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The First Reformation in Hussite Bohemia

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CHAPTER FOUR

Paint, poetry and pamphlets: the politics of reformation

On 31 March 1414 a Hussite layman from Poříčí in the New Town of Prague entered the Monastery Church of St James in the Old Town. In the middle of the sermon he approached the crucifix as if to worship but suddenly lunged forward smearing it with excrement.¹ This act of hooliganism profoundly shocked the pious worshippers. The query might be raised – what has this to do with Hussite religion? The priest captured in Hradec Králové carrying an umbilical cord in his bag, allegedly to stave off an unpleasant death, was also a Hussite.² While neither of these incidents have much in common with the spirit of St Jan Hus, both are consonant with the popular radical Hussite mentality. The propagation of Hussite ideas and the popular religion which subsequently arose must be considered the dynamic expression of the Hussite myth and heresy. That religion was subversive both at the intellectual and social levels. During a sermon preached by Jan Hus in the Bethlehem Chapel a man stuck his head out of a window and, addressing a large crowd congregated outside, roundly denounced the late Archbishop Zbyněk to such an extent that people were incited to frenzied rage against that erstwhile cleric who had formerly opposed Hus.³ Not all Hussite rhetoric was confined to inflammatory discourses made through windows. From the court-books of the lords of Rožmberk we learn that in 1423 two Hussite sympathizers, Dietle the cook and Jan of Prague, were involved in a plot to poison the great archenemy of the Hussite movement – ‘the lame devil’, Oldřich Rožmberk.⁴

¹ Hardt, vol. IV, cols 674–5.

² František Šmahel, ‘Silnější než víra: magie, pověry a kouzla husitského věku’ [Stronger than religious faith: magic and superstitions in the Hussite age], *Sborník vlastnědných prací z Podblanicka*, 30: 2 (1990), p. 43.

³ Hardt, vol. IV, cols 640–41.

⁴ František Mareš (ed.), *Popravčí kniha pánů z Rožmberka* [The executioners’s book of the lords of Rožmberk], in *Abhandlungen der königlichen böhmischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, vol. 9 (Prague, 1878), pp. 36–7. Jan Žižka and the Táborites engaged continuously in guerilla warfare against the wealthy Rožmberks in south Bohemia. The executioners’s book is a valuable source for these activities: burning houses of priests and cloisters, murder, destruction of Rožmberk property, secret collaboration of peasants with Žižka and the Táborites, theft and other general raids. In 1423 Borovec, Kopravdlo and Toman confessed that ‘Biskupec’ had incited them and the people of

The knife of ecclesiastical authority stabbed effectively against Jan Hus, Jerome of Prague and Nicholas of Dresden. Its blade encountered great resistance, however, in the attempt to root out popular Hussite heresy. The threat of permanence which the Hussites raised constantly had its foundation secured in the context of a widespread popular acceptance and implementation of the Hussite agenda. The longevity and enduring strength of the Hussite movement on its magnificent ride can be attributed in large measure to the thorough and successful dissemination of Hussite ideas across the broad expanse of Bohemian society. If the Hussite myth was the reality lived, then Hussite propaganda was the tale told.

It is the intention of this chapter to explore the contours of the relatively uncharted area of propaganda in Hussite history. While there have been good studies done on different forms of Hussite propaganda, there is nothing satisfactory in the English language on the subject as a whole.⁵ The drama of the Hussite phenomenon witnessed the emergence of a popular movement as well as elements of revolution and reformation. The convergence of paint, poetry and pamphlets, or the forms of visual, oral and literary propaganda both informed and reflected the ‘symbolic implications of everyday behaviour’.⁶ If by politics we understand the configuration of relationships and power within a specific context, directed toward a defined end, then politics and propaganda are inextricably linked. Power relations are integral to understanding both popular movements and popular religion. In the struggle for influence and persuasion the one with the best propaganda ultimately wields the most power and in the end prevails. Eventually the success of the radical Hussite movement depended upon its ability to transmit and translate intellectual heresy to the common people and to promote effectively the Hussite myth and heresy at the popular level. The authors and distributors of propaganda were as much in the thick of the battle as the knights and peasants who marched to the battle-

Boletice to burn Rožmberk property. After they committed the deed ‘they ate a goose in a beer cellar’. Ibid., p. 36. Paul ‘the little spider’ [*Pavel řečený Pavuček*] confessed that he and many others had often collaborated with Žižka. Ibid., p. 44. This source also gives some idea of the types of people involved in the Hussite movement in south Bohemia: village magistrates, grooms, potters, priests, servants, barbers, carpenters, town councilors, cobblers, blacksmiths, burghers and cooks.

⁵ The best treatments in western languages include Hermann Haupt, ‘Hussitische Propaganda in Deutschland’, *Historisches Taschenbuch*, 6 (1888), pp. 233–304 and Ferdinand Seibt, *Hussitica. Zur Struktur einer Revolution*, (Cologne and Graz, 1965), pp. 58–124. Haupt is dated and Seibt’s treatment could be broadened.

