
Táborite Apocalyptic Violence and its Intellectual Inspirations (1410–1415)¹

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Research on the origins of Táborite violence is certainly not a new field within Hussite historiography, even if the topic has not attracted much attention in recent decades. Among those contributing factors explored by historians, we find intellectual influences from pre-Hussite heterodox thinkers and communities, socio-economic transformations on local and regional levels, and socio-political developments within Bohemia and in Church relations. Less emphasised, however, are intellectual continuities from within the Hussite reform movement which could have helped form the opinions of the Táborite priests on violence. This is understandable since, by the time of Tábor's eruption into purgative violence in 1420, the erudite early Hussite leaders had significantly been depopulated by martyrdom, exile, or betrayal, and those that remained either played marginal roles in the pre-Táborite period, or voiced their opposition to the violence. Nevertheless, I will argue that the purgative violence of the early Táborites can be explained neither as a clear break from prior intellectual developments, nor by reference to a continuity of other traditions of heterodox thought. Rather, I will suggest that the proponents of apocalyptic violence at Tábor drew from within the "Hussite" tradition, engaging and recasting the discourses and concepts of its leading intellectuals. I will argue that these already went a long way toward empirically dichotomising human society along the axis of good and evil and insisting upon conditions and expectations for the Christian community which were later developed within the Táborite context to inform and legitimise violent action.

A full overview of the Táborite movement is beyond the scope of this paper, and thus only the most cursory summary is possible here.² Suffice it to say that by the time of the first Táborite congregations in 1419, the reform movement

1 Support for this study was provided by the Josef Dobrovský Fellowship from the Czech Academy of Sciences.

2 Most recently, see František Šmahel, *Dějiny Tábora*, 2 vv. (České Budějovice, 1990); Pavlína Cermanová, "Husitský radikalismus [Hussite Radicalism]" in *Husitské století*, ed. idem., Robert Novotný and Pavel Soukup (Prague, 2014) 84–107. In English see Thomas A. Fudge, "Neither mine nor thine": Communist experiments in Hussite Bohemia," *Canadian Journal of History* 23 (1998) 25–47 for an overview, though the most in-depth treatment in English is probably still provided by HHR, 310 ff.

which had begun at Prague University some years earlier had greatly expanded its social and geographical boundaries outside the urban and academic milieu. Thus, the king's decision in that year to ban the popular practice of *utraquism* resulted in mass-pilgrimages to the hilltops of the Bohemian countryside, where the practice continued, albeit now in an apocalyptically-charged context. With the king's death shortly thereafter, the escalation of anti-Hussite persecution, and the splintering of loyalties within the movement, the Tábórites shifted from pacifism³ to violence, eventually seeing themselves as God's agents of purification to prepare the earth for the descent of his perfect kingdom. These points will be discussed in greater detail below.

As mentioned above, the roots of Tábórite violence have already been sought from several different sources. Some have emphasised unique local social or economic conditions which contributed to the radicalisation of certain subaltern groups, such as localised plagues⁴ and the material conditions of the urban and rural poor.⁵ More commonly, though, the roots of such violence have been sought from the pre- and extra-Hussite contexts. Marxist historiography particularly emphasised rather the radicalisation "from below" and employed the term "popular heresy" (*lidové kacířství*), usually designating a general animosity between popular and official Christianity, the former made up of a vague mixture of extant (or supposed) pre-Hussite heresies such as the Waldensians, the Free Spirit movement, Joachimites, and others.⁶ Such syncretic theories of heterodox confluence, however, have been challenged from various directions, and it must suffice here to summarise that the evidence for a coherent and popular extra-Hussite heterodox tradition able to communicate and inspire purgative ideas in the Tábórites is weak and questionable, and would still not sufficiently explain the phenomenon.⁷

3 There are several sources which speak specifically to the non-violence of the early Tábórites, including their own popular song which urged "do not resist evil." See Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Dějiny Husitského zpěvu* (Prague, 1956) VI:187. Also see Konstantin Höfler (ed.), *Geschichtschreiber der husitischen Bewegung in Böhmen* (Vienna, 1856) I:528f, 532; translation in HHR, 286; SRB, III:29; translation in HHR, 286.

4 *Husitská revoluce*, II:114 f., 292 f.

5 Josef Macek, *Tábor v husitském revolučním hnutí* [Tábor in the Hussite Revolutionary Movement] (Prague, 1952) I:180–4.

6 For instance, see S. Harrison Thomson, "Pre-Hussite Heresy in Bohemia," *The English Historical Review* 48/189 (1933), 23–42; Robert Kalivoda, *Husitské myšlení* [Hussite Thought] (Prague, 1997) 158–178; HRR, 170–9; idem., "Hussite Radicalism and the origins of Tábor," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 10 (1956) 112–16 *infra*; Petr Čornej, *Velké Dějiny země koruny české* [The Great History of the Lands of the Czech Crown] (Prague, 2000) V: 197. Cf. Alexander Patschovsky, "Der Tábóritische Chiliasmus, Seine Idee, sein Bild bei den Zeitgenossen und die Interpretation der Geschichtswissenschaft," in *Häresie und vorzeitige Reformation im Spätmittelalter*, ed. František Šmahel and Elisabeth Müller-Luckner (Munich, 1998) 179–80.

7 Pavel Soukup, *Reformní kazatelství a Jakoubek ze Stříbra* [Reformed Preaching and Jakoubek of Stříbro] (Prague, 2011) 51 f., 61–7; František M. Bartoš, "Vznik Tábórství a Valdenství [The Beginnings of Tábóritism and Waldensianism]," *Jihočeský sborník historický* 3 (1930) 38–48;

Instead, the pre-Táborite decade is most important in historiography, on the one hand for its socio-political developments—including the reformers' struggle against church and king, and their expansion into a mass, cross-class movement—and on the other for its religio-intellectual innovation and decentralisation.⁸ These socio-political configurations and intellectual innovations have been well-researched in their relation to later political and religious debates and continuities in Tábor, such as eschatology and the eucharist,⁹ but less-so in connection to the Táborite transition to purgative violence.¹⁰ The debates on realism and Wyclif, for instance, have been denigrated to minor importance in this period,¹¹ and some prominent historians have argued that an intellectual legitimisation of violence cannot be found in any of the key figures of early Hussitism, including Jan Hus himself or his close colleague, Jakoubek of Stříbro.¹²

On the contrary, I will argue that the early ideas and ongoing debates on issues like ecclesiology, realism, and spiritual reform were not merely innocuous formal matters of high theology, but fundamentally informed the political goals and expectations of Hussites in relation to non-Hussites. For instance, they defined true faith as intrinsically political, requiring not only passive belief but also active expression in various ways. This emphasis on personal political engagement and agency, I argue, goes a long way toward explaining the roots of the later revolutionary transition of Táborite apocalypticism from passive escapism to purgative violence, which itself is a critical innovation in the transition from late-medieval to early modern thought. Practically speaking, these concepts created clear criteria for identifying the protagonists and antagonists of salvation history, and they made these categories mutually exclusive in both the spiritual and political sense. Moreover, they asserted that God's will was knowable to man, that this will could be

Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, 1972) 119–24.

