority outside the Scriptures and that any New Testament apostle in spite of all his errors on this or that question is much higher Christian authority than what we represent altogether. (Trtík 1963, 6-7)

The quote above might as well fit into the category of self-referentially absurd statements. What authority is it that decides what in the Scriptures is "unacceptable opinion" or an "error" of an apostle? Evidently, it must be some higher authority than the Scripture itself.

Trtík, in article 46 of Základy Víry, says that the highest authority is the Spirit of Christ. However, the authority that decides about unacceptable portions of the Bible cannot be identical with the Spirit of Christ that is known from the Scriptures, early Christian tradition, and Hussite and Brethren heritage (Trtík 1958, article 47), for they all agree on the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. The Spirit of Christ, being described that way, would not divide the Scriptures into acceptable and unacceptable parts; on the contrary, it would support the inerrancy of the written Word of God.

The authority that decides the texts about Jesus' baptism are accurate but the texts about His Resurrection are not, is the authority of science that does not accept anything that escapes scientific investigation. Czechoslovak theologians do not hide their admiration of science as

the highest source of knowledge: "The absolute freedom of science must be recognized . . ." (The Dogmatic Directions, item 2, appendix 5; emphasis mine).

However, when the highest authority is given to a science that does not acknowledge God, one reaches different results than when he does his scientific research under the authority of God. A nice example of this is found in the evolution debate. If the primary presupposition of a scientist is that God does not exist, and if the scientific investigation comes to a realization that evolution cannot be disproved, then it logically follows that evolution must have taken place simply because there is no other explanation. Such conclusion is then proclaimed to be the evidence for evolution. Who cares that in reality there is no evidence that the evolution actually ever happened?⁵ If the scientist was honest and wanted to be really objective, he should admit that creation and evolution are both open options without exhaustive evidence for or against them and that it takes faith to decide to believe in either one.

Removing God from the list of options is the same as giving science the right to determine the truth as the highest authority. It is a philosophical decision, not a scientific one, that does not seem to require any evidence.

⁵Cf., for example, Johnson: Darwin on Trial, 63-74.

This leads us to the very root of the problem, to the place of origin of the decline that reached its climax in theological liberalism: its philosophical foundations.

Down to the Roots: Pagan Philosophy

In the first half of the 20th century, liberal scholars often alleged that early Christianity had been influenced by pagan religions and philosophies such as Platonism or Stoicism. Today, thanks God, we can consider such arguments to be satisfactorily refuted.

However, the liberals have committed the very same error that they had accused the ancient Christians of: syncretism with pagan philosophy. Hegel's system of triads (Flew 1979, 139-42) caused perhaps the most significant change of thinking in the entire history of philosophy. Before Hegel, people thought in terms of antithesis: the opposite of true is false; the opposite of right is wrong; the opposite of good is bad (Schaeffer 1968b, 20).

Having introduced the system of triads, Hegel robbed humankind of the access to the absolutes: the opposite of true is no longer false, but it is just its complementary antithesis to make together a synthesis. This new synthesis is no more stable than the previous thesis because it can become a new thesis itself waiting for its antithesis with which it will work together toward a new synthesis again.

The theory itself is self-referentially absurd. If it is true that human knowledge develops through these

three-step sequences, then Hegel's view of reality will be sooner or later refuted by some future antithesis and will lose its validity.

Nevertheless, it seems that not many people notice the self-defeating character of Hegel's dialectic philosophy, and what is even worse, many build their belief-system upon it. It is one species of philosophical relativism, which has been rightly identified as prevalent modern malaise.

There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative. If this belief is put to the test, one can count on the students' reaction: they will be uncomprehending. That anyone should regard the proposition as not self-evident astonishes them, as though he were calling into question $2+2=4$. (Bloom 1987, 25)

Relativism, which has polluted all culture and especially the minds of today's non-Christians, has its roots in the philosophy of Hegel. Relativism requires the denial of reason because it is one of the self-defeating claims. Is the statement "All truth is relative" relative or absolute?