⁶ Gábor Klanczay, *The Uses of Supernatural Power: The Transformation of Popular Religion in Medieval and Early-modern Europe*, trans. Susan Singerman, ed. Karen Margolis, (Cambridge, 1990), p. 2.

fields. Of course, Hussite propaganda was derived both from the myth and heresy. It is also true to understand Hussite propaganda as contributing actively to the shape of the myth and heresy. In this beguiling paradox is the fusion of horizons which escalated local Bohemian dissent into the forefront of fifteenth-century European affairs and made the term 'Hussite' a name feared in central Europe as the scourge of heretical terror. It is a testimony to the success of Hussite propaganda that a hundred years after his death Jan Žižka could be made the subject of an oil painting with the inscription '*superbiae simulet avariciae clericorum severus ultor*' (the severe avenger of the insolence and avarice of clerics).⁷ With Žižka among the *dramatis personae* of the Hussite movement the rise and utilization of propaganda as a powerful weapon in the hands of the radicals was no whispering campaign.

To facilitate an examination of Hussite propaganda the subject-matter from the perspective of six categories shall be considered: popular songs, slogans and proverbial sayings, visual propaganda and dramaturgy. This category includes processions, demonstrations, mass gatherings and sermonizing. The famous Hussite manifestos and the genre of literary propaganda exemplified by the Budyšínský manuscript are the final two forms of propaganda to be examined. This latter category will be dealt with only in a limited way since among the six categories it had the least direct impact and influence at the popular level. At the outset it is entirely defensible to assert that these modes of propaganda came to function as distinct forms of power in the politics of reformation within the radical Hussite movement.

Functional literacy and Hussite ideas

Propaganda is a means to understanding how ideas were communicated and spread. Propaganda may be regarded as the 'deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist'.⁸ Hussite propaganda was not necessarily negative, misleading or untruthful. Despite the fact that Hussite propaganda set out to caricature deliberately its opponents and provoke a spirit of dependency in the camp of the enemy, the campaign primarily was concerned to spread Hussite ideas both to the faithful and also to those

⁷ Reproduced in *Sborník Žižkův 1424-1924* [Žižka Studies, 1424-1924], ed. Rudolf Urbánek, (Prague, 1924), plate 18.

⁸ Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, (Newbury Park and London, 1986), p. 16.

who might be persuaded to join the warriors of God in their quest to establish the law of God. In the pre-modern era the Hussite movement employed the full spectrum of communication media to broadcast its agenda.

In the later Middle Ages it is misleading to give too much credence to the assumption that the masses of the people read by means of the ear rather than the eye.⁹ Popular culture of the late medieval period was significantly visual.¹⁰ This can be evidenced in ecclesiastical art and the various forms of visual propaganda which arose in the fifteenth century and gained widespread proliferation in the development of the woodcut and broadsheet of the sixteenth century. Existing alongside visual modes of propaganda in the late medieval and early modern periods are modes of oral propaganda. Of course this form of propaganda is no longer accessible in an oral form but has become embodied in the literary records of the original form. These are apparent in recorded sermons, proverbial sayings, ballads, popular songs and recorded accounts of printed material read aloud. 'Authentic oral tradition, unaffected by any written text, is never easy to find.'¹¹ However, these written records must be treated in terms of their aim which was the preservation of an oral form of communication. Hence we can speak of oral propaganda even in the absence of the pure form. The popular songs, together with proverbial sayings and slogans, may be regarded as examples of oral propaganda in the Hussite milieu. Visual propaganda can be found in terms of the Bethlehem Chapel, the illustrations of the *Tabulae novi et veteris coloris*, and the traditions preserved in the Jena Codex and the similar text in Göttingen. Conventional literary propaganda can be located in the Hussite manifestos, the Budyšínský manuscript genre and the various types of learned tractates. Pervasive in these forms are the dominant ideas of the Hussite movement.

All of the forms of Hussite propaganda were directed toward a literate audience. The dissemination of Hussite ideology was no random affair. However, the literacy presupposed by the Hussites was not necessarily conventional literacy. The radical Hussites did not eschew education. Jan Hus emphasized education as had his predecessor, Tomáš of

⁹ Ruth Crosby, 'Oral delivery in the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 11 (January 1936), p. 88.

¹⁰ Robert W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1994), p. 3. See also Aron I. Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans János M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth, (Cambridge, 1988).

¹¹ Keith Thomas, 'The meaning of literacy in early modern England', in Gerd Baumann ed., *The Written Word Literacy in Transition*, (Oxford, 1986), p. 121.

Štítný.¹² Likewise the tradition of education at Tábor was highly regarded, as Aeneas Sylvius noted as late as 1451. 'Education is power and an instrument of power.' The Hussites understood this and in their propaganda campaign sought to bridge the social cleavage between the conventionally *litterati* and *illiterati*. By renegotiating the set lines of demarcation 'between possession and non-possession of different forms of power'¹³ the radical Hussites began a constitutional, radical change in Bohemian society.

František Šmahel has argued that a low state of culture in Bohemia among the peasants contributed to their lack of religious education.¹⁴ In the conventional sense that may be true. However, popular culture in the later Middle Ages was significantly visual and oral as opposed to literate in terms of reading and writing.¹⁵ If Šmahel intends the latter then he is absolutely correct. Apropos to the former, Šmahel's thesis cannot stand. Medieval Europe was a world of gestures, not the printed word.¹⁶ The world of Hussite propaganda at the popular level was also a world of gestures. But the gestures were forceful and powerful. In short, as the Hussite movement would ultimately demonstrate, the notion 'justification by print alone' was soundly subverted in Hussite Bohemia.