- 8 Petr Čornej, „Radikalizace raného husitství (1408–1414) [The Radicalisation of Early Hussitism],“ in *Tabule staré a nové barvy Mikuláše z Drážďan ve staročeském překladu*, ed. Milada Homolková and Michal Dragoun (Prague, 2016) 11–31.
- 9 For instance, the vast historiography on Jakoubek of Stříbro's possible influence on Tábor as recently summarised by Jindřich Marek, *Jakoubek ze Stříbra a počátky utrakvistického kazatelství v českých zemích* [Jakoubek of Stříbro and the Beginnings of Utraquist Preaching in the Czech Lands] (Prague, 2011) 44–48.
- 10 Some notable exceptions exist, for instance those who saw a connection between Jakoubek and Táborite violence: Josef Pekař (see Marek, *Jakoubek*, 45 n. 95), Paul De Vooght (see Marek, *Jakoubek*, 45 n. 99), and Howard Kaminsky more broadly (HRR, 48, 77, 85 f.). Yet even these do not address the relation systematically but haphazardly.
- 11 František Šmahel, “‘Doctor evangelicus super omnes evangelistas’: Wyclif's Fortune in Hussite Bohemia,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 43 (1970) 16–34; Vilém Herold, “Platonic Ideas and ‘Hussite’ Philosophy,” *BRRP* 1, 17.
- 12 Amadeo Molnár, “Mezi revolucí a válkou [Between Revolution and War],” *Křesťanská revue* 2 (1967) 20 f.; Paul De Vooght, *Jacobellus de Stříbro († 1429) premier théologien du hussitisme* (Louvain, 1972) 244–251.

established already in historical time, and most crucially, that this establishment required human agency to be fulfilled. To understand the significance of these debates, some discussion of their background will be necessary.

To claim that the Tábórites were informed by the views of reformist authors like Hus or Jakoubek, however, is not to say that the latter necessarily “intended” their statements to stimulate outright popular violence. Instead, I would suggest that, given their inconsistency and ambiguity relating to matters such as the legitimacy and means of popular agency, and the multiplicity of ‘contextual layers’ – each specialised in itself but woven together to form a complex continuity¹³ – which their discourse consisted of, it cannot be taken for granted that the resulting text’s illocutionary meaning was understood or accepted as such, and thus that its perlocutionary effect would be the author’s.¹⁴ It is clear, for instance, that the Tábórites claimed inspiration from Jakoubek of Sřtřbro for a number of innovations (including warfare) which he would later oppose or disassociate himself from.¹⁵ The roots of Tábórite violence must therefore be sought as much in the seemingly innocent debates on Augustinian ecclesiology, Platonic realism, and spiritual reform as in socio-political radicalisation.

The Identification of eschatological communities

The most basic conceptual inheritance of the Tábórites from earlier reform debates was the assertion that the true members of Christ’s Church—the body of the elect—were already identifiable based on their behaviour. This also allowed the identification of God’s enemies, and developed into the highly polarised world-view which informed the Tábórite strategies and goals discussed in the sections below. Yet the early Hussites were certainly not the first to suggest that one’s belonging in the eschatological communities of the elect or the damned could already be determined via reference to their objective behavior, nor were the Tábórites the first to draw violent conclusions from this observation;¹⁶ already against the Donatists, Augustine of Hippo (in his *De Civitate Dei* I, xxxv and *Exposition on the Psalms* LXI, iv) had worked

13 J. G. A. Pocock, “The concept of a language and the *métier d'historien*: some considerations on practice,” in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge, 1987) 30 f.

14 Isaac Ariail Reed, “Power: Relational, Discursive, and Performative Dimensions,” *Sociological Theory* 31/3 (2013) 203.

15 On material warfare, see Mikuláš z Pelhřimova, *Confessio Taboritarum*, ed. Amedeo Molnar and Romolo Cegna (Roma, 1983) 335. For other claims to continuity with Jakoubek’s early teachings, see HRR, 196 f. Jakoubek’s *Apologia* is in *Studie a texty*, II:161–164, with a Czech translation and discussion in František Bartoš, “Jakoubekův projev o Táborech [Jakoubek of Sřtřbro’s Speech about the Taborites],” *JSH* 9 (1936) 29–34.

16 This title apparently belongs to an enigmatic 4th century Donatist sect, the so-called Circumcellions.

hard to refute arguments of the identifiability of the elect in the *seculum*, and rather emphasised that the cities of God and of man – the mystical communities or bodies of Christ and the Antichrist – are mixed during their worldly pilgrimage, and that one’s actions today are irrelevant to one’s eschatological status, which could be known by God alone. The depth of human ignorance regarding God’s plan was emphasised throughout the middle ages, proving a strong deterrent to human speculation on the transcendent, but not an impenetrable one.

Eventually, however, intellectuals transgressed and collapsed the distinction between one’s behaviour and one’s eternal status. The most influential figure on Hussite ecclesiology, John Wyclif, himself accepted the hidden nature of election,¹⁷ but was more ambiguous on the identification of the damned (*praesciti*, foreknown): he argued that not only the pope, but the papal institution itself and the ecclesiastic structure supporting him were the “evident Antichrist”, which was not an individual person but “a monstrous composite one.”¹⁸ Jan Hus and Jakoubek of Strýbro went a step further, arguing not only that the mystical body of Christ was closely approximated manifestly by the primitive church of the apostles, but that the true members of Christ were still identifiable to some degree, even if the Antichrist had corrupted the visible church since the apostolic age. Hus was characteristically less systematic and theoretical than previous reformers on the issue of the Antichrist,¹⁹ and identified it not with an institution but with personal moral behaviour (though these became less distinct with the passage of events). As early as 1407, Hus preached “a true Antichrist” was one who rejected God in his actions but claimed to know God, and “there is not just one, but many of them.”²⁰ Perhaps the first real encounter of Hus and fellow reformers with the Antichrist was only in 1410 in their conflict with the Prague archbishop Zbyněk over Wyclif’s works, and thereafter the term was applied to clerical opponents and Zbyněk in particular.²¹ Only during his exile from Prague in 1413 did Hus unconditionally identify “the pope and his prophets, masters, doctors, [and] priests, who under the false pretext of sanctity conceal the abomination of the beast,” as the tail of the Behemoth.²² Nor did Hus’ predestination preclude the impact of moral behaviour on salvation, but rather he

17 Takashi Shogimen, “Wyclif’s Ecclesiology and Political Thought,” in *A Companion to John Wyclif, Late Medieval Theologian*, ed. Ian Christopher Levy (Leiden, 2011) 224.

18 John Wyclif, *Opus evangelicum*, ed. Johann Loserth (London, 1896) III:107, cited in Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist, Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York, 1994) 182.

19 Recently discussed by Lucie Mazalová, *Eschatologie v díle Jana Husa* [Eschatology in the Works of Jan Hus] (Brno, 2015) 317.

20 Jan Hus, *Synodal Sermon on Eph. 6*, in SSL, I:162, translated in Ivana Dolejšová, “Eschatological Elements in Hus’s Understanding of Orthopraxis,” BRRP 4, 129.

