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Report on habilitation thesis of Petra Mutlová, ‘The Case of the Other Hussites: Revisiting a Historiographical Construct of the Czech Reformation’

The thesis focuses on the so-called Dresden School and re-examines evidence for its existence and nature. The author analyses a wide range of sources from the period contemporary with the School and from the one that immediately followed, and comes to a convincing conclusion that the school did not exist in an institutionalised form, but the ideas of Nicholas of Dresden and possibly other German masters exerted some influence on the representatives of the Czech Reform movement which created a later perception of the Dresdeners as a group.

How relevant is the topic within the given academic field?

The topic is highly relevant to research on the Czech Reformation. The so-called Dresden School is an important part of the history of the Hussite movement, yet though often invoked, it has not been adequately investigated, and very little is known about it for certain. As Dr Mutlová correctly points out, there are numerous references to the Dresden School in scholarly literature, but the most important questions about it, including whether the term ‘school’ itself is justified, have never been answered. Though there has been much valuable research into the work of the individuals claimed to have been its members and associates, such as Nicholas of Dresden, Friedrich Eppinge and Peter Payne, there has been little attempt to examine comprehensively the evidence behind the assumption that they formed a circle. Re-examination of the full range of primary sources that have bearing on the nature of such an association, undertaken by the author, is therefore much needed. As the author observes, the term ‘school’ is ambiguous and it is important to consider whether its ‘members’ were united institutionally, by common ideas, or activities, such as teaching, or whether the ‘school’ is entirely a historiographical misconception.

Considering that the individuals involved are an international group and were subject to a range of influences, the topic is relevant not only to the field of study of the Czech Reformation, but more widely to the history of the European Reformation, including the Waldensian and the Lollard movements.

How precisely, clearly and understandably is the topic formulated?

The topic is clearly and precisely formulated and the argument is easy to follow. The author is to be commended for being highly sceptical about the evidence and asking the most fundamental questions about the School, not at all or only partially answered in earlier scholarship, such as whether the individuals traditionally associated with it can be precisely identified; and to what extent their biographies, literary output and ideas can be reconstructed from surviving sources. The structure of the argument is logical and the analysis is clearly presented. The discussion is organised into chapters, primarily according to the type of evidence examined, such as ‘Contemporary Narrative Sources’ (mostly chronicle sources), ‘Biographies’ (mostly university records and inquisition documents) and ‘Literary Output’. Within each chapter the primary sources are usefully listed, less known among them are described, and their reliability is commented on. Various contemporary and later claims and assumptions about the School and its members are carefully evaluated and conclusions are presented at the end of each chapter. All the findings are clearly summarized in the final chapter.

What contributions does the thesis make to the field and how it compare to other works, both foreign and domestic in the field?

The thesis offers currently the most detailed and up-to-date examination of the Dresden School and fills an important gap in previous scholarship. Dr Mutlová shows that almost every aspect of the conception of the Dresden School that existed in scholarship for the last two hundred years can be challenged. One of the most valuable contributions of the thesis is a comprehensive re-examination of all the primary sources, including somewhat later material, resulting from collecting and cataloguing of the works by Dresdeners by their followers. At present there is no such comprehensive account and the author’s analysis and listing of the sources (chronicles, inquisition documents and treatises of the Dresdeners) is an important tool for anyone trying to navigate this field, extremely confusing because of contradictory and incomplete nature of the