The loss of the access to the absolutes has impacted art, music, and general culture all way down to theology, where it stayed in the form of liberalism and Neo-Orthodoxy (Schaeffer 1968b, 53).

The flexible approach to the truth that the Czechoslovak theologians show should not be surprising--they do

not believe in the existence of an absolute, unchangeable truth.

The Czechoslovak theologians were too optimistic regarding the dogmas of their own church.

We cannot set up new dogmas now, in the beginning of the Czechoslovak Church, they will have to grow up with the progress of time and culture, without thinking about religion. (Spisar 1936, 137)

Spisar assumes that even the dogmas are not permanent--because no truth is permanent. If the dogma, changes it is not a dogma anymore. One could well ask, why keep calling those passing, culture-dependent articles of faith "dogmas" and not "weather reports," when they are so erratic.

Liberal theology can only hope in God's forbearance not believe, because there is nothing about the transcendent world that we can be sure of. What we have here is actually another self-referentially absurd clause: to say that nothing can be said about the transcendent world because nothing can be known about it, is a proposition about the transcendent world. If it is true, it must not be expressed. Therefore, it cannot be used as an argument. Liberal hope is necessarily wrong.

Wherever any seeming discrepancy between the Bible and science occurs, liberal theologians typically rush to agree with science. It is not so necessarily because of a devilish desire to neglect the eternal Word of God; they do

not believe in eternity of anything knowable anyway. Since they believe that variability is one of the features of the truth, they welcome any new opinion with an enthusiasm comparable to that of the Athenian lovers of philosophy (cf. Acts 17 : 21). It does not matter that the newer scientific discovery often denies the validity of the older one, the world is just that way.

Therefore, we should not be surprised that the liberals adopt the evolution hypothesis as a proved theory without questioning it and that they try to reconcile it with the Bible (The Dogmatic Directions, item 4, appendix 5). The validity of evolution is naturally assumed, as articles 112. and 113. of the Foundations of Faith show.

112. Does the scientific knowledge of the world and its evolution deny the faith in the Creator of the world?

The scientific knowledge . . . does not deny faith in the Creator, on the contrary, it answers this faith to the question, how the world was created and how God still creates in it.

113. In what relationship are the creation of the world by God and the evolution of the world?

The creation of the world by God is the invisible background of evolution and the evolution of the world is the visible foreground of the creation.

The Czechoslovak theologians went even so far as to say that Jesus Christ is the climax of the religious evolutionary process. This is the evidence that they really

believed (having adopted the Hegelian system) that everything, including the truth about God, undergoes a process of substantial change until it reaches the final agreement with the whole, which is the only true truth.⁶

Since two masters will not share the same servant, one of them must give up his rights. Therefore, science and the Bible do not have equally valued (not even equally relative) positions; science has stolen the position of highest authority, which once belonged to the Scriptures. From now on, the science has the last word in determining what is true and what is not. Thus the science is given more trust than it deserves not just because only the latest discoveries are true but also because the authorities over the subject barely agree with one another. But under the umbrella of relativism everything is perfectly alright; the clashes of the non-reconcilable opinions of the authorities are just the crystallization of some new, brighter synthesis.

The Czechoslovak theologians have never formulated any dogma, although in the beginning there was a hope of doing it some day. We can hardly accuse them of not being lucid enough to recognize the potential danger of the ideas they were supporting. There is reason to believe that they meant well and wanted to help the church by trying to avoid what they believed was wrong.

⁶The quote "The true is the whole." comes from the Preface of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind (Flew 1979, 139).

It would also not be fair to blame on them the lack of solid theological scholarship. The founders of the Czechoslovak Church had just awakened from three hundred years of forceful re-catholization; a generation of their followers underwent Nazism and the sufferings of the World War II; their followers have spent most of their lives under the rulership of a Communist regime. There has been no access to a free-developing theological knowledge as it is known in the U.S.A.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Czechoslovak Church has not given birth to a personality that is able to stand up and say a clear word to the situation. (After all, what clear word is there to say, once we have adopted the relativism of thinking in terms of synthesis?)