21 Mazalová, *Eschatologie*, 205 ff.

22 Matthew Spinka, *The Letters of John Hus* (Manchester, 1972) 88 f.

remained convinced of the relationship between the two, perhaps a result of his emphasis on the practical over the theoretical.²³

It was only in 1412, however, that the topic of the Antichrist received a more systematic treatment from Jakoubek, who approached the issue more methodically than Hus.²⁴ Relying heavily on the fourteenth century Czech reformer Mathias of Janov, Jakoubek explicitly materialised Augustinian ecclesiology (and the eschatological communities therein) with his works *Posicio de Antichristo*²⁵ and *Tractatus Responsivus*, systematically arguing that the pope is the greatest and last Antichrist of the last age of the world, and that all his adherents are the mystical body of the Antichrist made manifest:

“it appears that these kind of clerics and hypocrites [who are against the order of Christ] are not successors of the apostles, but that the pope is the head, and the college of cardinals—with the other adherents in wickedness against Christ—are the body of Antichrist, although they falsely pretend to be the successors of the apostles with great simulation under the greatest pretended appearance of piety”²⁶

Though the idea of a collective Antichrist was not absent from the works of Hus, who had admitted that the Pope could theoretically be the Antichrist, he instead named Zbyněk the highest Antichrist and emphasised the latter's collective character very little.²⁷ For Jakoubek, however, all observable reality seemed to deviate increasingly from Christ's truth: false absolutions from sin were called effective, the devil was called God, and any member of the Antichrist could be called a Christian simply because of their “bare, external participation [in the] sacraments”, rather than via the “invisible anointment of the spirit” and a “life of faith and love and hope, poured from on high.”²⁸ At least one contemporary sermon – *Apocalypsa XIo* – by an unknown priest²⁹

23 Mazalová, *Eschatologie*, 222 f., 311 f., 315 f.

24 *Ibid.*, 257 f.

25 It is partially-published by Vlastimil Kybal, “M. Matěj z Janova a M. Jakoubek ze Stříbra: Srovnávací kapitola o Antikristu [Matěj of Janov and Jakoubek of Stříbro: A Comparison of their Chapter on the Antichrist],” *Český časopis historický* 11 (1905) 22–38. A full version, based on a different manuscript, appears in Jitka Sedláčková, “Jakoubek ze Stříbra a jeho kvestie o Antikristu [Jakoubek of Stříbro and his *quaestio* on the Antichrist],” (PhD. diss., Brno Masaryk University, 2001) 27–64.

26 Jan Hus, *Tractatus Responsivus*, ed. S. Harrison Thomson (Prague, 1927) 59 (translation mine). Its attribution to Hus is an error of the editor.

27 Mazalová, *Eschatologie*, 206 f., 259.

28 Hus, *Tractatus*, 24.

29 Most authors doubt or reject the possibility that it was authored by Jakoubek, and no attempt I know of has been made to date it. See Andrea Krúpová, “Příspěvek k dějinám husitství: Jakoubka ze Stříbra kázání *Venit Helias* [A Contribution to the History of Husitism: Jakoubek of Stříbro the sermon on *Venit Helias*],” *Acta Facultatis Philosophicae Universitatis Ostraviensis – Historica* 13 (2006) 190; Spunar, I:224 (no. 601).

demonstrates the proliferation of the collective Antichrist concept, which defined the “sect of the Antichrist” as a body “from the highest head until the feet, that is from the Pope to the smallest lay satrap.”³⁰

This collective manifestation of the Antichrist, whether institutional or not, placed a high value on individual behaviour; just as the Antichrist’s members were made manifest by their acts rather than appearance, so also faithful Christians needed to demonstrate their faith by action to be considered followers of Christ. To some extent, an emphasis was placed on the priesthood in this regard, as the teachers and models for the faithful. In 1409, for instance, Jakoubek emphasised the role of every priest to escape worldly concerns to achieve the “spirit of freedom” and become holy by means of the Holy Spirit: “The Holy Spirit only inhabits holy minds, desiring and teaching us to be saints.”³¹ Similarly, Hus wrote in his *Sermo de Pace* of 1413 that priests who live according to Christ and teach the same “placate the subjects, and thus the people, God, and themselves,” while those who forsake their flock cause schisms, wars, and murders.³²

Apart from the clergy, however, both Hus and Jakoubek – and the latter perhaps more so – increasingly emphasised the responsibility of the individual faithful to demonstrate their faith by action. Hus acknowledged this,³³ but he continued to see priests as the primary means to divine peace given their ability to “placate the people”, and hence focused his ire on priests who refused to preach, calling them “Antichrists and a Satan, ... robbers, stealers, killers of sheep and betrayers.”³⁴ Instead, Jakoubek often redirected this responsibility, and the blame for failure, upon all Christians; the important influence of Mathias of Janov may partially explain this “individualism,”³⁵ but such emphases can already be found in Wyclif as well, whose ideal was to make each laymen a theologian capable of discerning orthodoxy by their scriptural knowledge, and thus bound to correct and resist an unjust ruler or pope.³⁶ In his *Ad bellum* of 1413/14, Jakoubek emphasised the individual and personal struggle against sin which every Christian had to undertake to be properly considered such:

30 Krúpová, “Příspevek”, 193.

31 Studie a texty, I:410–13, quote at 412. Ernst Werner, *Der Kirchenbegriff bei Jan Hus, Jakoubek von Mies, Jan Želivský und den Linken Taboriten* (Berlin, 1967) 34 f. does not note the clerical audience of the sermon.

32 Johannes Hus, *Sermo de pace*, in MIHOO, XXIV:6/100–105, 28/73–29/78.

33 For examples in Hus, see Jan Hus, *Provázek třípramenný*, in MIHOO, IV:147, where he emphasises to the laity that “holy life, preserved in man by living faith and hope and love, [is] the rope which every person on this earth should hold if they do not wish to perish forever”; also Spinka, *Letters*, 93.

34 Hus, *Sermo de pace*, 73–5, translated in Dolejšová, “Eschatological Elements”, 131, n.38.

35 Vlastimil Kybal, *M. Jan Hus, Život a učení* [Life and Teaching] (Prague, 1931) II/1:135; Miloslav Ransdorf, *Kapitoly z geneze husitské ideologie* [Chapters on the Genesis of Hussite Ideology] (Prague, 1983) 87 f. *Ibid.*, 116 n. 42, rightly challenges Kybal’s exaggeration of the differences between Jakoubek and Hus in this regard.

36 Shogimen, “Wyclif’s Ecclesiology,” 236–9.

[the Lord] animates us—with his example, growths in benefits, and the punishment served to the useless servant—so that no one, anywhere or at any time, can excuse themselves with the inanimate from daily aiding and [acting] in the preceding example of the many saints. ... For he is guilty of the death of Christ, who empties the virtue of [Christ's] death in his own evil life. And that death of Christ does not work for the salvation of anyone—nor does the cross of the Saviour benefit anyone—who does not carry his cross.³⁷

This clearly illustrated that there was no middle-ground, no “moderate” or “inanimate” Christian, since such a characterisation was itself oxymoronic. There were only saints (or those who closely imitated them) and Antichrist, the murderer of Christ, a position already visible in his 1412 *Posicio de Antichristo* citing Mt 12:30: “He who is not with me, is against me.”³⁸

According to Hus and Jakoubek, therefore, one's eternal status could already be perceived in this world via one's actions, an assumption which transgressed the Augustinian limits of human knowledge. Already in his historic appeal to Christ in October 1413—following the aggravation of his excommunication—Hus committed himself to Christ, “the most just judge, who unfailingly knows, protects and judges, makes known (*manifestat*) and rewards the just cause of every man.”³⁹ In his *De Ecclesia*, he explained that the members of the Church, like those of the human body, have “vital forces” flowing into them from Christ, and “these forces become part of the very essence of the members ... and the *operation* of the members is voluntary and gracious and meritorious.”⁴⁰ Moreover, “if anyone is predestined to eternal life, it necessarily follows that he is predestined unto righteousness and, if he follows life eternal, he has also followed righteousness.”⁴¹ Righteous behaviour, therefore, is to be taken as a visible sign of predestination, as manifested vitality coming from Christ.