Attempts at determining literacy in the later Middle Ages have proven to be an exceedingly tentative task especially for the Kingdom of Bohemia. By comparison it has been noted that for Germany literacy was probably no higher than 5 per cent of the national population though that figure would certainly be higher in urban areas.¹⁷ Of course the

¹² For example Hus revolutionized the Czech language. In an attempt to simplify the language he introduced the system of diacritics. This reform of the language was adopted and became the basis for modern Czech. See his *Orthographia bohémica*, most recently published in a critical edition with an extended introduction. Johann Schröpfer, *Hussens Tractat 'Orthographia bohémica'*, (Slavistische studienbücher, vol. IV), (Wiesbaden, 1968). This edition has the Latin text and a German translation.

¹³ Jacques LeGoff, 'Is politics still the backbone of history?', trans. Barbara Bray, *Dædalus*, 100 (Winter 1971), p. 9.

¹⁴ Šmahel, 'Silnější než víra: magie, pověry a kouzla husitského věku', p. 31.

¹⁵ There is evidence to suggest the long held notion of monks as literate persons working prodigiously with manuscripts may not have been so pervasive as previously thought. See Mark Dilworth, 'Literacy of pre-Reformation monks', *Imes Review*, 24 (Spring 1973), pp. 71-2.

¹⁶ See for example, Jacques LeGoff, *La civilisation de l'occident médiéval*, (Paris, 1964), pp. 397-407. 'The pre-eminent literary genre of feudal society was the *chanson de geste* ...', in LeGoff, *Medieval Civilization 400-1500*, trans. Julia Barrow, (Oxford, 1988), p. 357.

¹⁷ Rolf Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre. Zur Sozialgeschichte der Lesens in Deutschland zwischen feudaler und industrieller Gesellschaft*, (Stuttgart, 1973), p. 32. cited in Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, p. 2. See also Eugeniusz Wiśniowski, 'The parochial school system in Poland towards the close of the Middle Ages', trans. Antoni Szymanowski, *APH*, 27 (1973), p. 30.

idea of literacy is a very slippery concept indeed. What does it mean?¹⁸ Is it the ability to read? or write? or both? In terms of writing does it entail the ability to write one's own name, a complete sentence, or an essay? Is it the ability to read two words on a sign, or a political or theological treatise? And what about understanding? Suppose a peasant picked up a pamphlet and recognized its language to be Latin and could identify one or two words. Certainly the peasant could not be expected with that meagre knowledge to have understanding nor would his perception pass as literacy at least according to modern standards. But what constitutes the criteria for determining literacy in late medieval Europe? R.A. Houston has suggested measuring literacy in terms of the number of schools, the production and sale of books, inventories of possessions provided by wills or other documents, as well as a number of direct measuring devices some more reliable and worthy than others.¹⁹ Perhaps the better question is not about literacy but rather about communication. Instead of posing the query: who can read or write? it may be more productive to examine the answer to the question: how was a message communicated in fifteenth-century Bohemia? In this way it is possible to escape the sticky dilemma of literacy. This opens up the possibility for achieving a sounder methodological approach to the interpretation of popular culture.²⁰ The idea of devotional literacy as proposed by Margaret Aston is much more relevant to the milieu of the later Middle Ages.²¹ In terms of oral propaganda the idea of functional literacy operates in the mode of reception and understanding an oral message. Written texts were preceded by verbal texts.²² The Hussite movement occurred prior to the fundamental change in the balance of power from the image to the word,²³ from the symbol of paint and

¹⁸ For a definition of literacy see R.A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe Culture and Education 1500-1800*, (London and New York, 1988), pp. 1-5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-29.

²⁰ R.W. Scribner, 'How many could read? Comments on Bernd Moeller's "Stadt und Buch"', in *Stadtbürgertum und Adel in der Reformation studien zur Sozialgeschichte der Reformation in England und Deutschland*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, (Stuttgart, 1979), pp. 44-5. Scribner underscores the necessity of examining oral forms of communication to achieve this balanced framework of interpretive methodology.

²¹ Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion*, (London, 1984), pp. 101-33. Also Virginia Reinburg, 'Prayer and the Book of Hours', in *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life*, ed. Roger S. Wieck, (New York, 1988), pp. 39-44, and 'Popular prayers in late medieval and Reformation France' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1985).

²² Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past*, (Baltimore and London, 1990), p. 2.

²³ Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art*, (Cambridge, 1989), p. 347.

sculpture to the text of page and print. Hussite propaganda, whether in the form of paintings, songs, slogans, manifestos or processions, aimed directly at communicating a message in the most appropriate functional manner. The manifesto sent to the University of Cambridge had a particular impact on the academic circle while the satirical anti-Roman procession in 1412 exercised a different sort of effect upon the common people of Prague who witnessed it. By contrast, one of the popular ribald Hussite songs sung to the political officials in Venice instead of the manifesto which was sent would have had as little significance and gained as minimal a hearing in the conventional sense as a Latin polemical tract read to peasants in south Bohemia. However, the outrage factor in the case of Venice should neither be overlooked nor considered inconsequential. Hypothetically, the manifesto could have been written off by the Venetians as mere academic quibbling while the song could have aroused emotions to the boiling point of action. In any case, the Hussites strategically plotted the convergence of their propaganda with the intended audience.

