

Václav Koranda the Younger: Administrator of the Utraquist Church and writer

Václav Koranda the Younger (c. 1425-1519) was a representative of the third generation of Czech Utraquists. He died just before the first reformist elements started to enter Bohemia from Germany. Although contemporary Utraquism didn't bring any major innovations to the faith, Koranda was very active in establishing Utraquist positions opposing those of Catholics and radical reformers. However, this period is deeply fascinating and in many ways transformational in terms of literary culture. Printed books started to become more common as a means of communication, which was demonstrated both in Koranda's literary work and the composition of his own personal library. His activities in several roles (as a university and church official and as an author of religious and political works) led to a rather extensive collection of his written works being preserved, constituting exceptional material for the research of social communication in Bohemia during the reigns of George of Poděbrady and the Jagiellonian kings.

Koranda's activities as an administrator were a major part of his public life. After beginning his career at a young age (we can only guess as to why on the basis of muddled fragments), he completed his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the Prague university in the 1450s. As part of his role there, he actively took part in the transformation of the institution into a national Hussite university. It is thus not a coincidence that besides holding the posts of dean and rector, he was also named university dispenser several times, overseeing the publication of the university's documents. Václav Koranda also took part in the economic consolidation of the Prague university in the 1460s and 1490s.

Koranda's conscientiousness can be seen throughout the nearly 20 years he worked as an administrator of Utraquist clergy. Besides administering the church, the consistory he led was also active in politics. He corresponded with Matthias Corvinus and other rulers. Internal pressures within the Utraquist leadership began to surface in the 1480s when Václav Koranda had to cooperate with the new bishop, Augustine, who came from Italy. In 1489, it seems he had to hand over his agenda to the bishop and a newly selected consistory of which he was not a member. He stepped out of public life in terms of church administration, partially returning after Augustine's death in 1493 when he sent Jan Zajíc of Házmburk his earlier-written work and published *Traktát o velebné a božské svátosti oltářní* (Treatise on the Glorious and Holy Alter Sacrament), but he didn't return to the head of the Utraquist Church.

The Utraquist consistory's archive has preserved a rather extensive collection of documents that were recently discovered by the author of this book. It constitutes a vital source of insight into religious administration, but also into day-to-day life. A preliminary survey proved the structure of the records is analogous with the administrative files of the Catholic Church. However, this material should be evaluated and discussed in detail in a future work. The surviving documents, both the consistory's files and Koranda's treatises, show the bureaucratization of church administration successfully developed under Koranda's leadership. Matrimonial disputes made up a large part of the agenda he dealt with, but individual lords and clergymen often turned to the consistory (or in some cases even to Koranda himself) to confirm the presented clerics and their benefices.

During his long life, Koranda, from his office, joined in many religious discussions, both against Catholics and the radical reformation. He seems to have taken pride in his abilities to argue and debate and thus accepted the media strategy chosen by his opponents. His writings against Catholics were largely reactions to foreign texts, especially in the later period. However, it is not clear, especially in the beginnings, whether Koranda was himself directly addressed by his opponents. All evidence suggests he took opportunities to reply and even initiated some discussions (i.e. his correspondence with Hilarius Litoměřický). He used private letters for this task, but the fact that he copied them means he probably placed a more general and lasting importance on them as shown by the quotes of Scripture and church scholars. However,

Koranda's writings, especially at the beginning, worked with *ad personam* attacks, which he reasoned at the end of these private letters. A shift in his thinking in favour of targeting a wider domestic audience is demonstrated by his move from using Latin in the 1460s–1470s (with the significant exception of his correspondence with Hilarius Litoměřický) to an almost exclusive use of the Czech language.

The targets of his polemics included representatives of the Catholic Church administration in Bohemia, the Wrocław bishop, the Papal legate, King Matthias Corvinus, and the Catholic gentry. He also criticized monastic orders and converts to Catholicism. His texts were often based on degrading his opponents while his own arguments stressed the divine revelation of the chalice and the validity of the Compacts, which was a document where the Emperor and the Catholic Church recognized Utraquism. Koranda had a broad collection of statements from his predecessors supporting Utraquism, which he used throughout his literary life with slight changes. Real and imagined deficiencies in the Catholic Church played a role in Koranda's attacks against Catholics, as did his claim of insulted honor, a complaint used on both sides.