However, even all these circumstances do not make wrong things right. Karl Barth's Neo-Orthodoxy, that Zdeňek Trtík introduced to the Czechoslovak theology with the intention to save it from liberalism, has not worked. The major fallacy of liberalism, the loss of the access to the absolutes, remains. Something else needs to be done.

CHAPTER 4
THE HOPE FOR THE CZECHOSLOVAK HUSSITE CHURCH

Hope is the risk that must be run.

Georges Bernanos, Last Essays

Seemingly Hopeless

On October 16, 1994, Český Zápas published the following announcement:

Central Council of the the Czechoslovak
Hussite Church advertizes the concourse for the
position of the chairman of the Third Division
(Pastoral Care and Mission) of the Doctrinal
Department of its office. The conditions:

1. Full theological education
2. at least 5 years of pastoral experience
3. knowledge of the dogmatics of the CČSH, the Foundations of faith; the Foundations of the orders of the pastoral care of the CČSH, and the Worship order; and personal commitment to these church norms.

The advertisement, which goes on listing some technical details, is an expression of the need for an expert that would be able to give the church the official direction for the pastoral care and mission. So far (September 1995), nobody responded to the announcement.

On the one hand, it is a sad thing that the church does not have any mission. It is an understandable consequence of the loss of the divine dimension of faith--the church does not have a message that would address unbelievers. On the other hand, however, it is good that the liberal church does not reach the world with her destructive unbelief. The theological liberalism has spread far enough by itself even without the support of an organized mission.

. . . Nevertheless Hopeful

There are churches that have been polluted by the teaching of theological liberalism and successfully recovered from this disease, which is still so often deadly. Their history can be helpful as an example to follow and as a warning against the moves that are better avoided.

When the United Methodist Church faced the necessity to bring the doctrines back to the Scriptures, the conservatives, according to James Heidinger II, had five options from which to choose: (1) they could act as if nothing was wrong; (2) they could passively submit to things that violated their faith and conscience; (3) they could find a different church; (4) they could ignore church policies and focus on building a spiritually vital subchurch within the framework of the existing denomination; or (5) they could try to channel their influence for positive change (Nash 1987, 31-32).

After nothing else worked they finally came to conclusion, "This great transformation for which we pray will not come as a result of human strategies but as a result of the power of God" (Nash 1987, 37).

Trust in God is the necessary condition for start anything. "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15 : 5). The battle belongs to the Lord; human strength is never sufficient to gain victory over an enemy as great as theological liberalism, especially when it is widespread and has deep roots.

Man may not be strong enough, but God surely has the power to fight the battle. A hopeful sign is, that even in the Czechoslovak Church there are some Christians (more laymen than priests) who realize something is very wrong and needs to be changed. Since they do not have a clear understanding of the precise causes of the problem, they differ concerning possible solutions. However, they are the remnant of the faithful; moreover, they are the sign that the Lord has not finished with the Czechoslovak Hussite Church yet.

Suggested Strategy

Ironically, a church that has become liberal shows the a stronger resistance to the reforms than when it still was conservative. Reform-minded conservatives can try to force the liberals to change their views--only to find out that it is Don Quixote's fight.

However, they can ask the liberals to be consistent, using the self-referentially defeating character of basic liberal propositions. For example, Základy Víry is a document in a catechetical form with some strongly liberal articles :

The Word of God as a historical event is not identical with the Holy Scriptures as a written testimony.

134. About Jesus' human origin we judge that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary.

148. Resurrected Jesus Christ is not the body but the Spirit.

The liberalism in the Preface also cannot be overlooked:

This work is the theological expression of free Christian faith on biblical foundations. It is not decisive and it is not a finished debate; it is rather a base which is supposed to encourage to further discussions and help with them. It must never become a reason and an opportunity for disqualification of other theological opinions that are not included in it (Trtík 1958, 7).

When the articles of the Základy Víry are applied to themselves, the argument with a liberal might go as follows: "I do not believe in those extreme articles (82, 134, and 148) because I have the right to do so. The Foundations of Faith guarantee the freedom to believe in anything I want to; the articles are not dogmas. Whoever is trying to limit my freedom of conscience, it is him who contradicts the Foundations of Faith, not me!"