In 1414, a further step was taken. Until then, one's adherence to God's law and transcendental status depended upon subjective criteria—the degree to which one's behaviour was in harmony with God's law— but late in that year the criterion was objectified into the tangible, external practice of Utraquism, as initiated by Jakoubek and Nicholas of Dresden. According to the former, this criterion was explicitly Christ's, who did not say “He who believes in me,

37 Pavel Soukup, “Dobývání hradu Skály v roce 1413 a husitská teorie války, Ke spisku Jakoubka ze Stříbra O duchovním boji [The Campaign against Skála in 1413 and the Hussite Theory of War: On Jakoubek of Stříbro's writings On Spiritual Warfare],” *Mediaevalia Historica Bohemica* 9 (2003) 205–208 (translation mine).

38 Sedláčková, “Jakoubek ze Stříbra”, 28.

39 Novotný, 129–33, at 133. Translation and emphasis mine.

40 Jan Hus, *De Ecclesia – The Church*, trans. David S. Schaff (New York, 1915) 20 f. (emphasis mine).

41 *Ibid.*, 23.

or who hears me, or who is devoted to me, remains in me and I in him”, but said “He who eats my body and drinks my blood, remains in me and I in him” (John 6:57), emphasising the necessity of objectively-recognisable behaviour.⁴² Thus, the binary between practitioners and opponents of the lay chalice came to be increasingly synonymous with the binary between the elect and the damned, and thus visible. As Jakoubek wrote in 1415, “the Gospel truth of communion in both kinds, like other truths, divides the elect from the reprobate according to their different lives and wills.”⁴³ The chalice was the basic criterion for the difference between orthodoxy and heresy, and thus Jakoubek could flatly state that any priest who refused or impeded Utraquism “thus seduces the people and their souls from the way of truth, [and] therefore is a seducer and heretic.”⁴⁴ He even went further, explaining that those who denied the lay chalice or free preaching were collectively the person of the Antichrist, literally the “matter of the Antichrist” (*materiale Antichristi*).⁴⁵

The significance of this world-view for the later Tábórites bears emphasising. Their congregations and violence, planned and enacted within a drastically polarised and hyperbolised perceptual framework, fundamentally depended on this ability to objectively recognise the eschatological communities of the elect and the damned. The Tábórites’ confidence in their transcendental status, combined with imminent eschatological expectations, convinced them to establish perfect proleptic communities⁴⁶ in the “chosen cities”, anticipating the transformation after the plagues of the apocalypse. According to the priests of Tábó, obedience to prophecies and one’s physical location during this “time of vengeance” reflected his eternal status: “he who will desire to save his soul, namely among the wicked, will lose it, like Lot’s wife lost her life.”⁴⁷ Physical congregation and visibility was crucial, and the Tábórites already saw themselves as fulfilling the prophecy in Mt 24:31—that angels “will collect the elect from the four winds”⁴⁸—and thus the community which survived the final cataclysms in the mountains would be synonymous with that of the elect.⁴⁹

42 Jacobellus de Misa, *Quia heu in templis*, in Helena Krmíčková, “Jakoubkova kwestie *Quia heu in templis* a její vztah k Regulím” [Jakoubek’s quaestio *Quia heu in templis* and its relation to the Regulae], *Sborník Prací Filozofické Fakulty Brněnské Univerzity* 41 (1994) 17 f.

43 Hardt, III:512 f.

44 Jacobellus de Misa, *Utrum sacerdos*, in Dalibor Havel and Helena Krmíčková, *Paleografická čítanka literární texty* (Brno, 2014) 106 f. František M. Bartoš, *Literární činnost M. Jakoubka ze Stříbra* (Prague, 1925) 38–39 (no. 45) dates it to 1415 or more likely 1416. Spunar, I:217 (No. 569) supposes January 1416.

45 Hardt, III:516–9.

46 Matthias Riedl, “Living in the Future – Proleptic Existence in Religion, Politics and Art,” *International Political Anthropology* 3.2 (2010) 117–34.

47 František Palacký (ed.), *AČ* (Prague, 1872) VI:42 (translation mine).

48 *Ibid.*, and FRB, V:420 (translation mine).

49 Jan z Příbramě, *Život kněží tábořských* [The Life of the priests of Tabor], ed. Jaroslav Boubín (Příbram, 2000) 41.

The Tábórites' membership in one of the binary eschatological communities also depended on and informed their actions, including violence. Alluding to Christ's allegory of the wedding banquet (understood as heaven; Mt 12), one Tábórite author described the preparation necessary for this banquet as eating the body of Christ, which he further elaborated: "to eat Christ's body is livingly to believe in him, and *to drink his blood is to shed it with him* for his father ... In this way we shall all be Christ's body."⁵⁰ Thus the Tábórites saw themselves not only as the angels collecting the elect, but also as the "army sent from God through the whole world, to destroy all scandals from Christ's kingdom", though even this membership was conditional on obedient behavior, for "any of the faithful—even a priest, however spiritual a person—is *damned*, who holds back his physical sword from the blood of the enemies of the law of Christ."⁵¹ Though the content of such messages had transgressed the limits which the earlier reformers would accept as elect behaviour, the concept that objectively observable obedience and action were visible marks of one's transcendental status ("doing" is "being") was one which the Tábórites had inherited from earlier Hussite discourse.

Immanentising divine peace

A further conceptual innovation of the early Hussites which informed the world-view and actions of the Tábórites was the immanentisation of the supramundane realm, or the human attempt to implement the perfection of the divine sphere—together with its unity of heart and mind—onto the corrupt, divided, and violent world. As we will see, this heaven on earth not only forbade difference and apathy within itself, but also outside itself, since it represented not merely a competing cosmion of order and meaning among others, but of the cosmos itself.⁵² This meant that by defining itself as the ultimate fulfilment of Christian history, no strategy which aimed at its implementation (even violence) could be regarded as illegitimate by reference to hope for a higher *telos*. Despite its notable variations in the early Hussite and Tábórite contexts, the guiding ambition of this idea—perfecting the world—represented an intellectual continuity between them.

To emphasise the uniqueness of this concept, it may be helpful to reflect briefly on medieval political thought, which emphasised the distinction (and

50 Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End, Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1979) 268. Emphasis mine.

51 FRB, V:414 (emphasis mine).

52 Eric Voegelin, *History of Political Ideas*, ed. Athanasios Moulakis (Columbia, 1997) I: 225–7 cited in Matthias Riedl, "The Containment of Dionysos: Religion and Politics in the Bacchanalia Affair of 186 BCE," *International Political Anthropology* 5.2 (2012) 122, 128. For Voegelin, this substitution of the semantic cosmion for the cosmos characterises modern totalitarianism.

usually the hierarchy) between mundane and supramundane happiness and peace. To be sure, most theorists sided with Augustine (*De Civitate Dei*, XIX) in accepting the distinction between the perfect, eternal peace (*aeterna pax*, synonymous with *aeterna vita*) of the afterlife, and the imperfect “peace of the wretched” which exists among mortals. The former is an exclusively extra-mundane phenomenon, and thus human politics can only hope to effect and maximise the latter. This is achieved, Augustine explains, through harmony with “the natural order”, a Stoic concept which supplies a role for all members of society—even undesirables like prostitutes—in order to avoid even worse forms of moral transgression. Endurance of such lesser-evils was in harmony with eternal law,⁵³ and was developed by later medieval intellectuals, such as Gratian and Gregory IX, into the concept by which such evils would go unpunished for the preservation of peace within Christian society: toleration (*tolerantia*).⁵⁴ Later medieval thinkers continued along these lines (Thomas Aquinas),⁵⁵ emphasising the fundamental importance of worldly peace as a precondition for spiritual peace in the Church (Jean Gerson),⁵⁶ while others asserted it as a prerequisite for the actualisation of man’s intellectual potential (Dante Alighieri), or saw it as the singular greatest achievement in politics (Marsilius of Padua). What such an overview illustrates, however, are the mundane (inner-worldly) boundaries within which human political existence could aspire; man had to negotiate constantly between scriptural guidance and the weakness and sinfulness of the human condition, and could find perfect fulfilment only in heaven. Dante’s ambitious vision of humanity marching toward the end of a universal civil society (*finis universalis civilitatis humanis generis*) went the other direction, giving humanity hope for a secular *telos* in the form of collective Aristotelean intellectual happiness under the conditions of universal peace (*pax universalis*), but still operated within the traditional secular-divine binary distinction.⁵⁷

What we see developed by the early Hussite thinkers, then, is precisely the innovative collapse of this distinction by drawing the supra-mundane *telos* of Christianity squarely into the realm of human politics. The background of this development was the controversy surrounding the early reception of Wyclif’s works at Charles University. The metaphysical debates surrounding

53 Matthias Riedl, “Order,” in *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, ed. Michael T. Gibbons (Chichester, 2015) 2608 f.