Koranda especially adhered to this tradition during his time as an administrator. Innovative thoughts cannot be expected from his works and they were not even possible when considering the old hardline Hussite views held by contemporary Utraquist representatives. The Compacts, the contract between the Hussites, the church, and Emperor Sigismund's privilege that gave limited recognition to the Hussite program elaborated in the Four Articles of Prague, was a fundamental and fixed point in Koranda's religious-political views. The scholastic method in Koranda's works present only partially in refutation of the opponent's arguments and confirmation of his own opinion is a foregone conclusion. Koranda was thus a conservative Utraquist who expressed rather radical opinions in sharp critiques of the Catholic Church. For Koranda, like for all Utraquists, Scripture was the foundation of God's law; determining the administration of the church, its teachings, and its only correct interpretation was Utraquism. However, in accordance with the so-called Cheb Judge, Koranda recognized the apostolic tradition, the Church fathers, and the Church scholars as long as they didn't contradict Scripture. This included the question of obedience, a topic stressed by Catholics. Koranda, like Jan Rokycana and Martin Lupáč, was convinced of the irreversible validity of the Compacts, which he understood as a guarantee of religious freedom for Utraquists in accordance with the resolutions of the councils of the cities of Prague of 1448. However, he didn't recognize the same freedom anchored in the Compacts for Catholics. But in contrast to Lupáč, he never expressed the radical thought that communion from the chalice is valid regardless of the view of the Catholic Church and thus the Compacts need not be confirmed by the Catholic Church. He stressed the Compacts' validity, which confirmed Czechs and Moravians as loyal Christians who accepted communion from the chalice and which prohibit attacks against Hussite teachings or ritual practices. His polemics not only delved into the past, but also commented on current events, such as church councils and the acts of the popes.

It is also necessary to mention that Koranda's definition of Utraquism indivisibly includes a national and religious identity: In his view, Utraquism is simply a trait of ethnic "Czechs." Religious identity itself, referred to in the texts, was accepted to a greater degree in his works from the 1490s, specifically in the *Traktát o velebné a božské svátosti oltářní* published in 1493. Koranda's role as a lay administrator of the Utraquist clergy, which he took up at the start of the Jagellonian period, is most clearly represented in his letters to Jan Zajíc of Házmburk and indirectly referred to in the above-mentioned 1493 publication. Besides his role as administrator, Koranda's political identity was most clearly seen in his role as a university master that would welcome foreign delegations with friendly words, while a certain part was also played by the message to Rome of 1462. It is necessary to note both Hilarius Litoměřický

and Jan Zajíc refer to political or legal state identity (directly and indirectly) in their works as well.

Koranda's writings attacking the Bohemian Brethren are also consistent with the contemporary discourse, where he took the works of Jan Rokycana against "heretics" as inspiration. It's also noteworthy that two of the three surviving Rokycana letters were copied into his collection of writings (the so-called Clementine Manual Book), which was compiled in connection with his role as the administrator of Utraquist clergy. In the case of one of the letters, this is the only known surviving copy.

Although Catholics viewed the Utraquist Church as heretical, the approach to the Bohemian Brethren and the followers of Mikuláš Vlášnický was in the spirit of old traditions and significantly relied on the past practice and procedures of the Catholic administration. Koranda's texts targeting "heretics" addressed the King as the highest lay authority and the gentry as lords in accordance with Utraquist beliefs that the feudal lord should act in these matters. He also appealed to Utraquist clergy who were to help the consistory discover "dangerous" heterodoxy. A relatively large amount of these texts, which can be estimated on the basis of the preserved fragments of files from the Utraquist consistory and copied treatises, prove the existence of a systematic effort to suppress these radical sects by the Utraquist Church despite the opposite appearance in the case of Jan Zajíc of Házmburk.

However, in comparison with the often very radical arguments against Catholics, the texts targeting the above-mentioned radical sects reflects Koranda's strong conservative bent and attempt to maintain the *status quo*. Besides specific aspects of the faith, such as the view of the sacraments (especially the Sacrament of the Altar) or the clergy, he also criticized the morals of the Brethren. Koranda negatively viewed their emphasis on performing good deeds, outward expressions of religiosity, and the conviction of their own exclusivity, which was a thorn in the side of the majority Utraquist Church. He used lively and expressive language in some cases, though less than in the case of Catholics. However, he did not avoid embarrassing his opponents in some cases. Although there are only two letters understood as a personal polemic with a "heretic," it is clear these writings were primarily written by Koranda as a Utraquist official.