'Societies that lack writing [as a primary mode of expression] nonetheless record, remember, and transmit verbal texts whose grip on norms, values, and traditions is no less tenacious than that of writing.'²⁴ This principle can be demonstrated in Hussite Bohemia with ease. Whether or not they were espoused, Hussite values, norms, teachings and traditions can be located in virtually every corner of the Kingdom of Bohemia in the fifteenth century. Where manifestos were not sent, Hussite songs were sung. Where the songs were not heard, Hussite slogans resounded. Where the slogans were unknown, the 'warriors of God' marched behind Žižka and Prokop. Where the warriors of God were unseen, tales of their exploits were told from generation to generation. In terms of Hussite ideology, Bohemia could be said to be a functionally literate society. The message was told and retold, sung and re-sung, graphically portrayed and circulated. Systematic educating by the radical Taborite priests had the distinct result that many among the lower classes of Bohemian society were familiar with even the theoretical questions being debated in the ecclesiastical and academic circles of the land.²⁵ In an essentially non-literate society, conventionally so-called, ideas are communicated primarily through visual and oral modes. Hussite Bohemia was no exception. Thus, in terms of functional literacy it is safe to say that

²⁴ Stock, *Listening for the Text*, p. 10.

²⁵ Miloslav Polívka, 'Popular movement as an agent of the Hussite Revolution in late mediaeval Bohemia', in *History and Society*, eds Jaroslav Purš and Karel Herman, (Prague, 1985), p. 276.

literacy cannot be equated with textuality any more than oral tradition can be considered a form of illiteracy.²⁶

In the sixteenth century 'the printing press made it possible for a little mouse like Wittenberg to roar like a lion across the length and breadth of Europe'.²⁷ The Hussites had no such advantage. Even without the press, Prague and Tábor were also able to roar like lions, albeit at a lower pitch, across Europe via their propaganda which was indeed more than hushed whispers. The invention of the movable-type printing press which so greatly aided the German reformation of the sixteenth century arrived too late to be of any assistance to the radical Hussite reformation. The magnificent ride essentially had finished its course in the pre-Gutenberg generation. None the less, in the fifteenth-century Slavic world there were printing offices in Bohemia, Poland, Slovakia, Croatia and Montenegro.²⁸ The first Czech printing office was at Plzeň where, in 1468, the *Kronika Trojanská*, the first printed work in Bohemia, was produced. Thus, Bohemia was the third country in Europe, following Germany and Italy, to implement printing.²⁹ The early introduction of wood-block printing in Bohemia is evidenced by the fact that the oldest extant St Christopher woodcut dates from the 1430s and a note from Jan Štelcar Želetavský, a Lutheran pastor, asserts that a tractate written by Jan Hus was reproduced in 1459.³⁰ There were about a dozen printers active in Bohemia in the fifteenth century.³¹

Despite the fact that Bohemia represented a smaller geographical area than many other territories and nations in Europe, that its vernacular language was unlike anything in western Europe, and that the Hussite movement occurred well before the rise of the press, it is remarkable that Bohemia can point to a well-defined and highly successful array of propaganda modes. In the present context of popular religion, popular movements and propaganda it may be instructive to give due consideration to the important question about whether or not popular religion

²⁶ Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, (Princeton, 1983), pp. 7-12.

²⁷ Steven E. Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250-1550*, (New Haven and London, 1980), p. 199.

²⁸ Mladen Bošnjak, *A Study of Slavic Incunabula*, English version by Ferdinand Dobrowolsky, (Zagreb, 1968), p. 20. Bohemia was among the centres of early woodcut production. See Holm Bevers, 'An unknown Bohemia woodcut', *Print Quarterly*, 3 (December 1986), p. 345.

²⁹ Bošnjak, *A Study of Slavic Incunabula*, p. 27.

³⁰ František Horák, *Pět století českého knihtisku* [Five hundred years of Czech printing], trans. Frank Nebel, (Prague, 1968), p. 116.

³¹ Bošnjak, *A Study of Slavic Incunabula* pp. 30-38. See also Jaroslav Němec, 'Prokop of Waldfogel of Prague and 15th century printers of the Kingdom of Bohemia', in *The Czechoslovak Contribution to World Culture*, ed. Miloslav Rechcigl, Jr (The Hague and Paris, 1964), pp. 471-6.

can be caught in the act.³² There are two ways in which it may be accomplished: direct observation of surviving practices or the discovery of recorded evidence of those practices. In this context the former is doubtful. The present Czech 'Hussite' church is Hussite in name only and it is unlikely that radical Taborite religion is still being practised in the hills of south Bohemia. However, it is possible to examine the recorded remnants of songs, sayings, slogans, paintings, manifestos and various and sundry literary works from the radical Hussite constellation which retain traces of popular religion. If Hussite popular religion can be caught in the act it will be apprehended in the context of the movement's own propaganda. Of course, in this context we are left not with actual popular culture and religion, but rather with the active mediation of that culture and religion. Nevertheless, such mediation does tell us something important both about popular religion and culture. What follows is an examination of how Hussite ideas were transposed from the lecture halls of the university to the peasants of rural Bohemia and from the sacred houses of ecclesiastical discourse to the profane back-rooms of the Prague taverns.

Songs of slander, subversion and sedition

A recent book, provocatively titled *Music as Propaganda*, argues that '[f]olk music, popular music, is the direct expression of a people in every epoch and culture'.³³ To put it another way, in a significant sense popular songs express the *Zeitgeist* of a particular society. When a single Hussite sneers defiantly that the false eucharist made by a Roman priest is good only for wiping one's backside (since it is *ipso facto* not the true eucharist)³⁴ such an opinion can in no sense be regarded as a pervasive attitude. But when the same opinion is embodied in the lyrics of a ditty or song and sung by the masses, as for example in the popular song 'Antichrist is now marching ... already producing an arrogant clergy',³⁵ then it may reasonably be considered a direct popular expression. Indeed, the social function of music should be underscored. Sociologists and anthropologists have demonstrated that no society exists without music.³⁶ From time immemorial the ritual expression of popu-

³² Michel Vovelle, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, trans. Eamon O'Flaherty, (Cambridge, 1990), p. 91.