Similar opportunity is offered by the Neo-Orthodox view of the Bible. If it is true that the Bible is not the inspired Word of God but that it can only become the living Word when it is being read by open and responsive heart, one can easily proclaim: "I was reading 2 Timothy, chapter 3 and when I came to the verse 16 ('All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness'), it became the Word of God to me!"

Such claim is irrefutable by a rational argument because it refers to a private religious experience. The liberals would be compelled to find another (perhaps irrational) way to reject orthodoxy, but by doing so they would already be disclosing their real motivations.

However, it is hard to speculate about the future. We may believe that the Lord wants to restore life in the Czechoslovak Hussite Church. It is unlikely that the changes will begin from the top, for example, as a decision of a church council. Rather, it is more probable that something new will grow from a small seed, not visible and not remarkable in the beginning. Such vision brings hope because a growth like this is typical for God's kingdom (cf. Mt 13).

"At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail."

Job 14 : 7

GLOSSARY

CČS. An abbreviation for Církev Československá (The Czechoslovak Church). It is a title of one of the works by Karel Farský.

CČSH. An abbreviation for Církev Československá Husitská (The Czechoslovak Hussite Church). The abbreviation is used here only as a part of citation from original sources.

Obnova Církve Katolické v Československém Státě, (The Renewal of the Catholic Church in the Czechoslovak State). A book written by several various theologians, published in 1919. Editor of the book was priest, Matěj Pavlík, the future protagonist of the Eastern Orthodoxy in the Czechoslovak Church.

Ohnisko, (The Focus). A radical wing within the Association (see "The Association of Catholic Clerics"). The members of Ohnisko promised to work on the reforms until their assertion.

Právo Národa, (The Right of the Nation). The periodical of the Association ("The Association of the Catholic Clerics"). After the foundation of the Czechoslovak Church, the name of the periodical changed to Český Zápas (The Czech Fight).

Re-Catholization. The period of time between the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) and the end of the World War I (1918) when all non-Catholic believers were forced to leave the country. In Czech literature it is often referred to as the "time of darkness" (see also "The Hapsburgs").

The Association of the Catholic Clerics. A group of Roman Catholic Clerics in the beginning of the twentieth century who wanted to change the current conditions of the Roman Catholic Church in Bohemia and Moravia. Some of their demands were as follows: new church organization, participation of the laity in the church government, Czech language for worship. Here also referred to as the "Association".

The Hapsburgs. A German family whose generations ruled over the Austrian-Hungarian Empire from the 1648 to 1918. Most of their subjects were forced to be of the Roman Catholics confession (see also "re-Catholization").

APPENDIX 1

THE MEMORANDUM TO THE POPE

Since the times of Charles IV, the Father of the land, the Czech nation did not have an opportunity to deal with the head of the church alone and directly. The communication was always mediated only through the foreign representatives who spoke in Rome on behalf of the Czech nation. Then they shared in Bohemia the will of Rome, not having in their minds the growth of the faith but merely political interests. As a result of that, the church appeared to the Czech nation not as the bearer of the teaching of Christ but rather as advocate of the forceful plans of Germany and later Hungary. The Czech nation did not have a reason to love the Hapsburgs but rather had all the reasons to hate them because the Hapsburgs looked down at the Czech nation as an inferior one, as a necessary evil which was to be eliminated by all means and at any expense. The Czech nation was persecuted by the Austrian government, culturally neglected, and economically ruined. It did not even have the consolation the Irish and Polish nation had whose arch-pastors in the hardest times were of the same nationality; on the contrary, the Czech nation had for centuries bishops who not only did not feel and think Czech, they did not even speak good Czech. Some of them never even learned the language in their lives.

That is why the Czech nation's relation towards the church lost all excitement. The intelligentsia became an enemy for the church because they saw the difference between the theory of the Gospel and the practises of the Roman Catholic Church. The Czech clergy with pain observed the ever worsening conditions and faced the future with fear. The Czech people, by nature very religious, saw almost every day that the very protectors of faith neglected the language and the people in worship. The Czech language was pushed away from the churches, Czech children were forced to learn about religion in a foreign tongue. In the governor's palace in Vienna the Muslim mosque was to be built at the expenses of the state while the Czech Christian church had to be built at the expenses of the poor, and could be open only after many problems and obstacles.