evidence. The analysis of the sources is comprehensive and takes a wide range of features into account: the author examines codicological, linguistic and art-historical aspects of the manuscripts upon which the concept of the Dresden School depends. The evidence varies considerably for the members investigated: the chronicles refer, often vaguely, only to Peter and Nicholas of Dresden; the inquisition documents give much more detail about Drändorf, Rautenstock and Turnau; the name of a possible sympathiser Conradus Stoecklin is known only from the marginal glosses in a commentary on Nicholas of Lyra's *Postil*; Friedrich Eppinge is known from several contemporary documents and a treatise. The evidence is particularly complex for Peter of Dresden and his identification is particularly uncertain: the widely circulated treatises on grammar, logic and philosophy attributed to him do not match easily the profile of a radical teacher expelled from Dresden. The evidence for Peter Payne is complex in a different way: though much is known about him, the evidence for his association with the School is least convincing, though considering that he has been previously regarded as one of its members, Dr Mutlová's decision to include him in the discussion is understandable. Dr Mutlová navigates these complexities of evidence very well, attempting at every stage to distinguish fact from interpretation. Thus, after considering various sources that can shed light on the biography of Nicholas of Dresden, 'the best known member of the group' (p.29), she arrives to a sobering conclusion that the only facts about him that can be viewed as certain are that he studied in Erfurt and subsequently worked in Prague where he composed a number of treatises calling for a change in the contemporary Church (p.42). This and similar statements are a very useful record of the state of our current knowledge about the School, and an essential starting point for any subsequent research on its members.

The provision of the full listings of the works of Nicholas and Peter of Dresden, with their manuscripts and editions, including dubious attributions, and of all medieval copies of Eppinge's *Posicio* is very valuable and considerably improves on previously published listings. Dr Mutlova's list of the manuscripts of Eppinge's treatise adds a new manuscript, currently in Leipzig, to a list published in the recent work by Juři Kejř. Equally useful are the lists documenting dissemination of the works of the group in later manuscripts in the chapter on collecting.



The discussion of antithetical form of Nicholas's *Tabule veteris et novi coloris* is convincing and brings into consideration the evidence of the manuscripts where the text is incomplete or preserved in a disturbed manner (p.131). Such manuscripts were of little interest to earlier scholars. As pointed out by the author, however, this and similar evidence has implications for how the *Tabule* should be presented in modern editions and for the discussions of its vernacular adaptations. Most importantly for the thesis, the evidence of antithetical form suggests a link between the treatise and the students who carried antithetical pictures during street processions in Prague, and therefore has bearing on the question of the wider influence of Nicholas and his associates.

How appropriate and relevant is the chosen methodological approach to the topic?

The approach is relevant to the chosen topic and the state of research in the field. At the time of publication the work would benefit from the addition of some background material, such as a fuller discussion of the university milieu in Prague with which all the protagonists were associated, similar to the background material provided about the Kreuzkirche school. This would make clearer the important discussion of teaching by the members of the group, helping to answer such questions as how unusual is the claim that they attracted a 'multitude of scholars' and what this may have meant in practice? Or how surprised should we be that the treatises attributed to Peter of Dresden are on grammar rather than theology? Such a discussion has been initiated by the author as part of the consideration of whether or not modism was dated and could still attract interest in Prague in the 15th century. A wider readership would also benefit from a wider account of previous scholarship. Though it is referenced through footnotes and a very complete and up-to-date bibliography, including it explicitly in the narrative at different points would help the reader. Such discussion is not absent (e.g. an account of the works by Kaminsky and Cegna in the introduction and of the views of earlier scholars in 'Shared Doctrine'), but could be provided more consistently throughout (e.g. in the chapter 'Literary Output' concerned with identification and attribution of the works by the group that has a long history in previous scholarship). Such an account would also make clearer what still remains to be done in further investigations of the School.



What is the level of analysis?

The analysis is consistently of a high standard. It crosses several different fields of research, including history, codicology and palaeography, language and the history of linguistic thought (e.g. the discussion of modism), and art history, and the author is equally proficient in the use of evidence pertaining to all these fields.

Are formal criteria (language, citations, etc.) of sufficiently high standard?

The formal criteria and presentation are, as expected, of a high standard. The bibliography is extensive and up-to-date; its structuring is convenient for the reader. The citations are full and provide all the information necessary to discover the sources used.

Conclusion: Dr Mutlová's thesis 'The Case of the Other Hussites: Revisiting a Historiographical Construct of the Czech Reformation' fully meets the requirements placed on habilitation thesis in the field.