³³ Arnold Perris, *Music as Propaganda*, (Westport and London, 1985), p. 203.

³⁴ *Documenta*, pp. 636-8.

³⁵ Nejedlý, vol. III, pp. 442-3.

³⁶ Perris, *Music as Propaganda*, p. 3.

lar songs has provided a window into the collective consciousness of the historical particularity of peoples and societies.³⁷ In the context and milieu of Hussite Bohemia this is especially true. Popular songs emerged from the Bohemian vortex of social discontent and religious dissent as a medium of communication and expression of the collective Czech consciousness. Though the Czech historical context is rich in music and song the concern is not with Hussite hymnody. The songs analysed here are, for the most part, of a popular nature, ditties, ballads, or street-songs. What I have attempted to avoid are those songs which were probably sung mainly in services of divine worship. This requires subjective judgement. Some of these songs may well have been expressions of worship. It is also instructive to point out that the Czech language does not make a distinction between the *písnička* (little song or ditty) and the formal anthems, or between what might be considered hymns and folk-songs.³⁸ Lines of demarcation between songs and sayings is fairly arbitrary. Singing a ditty and chanting a proverbial saying has more in common as an oral mode of expression than not. It is for this reason I have chosen to deal with popular songs and proverbial sayings as a common form of oral propaganda, albeit in separate categories.

In the Hussite milieu of fifteenth-century Bohemia it is reasonable to regard popular songs as a means of communication as well as a main vehicle for mass propaganda. Even in sixteenth-century Germany the primary mode of communication remained oral.³⁹ Popular songs provide us with a means for understanding how ideas were spread especially in a volatile revolutionary context such as Hussite Bohemia. The Czech mobs in Prague and throughout Bohemia were not sufficiently literate in the conventional sense to write pamphlets, give speeches or compose treatises. But they could sing. Like the polemical theological treatises and startling broadsheets of the sixteenth century so likewise the rough cadences and shrill sounds of the popular songs in the fifteenth century provided a medium for ideas, communication, and propaganda.

Peter Burke has helpfully pointed out that singers in late medieval and early modern Europe fulfilled a very important function in society. Singing in the streets or in the market-places, these *Gassensänger* or *Marktsänger* drew attention to the message of the ballads they both

³⁷ See Christopher Ballantine, *Music and its Social Meanings*, (New York and London, 1984), pp. 1-29.

³⁸ Marie Elisabeth Ducreux, 'Reading unto death: books and readers in eighteenth-century Bohemia', in *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia J. Cochrane, (Cambridge, 1987), p. 219.

³⁹ Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*, p. 226. R.W. Scribner, 'Oral culture and the diffusion of Reformation ideas', *History of European Ideas*, 5: 3 (1984), p. 245.

sang and sold. The *Avisensänger* (news-singer) were those specializing in songs concerning current events.⁴⁰ In the specific Bohemian context the equivalent might be the *kramářská píseň* (hawker's song). While not wishing to deny the existence or function of these street singers in Bohemia during the age of the Hussites, it is more important to understand the popular songs of the time as arising out of the popular movement directly and functioning as a vehicle of communication. While music may be regarded as an expression of a societal ethos, the function of popular songs as propagandist may indicate a deeper level of active commitment to a cause, idea, or particular attitude. Not all music is propaganda,⁴¹ but the music that is propaganda is a powerful medium for the advancement and communication of ideas.

Early Hussite hymns were basically folk-songs⁴² and it was these popular songs which preserved the folk tradition of the Czechs.⁴³ The Hussite wars and the accompanying oral propaganda in terms of the popular songs in the fifteenth century gave a significant stimulus to vernacular Czech songs.⁴⁴ For example, the Hussite revolutionary songs *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci* (Ye warriors of God), *Povstaň, povstaň, veliké město Pražské* (Arise, arise, great city of Prague), and 'Children, let us meet together' are among the earliest examples of such types of songs in any European country.⁴⁵ The impact of the Hussite heritage of popular songs with their intensity and vigour left a profound influence upon Bohemia and neighbouring lands.⁴⁶ While radical Hussites and Tábórites considered most forms of art sinful, music was an exception. The impact and proliferation of popular songs historically helped shape Bohemia. Recent research in Czech archives uncovered more than 45 000 folk-songs and these dating from only the last century and a half⁴⁷ without consideration of the pre-modern era.

⁴⁰ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 1994), p. 95.

⁴¹ Perris, *Music as Propaganda*, p. 7.

⁴² Karel B. Jiráček, 'Music in Czechoslovakia', in *The Czechoslovak Contribution to World Culture*, p. 121.

⁴³ Boris Kremeniev, 'The influence of folklore on the modern Czech school of composition', in *Czechoslovakia Past and Present*, ed. Miloslav Rechcigl Jr (2 vols, The Hague and Paris, 1968), vol. II, p. 1321.

⁴⁴ Gerald Abraham, *Slavonic and Romantic Music*, (London, 1968), p. 13.

⁴⁵ Kremeniev, 'The influence of folklore', p. 1320.