54 István Bejczy, “Tolerantia: A Mediaeval Concept,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (1997) 365–384.

55 Thomas de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, p. IIa-IIae, q. 29, art. 2 (Editio Leonina, Romae 1895) VIII:237B: “Una quidem [pax] perfecta ... Alia vero est pax imperfecta, quae habetur in hoc mundo.”

56 Brian Patrick McGuire, *Jean Gerson and the Last Medieval Reformation* (University Park, PA, 2005) 194.

57 For Dante’s views see Matthias Riedl, “Dante and the Politics of Universal Mankind,” in *Abenteuer des Geistes-Dimensionen des Politischen*, ed. Petra Huse and Ingmar Dette (Baden-Baden, 2008) 75–84.

universals had several political and theological implications in the age of Papal Schism and Conciliarism, such as the mediation of divine authority and the normative role of scripture therein,⁵⁸ but also at issue here was the ambitious political vision of harmonising human existence (as imperfect and corrupt as it was) with that perfect world intended by God and expressed in scripture.⁵⁹ Realists in Prague, inspired by the concept of ideas developed by Wyclif and the philosophical school of Chartres, explained the pathetic state of the sensible world (*mundus sensibilis*) as due to its opposition to the archetypal world of ideas (*mundus archetypus*), which was perfect, eternal, and harmonious. Early Hussite thinkers, therefore, aimed to dissolve this opposition, using the concept archetypal world as a model for worldly reform and improvement or,⁶⁰ most radically among the Taborites, envisioning its complete and perfect implementation in human affairs.

The Platonic terminology identifying these opposing worlds was paralleled and increasingly overtaken by its Christianised, Augustinian counterpart in the various polemics and controversies which followed. In 1413, for instance, Jakoubek of Stříbro made the distinction between worldly corruption and divine perfection and unity in the context of the intense schism and polemics between Hussite and non-Hussite priests in Prague, using the terms mundane peace (*pax mundane*) and Christian peace (*pax vera Christiana*):

There is a certain mundane peace and concord of the gentiles, which consists of mundane prosperity and an abundant temporal calm ... [but] another thing is peace and concord itself, of Christians in Jesus Christ ... true Christian peace, consisting in the observance of the law of Christ.⁶¹

Both Hus and Jakoubek repeatedly emphasised this “Christian peace” and its opposition to mundane peace, for which they often cited Mt 10:34: “Do not think that I have come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword; for I have come to divide father from son and mother from daughter.” From such citations, and the approving tone which the reformist leaders used to describe the recent uproar caused by their preaching, it is

58 See Ivana Dolejšová, “Nominalist and Realist Approaches to the Problem of Authority: Pálec and Hus,” BRRP 2, 49–54.

59 This was already noticed by Vilém Herold, “Philosophische Grundlagen der Eschatologie im Hussitismus,” in *Ende und Vollendung, Eschatologische Perspektiven im Mittelalter*, ed. Jan A. Aersten and Martin Pickavé (Berlin, 2002) 735–44, though he does not note the relation to Jakoubek which I discuss below.

60 Vilém Herold, “Die Philosophie des Hussitismus, Zur Rolle der Ideenlehre Platons,” in *Verdängter Humanismus, Verzögerte Aufklärung, Philosophie in Österreich (1400–1650)*, ed. Michael Benedikt (Vienna, 1996) 111; Id., “Philosophische Grundlagen,” 743; Id., “Platonic Ideas,” 17.

61 *Documenta*, 493.

clear that such a “Christian peace” was not (unlike mundane peace) observable via interpersonal calm and tranquility, but precisely in the commitment of a community to enforce God’s law (*lex Dei* and its eternal patterns in the *mundus archetypus*), which would not necessarily translate into political tranquility but could take the form of political tumult. Yet Hussite thinkers did not perceive themselves as rebels, but rather as unveiling the “hidden” revolution the Antichrist had been leading ever since he seduced Christians away from the primitive church—the foremost representation of God’s will immanentised in post-lapsarian human history—toward the present world of corruption.⁶² In 1417, Jakoubek explained to a follower that if words failed to convince, the use of force by magistrates may be necessary to eradicate this corruption “so that the Lord God and Christ may be their Lord and they be his people, and that he may dwell with them forever, giving them his peace.”⁶³

This discourse essentially accomplished a reversal in the defining criteria of peace, and therefore also its opposite; true Christian peace was characterised by the harmony between the mundane and the supramundane, between man and God’s will as expressed in scripture. The implication was that true disorder and violence was also thusly characterised, not as intra-mundane but as disobedience to scripture. As we have seen, this reversal allowed Hussites to portray themselves as defenders of peace rather than rebels, and in a similar way it later allowed Taborites to portray themselves as cleansers of God’s kingdom: the Taborites translated the *pax Christiana* into terms of a proleptic narrative of the near future, namely the immanentisation of God’s kingdom (*regnum Dei/Christi*) in this world⁶⁴ following the destruction of the wicked and the end of the age. This represented an important innovation from most apocalyptic⁶⁵ movements and thinkers, who placed the transition into God’s kingdom outside history.⁶⁶ The Taborites achieved this by diverging from the traditional interpretation of *saeculum* as the world,

62 For instance, Jakoubek of Stříbro in 1414: “To observe this law of the gospel for the salvation of the elect and the pleasure of God, this does not in itself upset charity, but appeases and spreads it ... But I think that the imitated peace of riches, delights and glories of the world and the mundane covenant, is occasionally disturbed by this. ... The Savior said the peace of evils are to be broken: “I did not come to announce peace but the sword.” Hardt, III:512 f.; for Hus from 1412, see Jan Hus, *Výklad na vieru*, in MIHOO, 1:281: “I have not come to send peace, but the sword; for I have come to divide father from son and mother from daughter.’ And this is now happening, that in Prague father stands against son and daughter against father and mother.” See also his *Sermo de pace*, 28.

63 *De quibusdam punctis*, translation in HRR, 188.

64 Příbram, *Život*, 95: “Christ will step down from the sky bodily in his person, which every eye shall see, to receive the kingdom here on earth.”

65 On the terminological distinction, see Matthias Riedl, “Eschatology,” in *New Dictionary of the history of ideas* 2, ed. Maryanne Cline Horowitz (Detroit, 2005) 708–10.

