

## **Abstract**

The Development of Funeral Practices in the Context of the Evolution of Ideological framework of the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church.

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Our work resulted in finding that since the very beginning of its existence, the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church approached the question of funeral rituals as a practical, pastoral question, not academic and theoretical.

The Czechoslovak Church became a pioneer and promoter of cremation and operator of the most extensive network of columbaries in Czechoslovakia.

The major moment of Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church particulars was the shift from the mechanical-magical concept of funeral in popular Catholicism, by which it tried to confront with a purified and understandable ritual based on the gospel and the desire to enculturate the gospel and translate it into a "live" language.

Judging by the theological view of death and funeral, the basis from which it stemmed is quite clear – catholic modernism and liberal democratic thinking. In the first generation of Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church theologians we could observe significant "scholastic" fundament. Theological consideration was never priority in these matters, but the church only dealt with it when solving complex tasks.

It was not until the middle of 1940s, when the Copernical Revolution consolidated the traditional understanding and turned it into a stable basis of modern interpretation and it protected the CHC theory from threats of liberalism in an intelligible way. The current Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church, under the influence of Trtík and Kučera, starts to realise the importance and timelessness of Christian traditions and understands that its historical role does not lie in forming new

catechism, but in the ability to translate the gospel into new conditions: giving testimony of the oldest truths using new words.

In terms of structure, the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church funeral rituals were traditional and understandable.

When evaluating specific funeral rituals, we should note that the Farský ritual was a very liturgical and logically coherent set. It adhered to the good aspects of the traditional concept, while maintaining a logical structure. From the theological point of view, it was a well-balanced ritual, paying sufficient attention to the personality of the deceased, while consoling the mourners. It was trinitological and Christological and clearly understandable, its kerygma being noticeable.

The Drtina Agenda was the agenda which was used by the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church for the longest time. We can see its profound elaborateness and logicity. This agenda offers at every moment sufficient amount of alternatives for to any possible situation and condition that may occur. It is elaborated in a very careful and thorough way.

However, it diverts from Farský's liberal optimism, emphasising fateful moments. Generally speaking, it was "darker", putting the deceased personality in the centre. The deceased person became the second focal point of the funeral ritual, next to Jesus Christ.

The Drtina Agenda limited the structure of antiphonal dialogues and let the clergymen have control over the ritual, particularly with prayer and reading from the Scripture.

Last two agendas, the Špak and the Butt Agendas are almost identical. In comparison with the other agendas they emphasise the annunciation of the Word of God. They move the focus from the deceased person to the kerygma, which brings the nature of their agendas nearer to the Protestant approach. Nevertheless, they maintained the structure that is typical of the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church and the

course of the funeral rituals is in line with the current Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church liturgy.

The Butt Agenda complements the Špak Agenda with suitable responsories which were lacking in the Špak Agenda.

We appreciate Butt complementing the ritual with responsories, as they may endow the ceremony with greater spiritual depth when presented in a dignified manner.

However, the agenda as such leaves an indifferent impression and lacks personal urgency of the previously mentioned agendas.

Our research leads us to conclude that the approach towards funeral and related rituals in the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church underwent significant development and it imitated quite faithfully its the course of its theological evolution.

In this aspect, the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church was substantially influenced by the Farský Agenda. The other agenda with great impact was the Drtina Agenda which dominated the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church for the longest time.

We may assert that both agendas were well-conceived and served well. Other particular agendas did not have significant influence on the church as such.

The question remains how the latest agenda will be accepted.

Although the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church originated from the sources of Catholic modernism, it became a distinctive church in a very short time. However, traditional funeral rituals soon started to be complemented with new accents resulting from the atmosphere of liberalism. This was specific for the first generation of the Czechoslovak Church. After the Copernical Revolution, the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church tries to divert from liberalism, returning to more traditional thinking. The question of whether it was influenced by other denominations remains unproved.

When comparing the agendas, the Roman-Catholic basis was confirmed, which is a fact that had been publicly known before. The influence of other denominations was not proved, since even the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren was founded

and its funeral rituals established after the Czechoslovak Church's practices were established. Also the Orthodox crisis did not affect this issue, as the Czechoslovak Church quickly split into two independent churches which then evolved independently. A short instance of Czechoslovak crisis within the Old Catholic church was local and did not leave any traces in this respect. The fact these two churches are close to each other is not due to mutual influence but due to the fact they both stemmed from the Roman-Catholic basis.

The most significant finding is that the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church has always adhered to the liturgical framework and ecclesiological understanding of the sacrament. Despite a certain similarity and getting nearer to Protestantism, the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church never adopted the Protestant approach in this respect.

The dynamics of the development of its own agendas absolutely exceeded the dynamics of other denominations and laid foundations to the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church's tradition of funeral agenda creation. The question of understanding death and afterlife was also dynamic and influenced by the theological evolution of the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church. However, its mainstream never diverted significantly from the traditional framework. Some formulations, especially from the beginnings of the Czechoslovak Church, which might seem confusing, were due to the effort to find the right way of expressing Christian annunciation in a way that would be relevant to its period. In this respect their language reflects the period and its faith in scientific advancement and democracy.

Since the Czechoslovak (Hussite) Church did not have in Czechoslovakia or anywhere else in the world a similar denomination, its evolution was completely independent.