⁴⁶ Jiráček, 'Music in Czechoslovakia', p. 121. Previously unknown Hussite songs continue to surface in archives. The Czech song 'Vizme všikmi vóbec křest'ané' [All of us Christians, without any distinction, let us see] was found in a Latin manuscript in Erfurt, Scientific Library MS O 37 fol. 14^v well after Nejedlý concluded his monumental study of Hussite songs. See Miloslav Šváb, 'Ein neu erkanntes Hussitenlied in einem Erfurter Kodex', *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, 20 (1975), pp. 391-401.

⁴⁷ Perris, *Music as Propaganda*, p. 43, n. 10.

From the outset Hussite oral propaganda drew upon the familiar signs of the times to both capture attention and thus secure an audience to make a propagandist statement. Through the medium of the song the message could take flight from the proverbial pages of the book to reach those conventionally illiterate.⁴⁸ The songs could not fail to exploit the German/Czech conflict. After the German exodus from Prague following the 'Decree of Kutná Hora' popular songs ridiculing the Germans and calling for Czech domination was like adding salt to an open wound. The Hussite song *Povstaň, povstaň, veliké město Pražské* (Arise, arise, great city of Prague) both draws upon an historical and a theological concept of the city of Jerusalem. Matěj of Janov had earlier written in his *Narracio de Milicio* that the Jerusalem experiment founded by Jan Milíč of Kroměříž was the beginning of a divine action through Christ to create from Prague, formerly a city of Babylon full of filth and shame, a city of light upon a hill - Jerusalem.⁴⁹ The Jerusalem experiment formerly encompassed only 29 houses in Prague now expanded to include all of Prague as the city of the Lord.⁵⁰ Not only had Prague been raised to a pinnacle of prominence the Germans must give way to the Czechs.

Arise, arise, great city of Prague

Arise, arise, great city of Prague,
all the empire faithfully toward the
Bohemian land and all knights and all
powers of the land, against that king of
Babylon who threatens the city of
Jerusalem, Prague, and all faithful people.

Do not be afraid of the Hungarian king
because his honour and virtue are very
low, he will be defeated by humble people.⁵¹

Throughout the full gamut of Hussite propaganda lies this Czech-German animosity. By drawing on the familiar theme of social grievance the Hussite propagandists created a galvanizing effect upon popular culture. Arbitrary lines were drawn and correlations imposed. The for-

⁴⁸ Ducreux, 'Reading unto death', p. 219.

⁴⁹ Matěj of Janov, *Regulae* vol. III, pp. 358-67 especially p. 362.

⁵⁰ František Šmahel, 'The idea of the "nation" in Hussite Bohemia', trans. R.F. Samsour, *Historica*, 17 (1969), p. 103.

⁵¹ *Jistebnický kancionál*, Prague, National Museum Library MS II C 7 pp. 92-3. It is printed in Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Dějiny husitského zpěvu*, (Prague, 1913), p. 909. The Czech-German animosity has long been studied, see most recently Alfred Thomas, 'Czech-German relations as reflected in old Czech literature', in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, eds Robert Bartlett and Agnus MacKay, (Oxford, 1989), pp. 199-215.

mula German equals Catholic and Catholic equals Antichrist soon found its way into the oral propaganda of the Hussite movement. By focusing attention on the anti-clerical mood the radical Hussites legitimated their own peculiar cause against the familiar complaint of the excesses of the Church.

During the first decade of the fifteenth century a popular song circulated wherein truth was portrayed as no longer having a place to dwell on earth:

Song About Truth

As I travelled around the whole world
Inquiring among young and old
I found no one willing to accept me
So I have taken up my bed in heaven
And have finally found my home ...
Hear, O God, our voices
And in eternity give us a place to dwell near you
That we may lie down and together
With the angels praise you.⁵²

The chiliast hymn *Slýchal-Li kto od počátka* (If anyone has heard from the first) combined the complaints of Czech subordination and ecclesiastical excesses.⁵³

The wretched are in anguish in
every land, especially the Czechs, on
account of the conceited priesthood.

The Hussites inveighed against the wealth of the Church which sets it in opposition to the divine law. Instead of authentic ministry, the conceited priesthood have become learned in the art of simony. This 'Judas clergy' who forbid the proclamation of the gospel through song and word are set in diametrical opposition to the Hussite clergy who by implication are the true priesthood of Christ. The practice of Utraquism, a commonplace in Hussitism, also appears in juxtaposition to the traditional practice:

You became masters with false learning
Have you studied so that you could get wealthy by flattery?
You dress in silk, laugh at the law of God and wallow in pleasure
The learning with which you deceive people is woeful blindness.

If you had studied in order to spread the truth
of the heavenly father
You would abandon pride
and care for nothing but God alone.

⁵² The second verse personified the Czech peasants despised by the world, but eager to receive truth. Nejedlý, vol. III, p. 438.

⁵³ Nejedlý, vol. VI, pp. 181-3.

But this one has studied how to buy a church
or get prebends;
That one attends to the craftiness that is called
Worldly wisdom, seeking benefices.

They all praise the pope
Because they look for simoniacal wealth with him
They oppose God
Although many of them confess that God's law
commands all to drink God's blood and eat his body
but this is not commanded by the pope.