66 See Robert E. Lerner, “Refreshment of the Saints, The time after Antichrist as a station for Earthly progress in Medieval thought,” *Traditio* 32 (1976) 97–144; R. A. Markus, *Saeculum, History and Society in the theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970).

and redefining it as an age; thus, the “consummation of the *seculum*” simply was a historic, inner-worldly event, and not the destruction of the world (*mundus*) and the end of history.⁶⁷ Just as the image of *pax Christiana*, this kingdom would represent a perfect implementation of the *mundus archetypus*, characterised by a state of peace, achieved not by human truces with the wicked, but by an undisturbed single-mindedness in the Lord’s will: the Lord will give them “one heart and one soul” (cf. Jer 32:39),⁶⁸ and “they will see eye to eye” (cf. Is 52:8).⁶⁹ All human structures and hierarchies, secular and ecclesiastical, which were established in the worldly peace, will be superfluous and will wither away in this kingdom, where the only remaining distinction of any import will be one’s transcendental status among the elect or the damned.⁷⁰

By pulling the *telos* of Christian history into the world, the Taborites redefined the criteria for peace and violence, since the existence of an alternative cosmion of meaning and fulfilment represented in itself an affront to, and even negation of, the totalistic claims of Christ’s kingdom. Just as with *pax Christi*, the concept of *regnum Dei* was one of *universal* purity: even a truly holy community would be corrupted by its toleration of wickedness anywhere outside itself. This would explain the eruption of purgative violence immediately following Christ’s supposed “secret” arrival in mid-February 1420; as the Taborites explained, Christ’s presence ended the time of grace which had lasted since his first coming, and initiated the time of vengeance (*tempus ultionis*), representing the transformation of the old cosmion into the new and thus ending the toleration of sin and coexistence with the sinful. This required a purgative army to “destroy all scandals from Christ’s kingdom, and to expel the wicked from the midst of the just.”⁷¹

Human agency

As we have seen, the coexistence of Christian peace with a disharmonious cosmion was impossible, but what could be done if all attempts to convert

67 This was already implicit in presumably-earlier Taborite literature, which called on the faithful to flee from the wicked to “save their soul from God’s anger and escape punishment”, thus presumably surviving the apocalyptic cataclysms. See Thomas A. Fudge, *The Crusade against Heretics in Bohemia, 1418–1437* (Aldershot, 2002) 32. More explicitly, one Taborite author went to great pains to cite scripture which speaks of a plurality of ages (*secula*), thus distinguishing it from the world (*mundus*). See FRB 5, 418.

68 František M. Bartoš, “Do čtyř pražských artikulů,” *Sborník příspěvků k dějinám hlavního města Prahy* 5/2 (1932) 589.

69 FRB, V:421.

70 FRB, V:422 “The elect will have peace with God, because he will not be angry with them anymore.”; Bartoš, “Do čtyř pražských artikulů,” 589: “If, however, there will be original or actual sin in any little one or adult, he will not be of and [belong] to this kingdom, in which there will be peace.” See also FRB, V:415, 422.

71 FRB, V:414.

sinner failed? We have seen that the Taborites eventually decided upon the use of popular violence to purge sin, but the novelty of this choice by an apocalyptic movement should not allow us to take it for granted. We will see that the direct, personal access to divine authority already claimed and urged by earlier Hussite thinkers weakened not only the legitimacy of the clerical monopoly on the understanding of the divine will, but also the royal monopoly on the establishment of that will on earth. Apart from removing restrictions on popular action, however, these thinkers also encouraged popular action by denouncing apathy, claiming the necessity of human-divine cooperation for change, and citing violent scriptural examples as legitimate models for all Christians. These observations will help us understand Taborite popular, purgative violence as a radicalised continuity of earlier concepts, rather than an aberration.

Once again, appreciation of the significance of Taborite apocalyptically-informed purgative violence will require a brief foray from Bohemia, into the long history of western apocalyptic movements which, almost as a rule, were pacifist and escapist rather than activist. This has much to do with the previously-discussed Augustinian conception of salvation history, which maintained that post-lapsarian mankind was in a static punitive state, meaning there was no hope of improving man's inner-worldly condition. Instead, this should be passively endured, even if it meant suffering tyrants, and attempts at resistance were signs of pride—rebellion against God's providence—and should be opposed (*De Civitate Dei*, XIV, 13; *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, CXXIV, 7, and LXXXV, 24; *De Trinitate*, VIII, vii, 11). Medieval apocalyptic movements and thinkers thereafter largely accepted this determinism, and even those who contradicted Augustine by prophesying an era of inner-worldly bliss—such as Joachim of Fiore, the Franciscan Spirituals, and the Apostolic Brethren—accepted that the agents of change and destroyers of the wicked would be either divine (God and/or his angels) or secular authorities (the emperor), while the community itself could only flee or preach.⁷²

72 See Matthias Riedl, *Joachim von Fiore, Denker der vollendeten Menschheit* (Würzburg, 2004); Gian Luca Potestà, "Radical Apocalyptic Movements in the Late Middle Ages," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. John J. Collins (New York, 2000) II:110–42. The issue of human agency in apocalyptic movements is one of controversy in scholarship. Norman Cohn's deterministic view on the relationship between apocalyptic movements and violence in his *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New Jersey, 1957) has been heavily qualified by later authors, though some maintain a continuity throughout the medieval period of the option or possibility for apocalyptic movements to become violent. See Philippe Buc, *Holy War, Martyrdom, and Terror, Christianity, Violence, and the West, ca. 70 C.E. to the Iraq War* (Philadelphia, 2015) esp. 253–261; Charles B. Strozier and Katherine Boyd, "The psychology of Apocalypticism," in *The Apocalyptic Complex, Perspectives, Histories, Persistence*, ed. Nadia Al-Bagdadi, David Marno and Matthias Riedl (Budapest, forthcoming). The opposite view is held by Robert E. Lerner, "Medieval Millenarianism and Violence," *Pace e Guerra nel Basso Medioevo* (Spoleto, 2004) 37–52.

The Tábórites began as such an escapist apocalyptic movement, but then within a brief period seemed to transition into defensive/preservative, and then offensive/purgative violence. In the surviving sources, the Tábórites did not seem to reflect explicitly on these transitions, and the matter is too complex to delve deeply into here. Suffice it to say that by November 1419, in the context of growing persecutions by royalist Catholic forces on the one hand, and “betrayal” by the moderate Hussite (Utraquist) nobles and university masters on the other, the Tábórites seemed to abandon previous ecumenical attempts with moderate Hussites,⁷³ and their new goal was rather bodily survival into the new age, which involved both flight and armed defense, if necessary. For instance, an early Tábórite pamphlet which urged flight from the wicked and was otherwise wholly escapist, it also complained that “many commit themselves against Christ’s commands, considering that battle should not be waged with the physical sword against hate and vileness, delusion and heresy.”⁷⁴ One Tábórite priest also urged self-preservation to Tábórite pilgrims travelling to Prague: “Brothers! You know that the vine has blossomed, but the goats would like to carry it away. Thus, do not walk with staffs, but with arms.”⁷⁵ The importance of bodily survival into the new age (rather than martyrdom) seems to be connected to the materialisation of heaven on earth which the elect would inherit, relating to the earlier university debates discussed above.

Yet the agents of global destruction, even in the Tábórites’ defensive phase, were still understood as divine, and only later (presumably after Christ’s secret coming in mid-February, 1420) were the Tábórites themselves called upon to enact the apocalyptic destruction of the wicked, as we have seen. One hostile observer narrated this transition: “And when this did not happen [the destruction of the wicked] and God did not bring about what they [Tábórite priests] had preached, then they themselves knew how to bring it about, and again invented new and most evil cruelties ... that all sinners were to be killed ... with the sword.”⁷⁶ It is precisely this concept, of human agents assisting God in the apocalyptic narrative, which is so innovative of the Tábórites, and yet we already find some parallels to it in the pre-Tábórite period which weakened certain restraints and gave direction to the popular anxiety caused by cohabitation with sinners.