Now the Czech nation is free and can begin to take care of its own matters. We are convinced that we have to protect freedom as a special gift from God and use it for the benefit of the nation and for the strengthening of religion and faith. Many of the evils that spread during the Austrian rulership can be corrected. It is now possible to hope in a new advancement of the faith and Christian life for the future not only for the salvation of the Czech souls but also among other Slavic nations. For this task the help of the Apostolic See is crucial.

The Suggestion of the Reforms

1. First it is necessary that new bishops will be nominated, ones fully qualified for their task, sincere Czechoslovaks, knowing the language of the people, politically spotless, and distant from that kind of Austrian Catholicism which used to support only the Germanization and Hungarization. [The Memorandum goes on to list several names of bishops whose keeping in the office did not appear appropriate to the reformers.] For the future, in which we can expect the separation of the church and state, we ask for the possibility to suggest to the Prague Primate the best candidates for the diocesan government, out of which the Primate would recommend some to the Holy See for nomination.
2. For the best benefit of both the nation and the church we ask that the archbishop of Prague would be given the power over all areas of the republic, similar to that which was once upon a time given to the Slavic apostle, St. Methodius. Only then can be built the bridge of unity for the other Slavic nations because the Czechoslovak nation is the only one with the same friendly contacts with other Slavs: Ruthenians, Bulgarians, Serbians, Croats, and Slovenes. Besides that our government wants to support the Slavic studies in the University of Prague. It seems to be the best time to make the intentions of Lev XIII, expressed in the encyclical Grande Munus, come true.
3. For the same reason we ask that the Czech language would be allowed to be used for the worship and prayers within the borders of the Czechoslovak Republic, for the Pope Hadrian II.

approved the usage of the common language for our apostles Cyril and Method. In some memorable places the worship in Old Church Slavonic language could be renewed.

4. Since the ununited Slavic churches do not recognize the Roman celibacy law, we ask that the law would be weakened in our country, in order for the Slavic clergy, still not united, to be encouraged to greater trust in the Apostolic See, and thus be won for unification with the Catholic Church. By asking this we do not oppose that virginity as a higher and more perfect state would be recommended, and we do not want to encourage the clergy to promiscuity. Also, with no doubt, the most of the priests would keep celibate. Otherwise we consider to be right, as long as the law is valid, that the transgressions would be strictly punished with no regards to the persons, always and everywhere, not only with the young and lower priests but also with the older ones.

We give these wishes and pleads to the Holy See for consideration and for the investigation in the presence of the bishops and other officers. Our present government supports the solution of the matters, as we have written them down, and with great kindness has dealt with the representatives sent to Rome.

In Rome, June 28, 1919

The Association of
the Czechoslovak Catholic Clerics in Prague

(Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 26).

APPENDIX 2
THE REGULATIONS OF OHNISKO

The regulations of Ohnisko were as follows:

1. Free gathering of those who work on the reforms within the intentions of the Unity of the Catholic Clergy until the work is completed.
2. New members are accepted after secret voting.
3. The head of Ohnisko consists of three persons: the confidant, the secretary, and the treasurer.
4. The confidant keeps the list of members, the secretary is responsible for the agenda, and the treasurer is in charge of the bills.
5. Prague confidant has the list of the countryside confidants and keeps in touch with them.
6. The daughter organizations can be anywhere as long as they have at least three members.
7. Each member promises to betray neither the brothers nor the program.
8. Real brotherhood governs among the members with no regard to the position or the office.
9. The amount of the contributions is determined by the members themselves.
10. Expelling of a member is done by the majority votes of those present. (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 19)