They do not let the gospel be preached
read or sung to the simple people
They do not wish to talk about God
but only to run after wealth
O Judas clergy.⁵⁴

This song illustrates the combining of social sentiment and doctrine in a single propagandist thrust: the Roman paradigm is subverted, the Hussites are offered as an alternative, and the cause of the common people is held out in the Hussite premise. Following the deaths of Jan Hus and Jerome of Prague at Constance and the conciliar ruling against communion in both kinds, Hussite propaganda became filled with invectives against the council and popular songs ridiculed the conciliar fathers and condemned their sinfulness with regard to their treatment of Hus.

Concerning the Council of Constance

O you Council of Constance
Who call yourself holy,
How could you with such neglect
and great lack of mercy
destroy a holy man.

Has it been his guilt
To show many their sin
Moved to do so by God's grace
so they would do penance
without some cleverly contrived trick?

Your pride and fornication
Avarice and greed
He sought to remove
and to direct you on the way
to truthful dignity.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Nejedlý, vol. VI, pp. 181-3.

⁵⁵ Text in Jana Fojtíková, 'Hudební doklady Husova kultu z 15. a 16. století. Příspěvek ke studiu husitské tradice v době předbělorské' [Musical documents of Hussite culture from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A contribution to the study of the Hussite tradition in the age before the White Mountain], *Miscellanea Musicologica*, 29 (1981), pp. 100-101.

'Anticlerical satire, which may appear to be merely social comment, is often a special type of political satire'.⁵⁶ In this case popular opinion shapes the propagandist message. This is apparent because propaganda cannot create *ex nihilo*. It is confined to utilizing data which already exists, it does not create material in a vacuum.⁵⁷

The long daily sermons and the proliferation of popular songs characteristic among the radical Hussites may suggest the dominant form of communication. The incessant hammering away at the enemies of God as well as the Germans left no question in the popular mind that there was no essential difference between a German, an enemy of God, and an enemy of Bohemia. German dislike of the Hussite movement was equally widespread and as deeply rooted.⁵⁸ This gave rise to an anti-Czech, anti-Hussite wave of propaganda in the form of popular songs. In 1417 the Hussite Jan Čapek composed the song, *Ve Jméno Božie Počněme* (Let us begin in the name of the Lord).⁵⁹ This song was an effort to articulate Hussite doctrine in terms accessible to the popular movement. The doctrine of the Church was outlined in terms of the community of the predestined which was for all intents and purposes a repetition of Hus's teaching in *De ecclesia*. This treatise was read aloud to a group of people in the Bethlehem Chapel in the spring of 1413. The doctrinal outline in the song is radical in its denial of saints and images and represents a sectarian strain. The spread of Hussite doctrine reached epidemic proportions in Bohemia and the onslaught of anti-Hussite propaganda aimed directly at ridiculing and undermining the Hussite agenda.

Hear oh Czechs!
Mark it well, all faithful Czechs,
they speak evil of you throughout
all of Christendom ...⁶⁰

When this attempt to influence popular opinion on the basis of mass consensual agreement from abroad failed, the anti-Hussites suggested snidely that the Hussite agenda was based on ignorance.

A song about Rokycana and his sectarians

⁵⁶ Matthew Hodgart, *Satire*, (London, 1969), p. 39.

⁵⁷ Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Minds*, trans. Konrad Kellen and Jean Lerner, (New York, 1965), p. 36. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Otakar Odložilík, 'George of Poděbrady and Bohemia to the pacification of Silesia - 1459', *University of Colorado Studies*, 1 Series B (February 1941), p. 267.

⁵⁹ Nejedlý, vol. VI, pp. 190-93.

⁶⁰ Karel J. Erben (ed.), *Výbor z literatury české* [A selection of Czech literature], *Od počátku XV. až do konce XVI. Století* [From the beginning of the fifteenth until the end of the sixteenth century] (Prague, 1868), vol. II, cols 245-8.

They sing Czech at Mass,
perhaps they don't know Latin ...⁶¹

In this song the anti-Hussite propaganda bemoaned the grievous harm that the Roman Church was suffering on account of those 'rascal Husses and Heretics'.

You Czechs of the true faith,
grieve for the injustice
which is happening now to
the holy Roman Church.⁶²

When this plea for pity fell on deaf Hussite ears, the songs thereafter began to manifest a degenerate quality of ridicule and abuse. The next logical step was to associate the Hussites with the devil and with heresy of generations past.

On the capture of Sigismund Korybutovič

The evil one made Engliš a present for
us, who goes around Prague softly,
giving out a law from England
which is not good for Bohemia.⁶³

Here Engliš is the Oxford Wyclifite Peter Payne who was called Master Engliš in Bohemia. Apart from Sir John Oldcastle, Payne was likely the most famous disciple of Wyclif in the fifteenth century. After his escape from England in 1414, Payne spent the remainder of his life until 1456 in Bohemia becoming a major spokesperson for the radical Hussite cause.⁶⁴ Held in high esteem by a number of Hussite leaders he functioned in important Hussite diplomatic affairs. According to this popular song Payne (Engliš) was a gift from the devil. His stealthy movements about Prague suggest deceit and the unhealthy law is the Lollard code of Wyclif. As the archheretic of the later Middle Ages and condemned by the Church, Wyclifism made Hussitism that much more suspect as noted earlier particularly in terms of Charles University and Jan Hus.