For instance, the role of man in instituting divine peace in this world was already accepted by many Hussites as a basic tenet of reform coming from Wyclif, though this was typically limited to the king and secular authorities whose duty it was to enforce God’s law.⁷⁷ Shortly before his death, for

73 HHR, 297.

74 AĀ, VI:41.

75 SRB, III:30.

76 McGinn, *Visions*, 266; Příbram, *Život*, 42.

77 Howard Kaminsky, “Wyclifism as Ideology of Revolution,” *Church History* 32/1 (1963), 57–74; *Husitská revoluce*, II:83.

instance, Hus predicted a “great persecution” of his followers and urged the secular lords to intervene physically.⁷⁸ In 1413, Jakoubek petitioned the king with his *Consilium de pacificando regno* to “insist on the restoration of that peace and concord [of Christ] by means of a suppression (*destruendo*) [of the sins] of the clergy.”⁷⁹ Many more examples could be found,⁸⁰ but suffice to say that the king and nobles were regularly appealed to as coercive agents of reform.

Yet agency to correct sin was already being somewhat “democratised” outside the traditional secular elites and clergy. This was an extension of the previously-discussed “objectivisation” of faith, by which the faith of all had to be manifestly observable in action in order to be considered legitimate. Christ called for the action of all his faithful, through whom he could conquer the wicked, since even a weak man “equipped with such faith and word of Christ ... shall surmount the powerful and wise of this world and legions of demons; although it shall be he himself [Christ] who conquers within us, it is more that he conquers through us (*per nos*), than he himself (*per se*) conquers.” Ideally, as Jakoubek explained, Christian peace could be achieved if each Christian performed an internal purgation of sin within himself by living according to God’s law, a semi-mystical exercise by which one invited a union of himself with Christ, a *hypostatic* union which mirrored the union of Christ’s humanity and divinity, and which perfectly harmonised the Platonic dualist modes (*duplex esse*) of God’s will, the eternal (Christ) and the created (the world):

Thusly, within every just and faithful Christian, by living according to the mandate ... he is united with God, the highest prince Jesus Christ, in such a degree that he becomes one spirit with him, one person according to Augustine, and thus because of the unity of Christ with Jesus through the being of grace with the spirit of man, or with his Church, they become communicators of properties (*communicaciones ydiomatum*), i.e. attributes of such mutual derivation, namely of designating and designated, thus that the suitable things attributed to one are said of the other, and vice-versa.

He goes on to explain, however, that even if the eternal will of God cannot be influenced by man, the perfect harmony of the two modes—the conformity of the created to the eternal— and thus the fulfilment of God’s will did depend on human agency. If a part of the Church was not purged of sin, and

78 *Documenta*, 126; *Husitská revoluce*, II:83; See also Hus’s exhortations to rulers in Pavlína Rychterová, “The Vernacular Theology of Jan Hus,” in HC 187 and 190.

79 *Documenta*, 493; trans. Jana Nechutová, “Sermones de Pace,” BRRP 10, 23 f. (alterations mine).

80 In English, see the overview by R. R. Betts, “Some Political Ideas of the Early Czech Reformers,” in *Essays in Czech History* (London, 1969) 63–85.

did not live in harmony with God's law, then the fulfilment of God's will was prevented:

Thus when the Church or the spirit of the faithful in any of his members is impeded in the execution of the mandate of the highest [prince], then the highest prince is impeded, according to the extrinsic reason of his mandate, which is united with the Church. ... Thus a lesser prince can impede the highest prince in the execution of his mandate, in himself or in others ...⁸¹

In other words, anyone who did not follow God's law did not merely threaten his own salvation, but impeded God's will and the divine peace (as explained above). As such, Jakoubek viewed the choice of every Christian to follow or ignore the law of God as a personal choice which had broader social repercussions. Each sinner presented to the faithful Christian an existential threat to salvation, an ultimatum in the most hyperbolic terms: battle or surrender, faith or hypocrisy, Christ or Antichrist. In this sense, though Jakoubek often emphasised that the battle of good and evil was spiritual, their engagement in the human world meant they were social and political: Christ would not conquer the wicked himself, but rather "through us."⁸² Already in 1410 he made this process, from internal (personal) to external (political) purgation of sin clear: "We shall deplore each and every such insult to God, [and] lamenting, we should fight and destroy the law of sin and of the Antichrist – opposed to the observance of the law of Christ – first in ourselves and then in others, until death."⁸³

The necessity of the human agent in the struggle against sin meant that Jakoubek repeatedly emphasised the political implications of faith, and conversely, the impossibility of apolitical faith or apathy. Ignorance, laxity, fear; none were excuses for the toleration of sin: "not only he who commits the act [of sin], but he who assents to it, approves of it."⁸⁴ Those who tolerated anything but perfection were "useless" and "effeminate", not Christians but hypocrites who "will be condemned as traitors of the truth more than Iscariot."⁸⁵

81 Studie a texty, II:338–341 (translations mine).

82 Jacobellus de Misa, *Defensio libri Decalogi Mgri Johannis Wiklef*, in Studie a texty, II:326.

83 Ibid., 325.

84 Hardt, III:514 f.; See also Soukup, „Dobývání“, 206 f.: " ... it does not pertain to a faithful Christian to [only] not do evil, but it behooves him to fully hate evil itself and to rage against sins from a perfection of zeal of charity, and to persecute the kingdom of the devil... [the Lord] animates us with his example, growths in benefits, and the punishment served to the useless servant, so that no one can excuse themselves with the inanimate because of place or time from daily aiding and [acting] in the preceding example of the many saints." (translations mine).

85 Jacobellus de Misa, *Defensio libri Decalogi Mgri Johannis Wiklef*, 318, 325, 326, 328.

This “democratisation” of agency also seemed to weaken the monopoly on legitimate coercion held by the secular authorities. Examples of this can be found already in the works of Wyclif, who made clear that God could use the common laity to force lords to comply with his will:

I say that God can command the people to do this [to correct delinquent lords], nor is the power of God so depleted but that it can move the people to do this; therefore, the Commons can do this.⁸⁶

In an address regarding the prevention of public sins, Jakoubek ambiguously switches register between physical and spiritual war, between royal and communal agency:

... all mortal sins... should be impeded through [divine] law *by any and in any* of the highest powers with guidance, threats and corrections if it is necessary and profitable for the more obstinate. ... every Christian community should be holy and *should eradicate all evil from itself*, just as it adorns the saints to rouse themselves to nourish and defend [those things] in observance of the orders of God, and *to destroy the contrary and impeding evils themselves*.⁸⁷

Similarly, the democratisation of access to divine will seemed to inadvertently undermine the traditional constraints on violence based on just war doctrine. While discussing just war, Jakoubek noted (contradicting Aquinas) that its second condition—confirmation from secular authorities—merely mediated divine assent, where the final authority in determining the legitimacy of violence lay.⁸⁸ Yet this was contradicted by Hussite confidence in their immediate knowledge of God’s will, which Jakoubek himself reiterated in the same address, referring to David, Gideon, and Joshua: “Thus, because they [the warriors of the Old Testament] were driven by the Holy Spirit, that it may be revealed to them when and for how long they should fight, the same

86 John Wyclif, *Trialogus*, ed. Stephen Lahey (Cambridge, 2013) 298 f. The debate on Wyclif’s relationship to violence has recently been re-opened by Rory Cox, *John Wyclif on War and Peace* (Suffolk, 2014) and is too momentous to enter into here. Suffice to say that Cox’s identification of Wyclif as the “father of modern pacifism”, and the radical pacifist Petr Chelčický as his most faithful Hussite adherent (pp. 163 f.), directly challenge my characterization of Wyclif as a source of Hussite violence, though Wyclif’s explicit position on the legitimacy of coercion seems to undermine Cox. See Kaminsky, “Wyclifism,” esp. notes 45, 57, 71, 90.