APPENDIX 3

SELECTED IMPORTANT ARTICLES IN OBNOVA CÍRKVE KATOLICKÉ V ČESKOSLOVENSKÉM STÁTĚ

1. Patriarchate. The Patriarch in Prague was supposed to oversee the pastoral care for all Catholic believers in Czechoslovakia with the hope that it could help to build the bridge between the Western and Eastern Christianity. Prague was expected to become the center of studies and of church unity of the Slavic Christians.
2. Church autonomy. Participation of the laymen in the government of the local churches was presumed to take place. The head of the board is the priest who determines the number of members according to the size of the congregation. The diocesan council has twelve members, half of which are laymen. The head is the bishop or his representative. The central council with the patriarch as its head governs the whole church and is made of the representatives of the dioceses.
3. Suggestion for the reform of the Czechoslovak liturgy. The reasons given for the native tongue were the Cyrilo-Methodian tradition, the Bible, and the Slavonic practise. Next demand was to perform the Old Church Slavonic liturgy every day in the Emauzy monastery in Prague, as well as in other historically significant places.

4. Suggestion for the correction of the study and training of the clergy. The demand is to close the diocesan seminaries and to open central divinity faculties [i.e., colleges]. The future priests would have greater understanding and deeper education for their ministry. Concerning the spiritual growth of the candidates, a so-called "spiritual" is nominated, a person that would lead the students together with the rector [i.e., President]. It is recommended that the students would elect the confidant instead of the prefect.
5. Celibacy on voluntary basis. The demand for voluntary celibacy is supported by the biblical verses and the evidences from the early Christianity. The ideal of virginity is, however, recognized. "We wish that the character of the original voluntarism and advise would be returned to the priestly virginity."
6. The attitude towards the orders. "We demand the revision of all the church orders. Their property should be put together with the rest of the church property in order to serve the whole church. The status quo, when the rulers of the orders lived outside the state borders, should change."
7. Suggestion for the correction of the church practise concerning the cremation. The reformed priests demand canceling of the prohibition of the church ceremonies in case when the survivors decided for the cremation. Since 1892 the church used to refuse the funeral ceremony to those who wanted their bodies cremated or who were members of the Friends of

the Cremation Club. Reform priests explained their demand to change this practise by stating that the priestly ministry does not allow them to refuse the mourning.

8. Suggestion for the correction of the prayer book. The basic demand is to translate the prayer hand-book of the Roman Catholic priest into the national language. (Kadeřávek and Trtík 1982, 21-22)

APPENDIX 4

THE MEMORANDUM TO THE SERBS

1. The Czech worship language (with possible occasional Old Church Slavonic¹ language).

2. The worship would temporarily remain as it is now and later on the rituals, worship books, and prayers would be changed in order to differ from the Roman Catholic ones and to fit the new church, as long as the old folk tradition would allow it.

3. The priests and the bishops are to be ordained democratically, i.e., with the approval of the believers.

4. The priests who came from Roman Catholic Church do not have to be re-consecrated.

5. Priests are allowed to get married even after the consecration, and not only once but as often as necessary.

6. The celibacy of the bishops is to be terminated.

7. In the beginning, before the Czechoslovak Church will have her own Czech bishops, the bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church will be sent to Czechoslovakia. Bishop Dositej

¹The medieval Slavic language, a predecessor of both Czech and Slovak, as well as the Serbo-Croatian. Old Church Slavonic was actually the language for which Cyril created the alphabet. The written form of the Old Church Slavonic language bears his name--the Cyrillic alphabet.

was chosen because he enjoys the trust of the Czechoslovak Church.

8. The Czech bishops are to be consecrated as soon as possible in order for them to lead the Czechoslovak Church as an autocephalous one.

9. The salaries for the priests are requested on the same level as for the state employees with an academic education.

10. Before the Czechoslovak Church is able to start and run her own seminary, it is requested that 15 Czechoslovak students be accepted and supported in the seminary in Bělehrad.

11. The women are to be the members of the church committees.

12. Since the term "Orthodox" in Czechoslovakia invokes the circumstances in Russia before the World War 1, and for the reason of autonomy of the new church, it is requested that the church will bear the name: Czechoslovak Truth-faithful²Church, or Czechoslovak Cyrilo-Methodian Church, or Czechoslovak Church. (Spisar 1936, 119-120)

²A literary translation from Czech pravdověrná, an artificially created neologism that normally does not exist in the language.

