

Petr Hlaváček

**The Servants of Antichrist: the Denouncement of Franciscans on the Utraquist  
(Hussite) Pictures in Jena Codex (Bohemia, Around 1490-1510)**

The hectic period of Bohemian Reformation (1419-1434) was characterized by civil wars and by unequal struggles against international intervention by papal and imperial crusaders. One of the products of those stormy times is the entirely anomalous ecclesial situation, when in Bohemia existed side by side two ecclesiastical organizations: the Roman Church and the Bohemian Utraquist Church. The Franciscan John of Capistrano, during his Bohemian sojourn (1451-1454), focused his ire on the Compactata, which had legitimized the Utraquist Church at the Council of Basel. Capistrano's militant spirit continued to inspire their work, and, despite internal frictions within the Order, the Franciscans in the Bohemian Kingdom remained important supporters of the Roman Church, as well as zealous opponents of the Bohemian Reformation. The Franciscans received rough literary treatment, evocative of the dialectical pictorial treatment in the Jena Codex (ca. 1490-1510). The author of this composite manuscript of written Czech theological texts was Bohuslaus of Čechtice (†1533) from the Prague Utraquist University. The illuminator of this work was Janíček Zmílelý of Písek, who in his pictorial satire *Antithesis Christi et Antichristi* attacks Bohemian Franciscans. This illuminator created a very specific „Franciscan iconography“ with a perverted connotation: in the illustrations the Franciscans are symbolically presented as the destroyers of the Church and servants of the Antichrist. This essay represents only a brief view in the Jena Codex, a unique nonconforming art work from the end of the Middle Ages in Bohemia. The Franciscans received rough literary treatment, evocative of the dialectical pictorial treatment in the Jena Codex (ca. 1490-1510), the most beautiful manuscript from Utraquist Bohemia. The author of this composite book of written Czech theological texts was Bohuslaus of Čechtice (†1533) from the Prague Utraquist University. The illuminator of this work was Janíček Zmílelý of Písek, who in his pictorial satire *Antithesis Christi et Antichristi* attacks Bohemian Franciscans. This illuminator created a very specific „Franciscan iconography“ with a perverted connotation: in the illustrations the Franciscans are symbolically presented as the destroyers of the Church and servants of the Antichrist. On folio 4v of the Jena Codex is an illustration with the Temple as the image of the Church. This symbolic Temple is impaired and threatened with ruin, therefore it is secured with safeguarding construction. Just this supporting construction of the Temple/Church endeavours to destroy the monks systematically – on the right a Franciscan Observant along with a Dominican Friar, on the left a Conventual Franciscan, who is cutting the support of the Church with a big sawmill. In another illuminations the Franciscans also posture in the Antithesis, which mirrors a Utraquist critical juxtaposition of the feascance of Christ and the Pope as the Antichrist. On folio 35v is a textual reference to the Gospel of St. John and the illumination with Jesus Christ washing the Apostels' feet. Opposite on folio 36r is a picture with the Pope, the false vicarius Christi and the Franciscans – the false Apostles kissing his feet. The Franciscans are pictured here as opponents of the true Church once again. On folio 39r – as we can see – is presented a central event of the Bohemian Reformation, the burning at the stake of Jan Hus in 1415. The Franciscans in their brown habits are pictured along with notable church and secular personalities. They are conventionalizing herewith to the exemplary enemy of the Bohemian Reformation and the entire Church of Christ. Most significant example of this Utraquist pictorial is seen in folio 57r of the Jena Codex with the expressive imaging of the battle between the Hussite „warriors of God“ and the Crusaders. The Bohemian army is presented here as the army of Christ, the Crusaders as godless warriors of the Antichrist. Once again the Franciscans are depicted as their servants, the most active preachers of the Crusade against the Utraquist Bohemia. This essay represents only a brief view in the Jena Codex, a unique nonconforming art work from the end of the Middle Ages in Bohemia.