The intellectual foundations of his activities as the master of the faculty of arts and administrator of the Utraquist Church can be partially determined by the surviving remnants of his library. Koranda was a true bibliophile and took a very active role in literary culture. During his long life, he compiled an immense collection of books, of which 71 volumes are known today. About two-thirds of them were manuscripts. It is not surprising Koranda concentrated on collecting the works of John Wyclif, Jan Hus, and first- and second-generation Utraquists as well as those by the church fathers that the Utraquists used as a foundation for their beliefs. The significant portion of books about sacramental theology, especially about the Eucharist, is also unsurprising. Koranda also had great respect for his teacher, Křišť'an of Prachatice. Like him, he studied astronomy and other physical sciences, which is reflected by the books in his collection on those topics. His interest in ethics was also reflected in his treatises and he collected literature about polemics of the day, especially the works of Gregory of Heimburg.

When compared to the library maintained by the professors of the Kraków University, his book collection seems rather conservative. This can be seen in humanist works, which Koranda had knowledge of, but he staunchly rejected this vein of thought that at the time was understood as a new paganism. He thus selected only the humanistic works that matched his precise and specific interests. While he may have acquired the letters of Pius II out of a personal interest in the works of the Pope (who he had met personally), other works reflecting his personal preferences stemmed from his position. *The Donation of Constantine* by Lorenzo Valla was copied to criticize the document the Pope and the Catholic Church used to appropriate temporal power. Political works, like Valla's supposed dispute between a priest and a knight, and Marsilius of Padua's *Defensor pacis*, were probably acquired for their sharp anti-Papal bent.

We also know he disputed Sulpicius's humanist grammar in education and supported the proven scholastic works of Alexander de Villa Dei. This was in spite of owning Valla's *Elegantiae*, a work known to have been owned by the humanist-oriented Václav of Chrudim, and which was also familiar to Tas of Boskovice and Jan of Rabštejn. He has a similar approach to works based on ancient ethics, and these works (such as a first edition of Ovid) are often marked and commented with Koranda's notes.

Koranda would often write his comments into his books, both printed and manuscripts, an act that was very typical of him. For example, he commented on important libraries of the past in a chronicle he was reading. His additions make clear his interest in contemporary history as well as the representatives of the Catholic Church that Utraquist leaders would define themselves against. In some cases, the writings are very succinct; summarizing a paragraph's content or acting as a guide for the reader. This gives us little insight other than Koranda's regard for the text. His own interests can also be seen in the manuscripts he had copied or that he transcribed himself, as well as the newly-printed books he acquired. His body of works included two volumes of his own transcribed works, his own theological dictionary, and, unknowingly, extensive discarded documents in the bindings of three of his books.

Koranda lived at a time when the domination of manuscripts started to be replaced by printed books. Most of his library of traditional Utraquist works is in manuscript form, but Koranda was also very actively interested in printed books. The remnants of his library do not contain a single book published after 1500, but as books from the beginning of the 16th century were later re-bound in more modern covers, usually destroying any documentation of the original, it cannot be said that Koranda did not acquire new books after 1500.

Koranda's collection is mostly made up of manuscripts that are usually convoluted works of various genres, which is why the number of volumes from each area can only be estimated. Even with this limitation, it can be said that more than half of Koranda's books were of a theological nature, while other areas typical for Koranda (astronomy, rhetoric, and ethics) are usually represented by only a few volumes. In terms of language, the dominance of Latin is interrupted by only a few Czech works recorded in the Clementine Manual Book and Koranda's margin notes were exclusively written in Latin. It is also necessary to note that we are only working with a fragment of his library and thus it is very unlikely he did not own any manuscripts or books written in Czech despite not having any evidence to the fact (the exception being the only Czech version of Aesop preserved in the discarded papers). The library also lacks printed versions of his own works. Koranda's scope of interest was probably much larger than the surviving volumes demonstrate as shown by his quotes of other works in his writing and in his margin notes, but those works were not preserved.

It's possible to ask what aspects of Koranda's life and works represented the medieval period and what was a harbinger of modern times. This conservative representative of third-generation Utraquism favored traditional values and preferred scholastic learning. He was interested in innovation, but only within scholasticism, which is why he and other university masters, both Utraquists and Catholics, incorporated the works of Jan Versor into the teaching of the Prague university in the 1450s. The way this consummate bureaucrat treated his opponents in his polemics shows he had developed an abstract understanding of texts, which was strengthened by the rise of printing. His individuality, seen in his comments written into the books in his library, is something that can be considered modern along with his political pragmatism. It's therefore easy to agree with the older, nearly intuitive conclusion made by Josef Macek: "It can't be ruled out that only a lack of sources shines an odd light on the administrator's actions, as he's often radical in theology, although politically he was more cautious and is more of a fair-weather fan who prefers to join the winners after the fact."