APPENDIX 5
THE DOGMATIC DIRECTIONS

1. Our directions have to be in accordance with our time, reared by exact science.

2. The absolute freedom of science must be recognized; as well as the necessity for the scientific method for all the areas of thinking including the religious thoughts as long as they are accessible to science.

3. It is necessary to work on clarification of the question of religion generally; to adopt the historical and rational standpoint to the religious knowledge, revelation, faith, Christianity, the person of Christ, Christian churches, interpretation, dogmas, moral and social problems of today, and the future forms of Christianity.

4. We respect the law of evolution also for the idea of religion and Christianity, for the Christian dogmas and for all the decrees of the church councils, that are all stages in the development of the Christian thought and conditioned by their times.

5. All the terms and concepts of the Christian thought must be critically revised and newly classified in regard to their vitality; what is dry and brings no sap anymore, let it die!

6. It is important to distinguish between what is essential in Christianity and what is not--what is only an expression of a Christian society at the time; and to get rid of a heavy dead weight of stiff formulas that came from the mentality of certain nations (Greek, Roman, and the Eastern ones) of long ago.

7. The articles above are the only way to solve the horrible religious crisis.

8. It is necessary to tend towards the freedom of the sons of God on the basis of the pure and joyful message of Christ.

9. Jesus Christ is for us the corner stone, our foundation and our goal. The Sonship of God, proclaimed and lived by Him, is our anchor and hope. We need to build on it. In accordance with Him we need to solve and correct our relationship to God the Father and to the people, our brothers and sisters. We want to be Christians. The task of our church is the moral renewal and salvation in the sense of Christ.

10. We have in mind a new type of Christianity. The non-essential differences are not important. We want to attain one sheep-pen and one Shepherd.

11. The churches can be only national. In living the Christianity and in making it real, the specific moments of the nation may become important and justified, even indispensable, especially in the respect of ideological and organizational issues.

12. The Czechoslovak Church is Christ's church: the foundation is the teaching of Christ. It is also a national church because she wants to live in the nation, with the nation, and she identifies herself with the national history.

13. Mutual relationship of the Christian churches is brotherly, determined by the sovereignty, equality, and Christian love. Our church rejects any alien arbitrary interference with her life. She herself does not want to intervene with the life of any other church. She desires for the closest fellowship with the brotherly Serbian Church and for ideal and practical bilaterality with the Czech Brethren Evangelical Church.

14. It is necessary to organize a zealous theological and popularization work as a preparation for the solution of the problems mentioned above. We need a modern religious review of high level, perhaps of an inter-denominational character, not only for the church people but also for those standing outside the church. We need religious debate; we need the collection of modern religious books, both originals and translations. The churches have to get together for cooperation; one church can never do such a job; we will need the help from non-church religious sources also.

15. There is no reason for being afraid of cooperation with the United Serbian Orthodox Church and Czech Brethren Evangelical Church.

16. The Serbian Orthodoxy looks for modern orientation, it wants to get rid of the stiffness of thinking, it has to submit itself to the needs of the present time.

17. The Czech Brethren Evangelical Church, the heir of the Czech Reformation, can mediate for us the knowledge of the Western theological work and religiosity.

18. We reassume with the last expression of the Christian idea, common to all Christian churches, the Nicene Creed, and we recognize only the first seven ecumenical church councils. Thus we reject the unnatural development of the Christianity in the Roman Church, especially the papal primacy and infallibility. The same has been done by the Czech Reformation which is a part of our past.

19. The Czechoslovak Church, however, emphasizes the evolutionary view on the Christian idea and insists upon the freedom of the conscience (as it was proclaimed at the declaration of foundation) which is considered to be the freedom of the religious confession and which was reserved in the Memorandum sent to the Serbian Church.

20. It is necessary to think about the religious questions in love and tolerance, not to argue about specific dogmas, and keep the freedom of individual opinions. The effort of the church and her members is to be the moral life according to Christ's standards.

21. Let the committee, assigned for the theological work in the spirit of these directions, be organized. (Spisar

1936, 146-148)

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