87 Jacobellus de Misa, *Determinacio de prostibulo, de scortis*, in Havel and Krmíčková, *Paleografická čítanka*, 103 f. (emphasis and translation mine). *Spunar*, I:215–216 (No. 564) dates the text to between 1411 and 1415.

88 František M. Bartoš, “Studie o Žižkovi a jeho době, 5,” *ČNM* 99 (1925) 19 (translation mine): “The second [condition is] so that warriors have confirmation from a superior, and so that those superiors have confirmation from God, so that if those who are arranged [for battle] shall die, they shall ascend in spirit into heaven.”

should also be done now.”⁸⁹ Moreover, coercion could already be undertaken popularly based on this knowledge: the Praguers should imitate Moses in sedating the city’s evils, and needed to do so before legitimately entering into battle for God.⁹⁰ The authority to coerce, therefore, was not unambiguously monopolised by secular authorities.

Even more explicit and striking examples of the democratisation of coercion, however, came from Hus’ works in Czech, such as his *Exposition on the faith*, in which he tried to explicitly reach the “small, simple people.”⁹¹ In imitation of the Old Testament governor of Judah, Nehemiah, Hus urged all classes of laity to prevent sin with force:

princes, knights, noblemen *and citizens* (*měšťané*) should prevent their people from committing fornication and especially adultery. In case they do not abstain from that they should be beaten and whipped, but not executed.⁹²

The democratisation of force also extended to policing the clergy:

Now, king, prince, lord, knight, and *also commoners* (*i obcě*), you should learn from this holy prince [Nehemiah] and not suffer fornication and adultery from holy priests. You should not receive such priests, but the way this [prince] has chased away the fornicating priests can serve as your example ... you should learn to adjudicate the priests so that they respect their priesthood ...⁹³

Moreover, Hus’ exposition on the fifth commandment against killing gave a legitimate place not only to the traditional concept of “just war” by secular authorities, but also to what he calls “holy anger” which can be held by any Christian. Rather than “devilish anger” which came from greed, lust, and human offenses, holy anger was that “by which a person is angry at hate (*hněvá na zlost*), and thus at a wicked person for [their] hatred.”⁹⁴ He also calls this “anger in love” or “loving anger” (*hněv v lásce*) for an offense done to God, not to oneself. It is in this anger that force may be justly employed: “just like God, Moses and Phineas and other servants of God were properly angry (*hněvali*

89 Ibid., 20 (translation mine).

90 Ibid., 20 f. (translation mine): “When Moses was speaking with God on the mountain, the people sinned. When later he was obliged to fight with those people against the Babylonians, he first exterminated and punished the wicked amongst the people and killed many: thusly the Praguers (*Pragenses*) should first sedate the wicked in Prague and then avenge the cause of God.”

91 MIHOO, I:63.

92 Ibid., I:189, translation Rychterová, “Vernacular,” 188 (alterations and emphasis mine).

93 Ibid., I:190, translation Rychterová, “Vernacular,” 193 (alterations and emphasis mine).

94 Ibid., I:208.

sú se dobrě), also [anyone] should be angry at their enemy because of sin, but not for their own boasting or riches or revenge.⁹⁵ In this context, we may understand Hus' explanation that every act which is not in agreement with the will of God is a sin, and thus "no one should kill his neighbour *except* from love, [and] if it is revealed to him."⁹⁶

As a final defense against Taborite violence in late 1419 and early 1420, Jakoubek repeatedly used this point, namely that the divine revelation which militant priests claimed to legitimise violence was a rarity and not to be relied upon.⁹⁷ Yet the notion that revelation was an ongoing process used by God to guide his faithful was one which Czech reformers had already used for decades,⁹⁸ including the Hussite leaders themselves. During the heated conflict between Archbishop Zbyněk and Hus in 1410, Hus apparently acknowledged a recent prophecy of Jacob of Taramo – that "one will rise to persecute the gospel, epistles, and faith of Christ" – as having been fulfilled in Pope Alexander V.⁹⁹ In addition, Jakoubek himself claimed personal revelation as the source for his renewal of the lay chalice.¹⁰⁰ Such subjectivisation of revelatory authority was obviously a difficult door to close once opened, and its adoption by Taborite priests positive of their own legitimate cause thus proved impossible to thwart.

What we find, therefore, already in the pre-Taborite intellectuals is a weakening of traditional restraints on human action and speculation on divine will. Responsibility for spiritual reform did not lie with magistrates alone, but with every Christian, who was expected to internally and externally purge sin, since Christ himself relied on human cooperation in this endeavour. The form this should take was not unambiguous, though the continued existence of sin posed an existential threat to every Christian, impeding God's will and jeopardising their salvation. Crucially, the delegitimisation of human authorities (achieved by the long disputes against Papal superiority), the emphasis on direct communication or even unity with the divine, and even the valorisation of anger and violence against sinners, had the effective potential to remove positive restrictions on those—like the Taborites—who would claim direct access to God's will, unwillingness to tolerate sin, and authority to use the most drastic violence to ensure its elimination.

95 Ibid., I:220.

96 Ibid., 210 (emphasis mine).

97 For instance, his text *Noverint Universi*, in HHR, 528 (translation mine): "... those wars [of the Old Testament] were commonly waged from certain revelation, which now does not happen so commonly; it may be possible, but rarely."

98 See Pavlína Cermanova, *Čechy na konci věků* [Bohemian at the End of Time] (Prague, 2013).

99 *Documenta*, 405.

100 Hardt, III:566: "That which is generally called a revelation, the method of knowledge through the scrutiny of the law of the Lord [i.e. Holy Scripture], and from solid explanations and the authorities of the early saints, such as Augustine ..., in the very same sense I can admit that I have a revelation, because I have knowledge from the law and from genuine Scripture."

Conclusions

How could the Taborite radical innovation of popular, purgative violence be born from an academic Church reform movement stressing the exclusive legitimacy of *spiritual* struggle and *established* sources of coercion? The framing of this question has often led historians to answers suggesting influences from outside heterodox traditions combined with unique socio-economic conditions. I have argued instead that the question is framed misleadingly, and that the Taborite innovation inherited a great deal conceptually from earlier key reformist leaders who were not always consistent on matters like popular pacifism or agency. In their creation of a popular movement which spread geographically in the kingdom, these thinkers clearly simultaneously lost their monopoly on hermeneutic authority, and yet I have argued that certain core assumptions which were fundamental to informing the Taborites' purgative campaign—confidence in the identity of transcendent communities, knowledge of God's will, and the authority to cooperate in its manifestation—were not fundamentally new or fringe, but rather radical interpretations of those developed a decade earlier by Hussite intellectuals to define their positions on contemporary debates like those on ecclesiology, realism, and reform. In sidelining or overlooking these important continuities and instead emphasising the pacifism of early Hussite thinkers, we not only disregard the important complexity within "Hussite ideology", but we miss a valuable explanatory factor for Taborite purgative violence, as demonstrated by their self-perception, motivations, and goals.