The anti-Hussite songs were no worse than their Hussite counterparts in terms of ridicule, satire, blasphemy, and obscenity. Yet it must be

⁶¹ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské* [A selection of Czech literature from the Hussite age], eds Bohuslav Havránek, Josef Hrabák and Jiří Daňhelka, (2 vols, Prague, 1963-64), vol. II, pp. 85-91, at p. 89.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁶³ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, vol. 1, pp. 327-31. Songs ridiculing the Czechs as 'Hussites' and 'Wyclifites' were widely used. See for example *Carmen contra Hussitas*, Prague Castle Archive MS C 20 fol. 76^r and *Píseň proti Viklefitům a Husitům* [A song against the Wyclifites and the Hussites], Prague Castle Archive MS N 6 fol. 48^v.

⁶⁴ The fullest study of Payne in English is William R. Cook, 'Peter Payne: Theologian and diplomat of the Hussite Revolution' (unpublished PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1971).

admitted that the propaganda of the anti-Hussites knew no bounds in agitating the popular imagination. To accomplish this the anti-Hussite propaganda framed its message in the familiar format of the liturgy. The best example is the so-called *Wiklefitskou mši* (Wyclifite Mass):⁶⁵

The creed

I believe in Wyclif, the lord of hell and patron of Bohemia, and in Hus, his only begotten son, our nothing, who was conceived by the spirit of Lucifer, born of his mother, and made incarnate and equal to Wyclif according to the evil will ... ruling at the time of the desolation of the University of Prague at the time when Bohemia apostatized from the faith. Who for us heretics descended into hell and will not rise again from the dead nor have everlasting life. Amen.

The most oft-repeated part was the *Liber generacionis* which attempted to account for all the evil sons of heresy by tracing them back genealogically to Wyclif, the son of the devil.⁶⁶

The book of the generations

The book of the generations of all the accursed sons of the heretic: Wyclif, the son of the devil ... Stanislav of Znojmo begat Jan Hus, Hus begat Marek of Hradec, Marek begat Zdeněk of Labouň, Zdeněk begat Šimon of Tišnov, Šimon begat Peter of Koněprusy ... Knín begat Jerome, the athlete of Antichrist, Jerome begat Jan of Jesenice before the migration of the three nations and after the migration Jesenice begat Zdislav the Leper ...

This linking of Hus and Hussitism to Wyclif and the subsequent Lollard movement was sufficient to reimpose the verdict of heresy. Wyclif had been condemned. Any recurrent trace of Wyclifism in Bohemia was likewise worthy of condemnation. Hus had been consigned to the flames as grievously heretical and his followers were also considered equally troublesome and incorrigible in their continuing 'cloud of errors'. For the enemies of Hussitism it seemed that Wyclif would not remain dead. Despite having been disinterred from Lutterworth in 1428, his remains burnt and dumped into the river, it seemed the River Swift flowed straight into Bohemia. The late heresiarch persistently appeared throughout Bohemia spewing his heresy far and wide.

⁶⁵ *Missa Wiklefistarum*, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS 4941 fols 262^r-263^v. Published in Paul Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, (Stuttgart, 1963), pp. 217-23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Another version also exists. See Václav Novotný and Vlastimil Kybal, *M. Jan Hus. Život a učení* [Master Jan Hus. Life and teachings], *Život a dílo* [Life and work], (2 vols, Prague, 1919-21), vol. I, pp. 112-13.

Sanctus

Sing mourning, mourning, mourning,
Wyclif *Scarioth*; heaven and earth
are full of your heresy ...⁶⁷

This ecclesiastical parody replaced the 'Lord God Almighty' with Wyclif, associate of the Devil, at the centre of the liturgy.

Perhaps the ultimate weapon in the hands of the Hussite opponents was the genre of oral propaganda represented by the popular song *Viklefice* (The Lollard lady). This witty and satirical *tour de force*, if not damaging to the Hussites must have stung them badly. Bearing in mind that Jan Hus had been supremely committed to a moral reform and that even at Constance among the conciliar fathers his character had been unimpeachable, it is no illusion to suppose that the radical Hussites in particular prided themselves on morality and did not tolerate breaches of conduct at all but punished severely the offenders as is evident in Žižka's massacre of the Adamites in 1421 on 'purely moral grounds'. This popular propagandist song personified the Wyclifite-Hussite cause as a woman of ill-repute who sets about to share carnally her filthy knowledge with a young man. The Scriptures and the study of them are associated with lechery and the Hussites must have been incensed to find themselves allied with such an objectionable notion when their true intention had been an imitation of St Jan Hus.

The Lollard lady

It happened once upon a time,
Perhaps on such a holiday,
A Lollard lady called
A young lad to her side
To teach him the true faith.

'Please come to me for Jesus' sake,
But come to me in silence.
I would instruct you in the faith,
And if you wish to look
I will reveal the Holy Book'.

The lad responded to her call,
And looking on her lovingly,
He said, 'I would be glad to learn
All that I must to earn
The right to join your company'.

The lady said, 'Now look at me,
My lad, come visit me
When all is still

⁶⁷ Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, pp. 222-3.

And no one is about; I will
Reveal the Holy Book'.

And so the lad without delay
Set out to follow and obey
Her words. On Sunday, after four,
He found the time to slip away
And came in silence to her door.

Eagerly the lady said,
'I welcome you, beloved guest,
You whom I have so long desired
And whom my soul has so admired,
Enter my home and rest!'

'Come sit with me a little while,
I would reveal the Word to you.
Although I have little to show
As far as books and Bibles go,
You will find things to do'.

And here our Lollard lady bared
Two chapters of her Book for him,
They were so round and fair,
– Each a delicious pear –
So very pure and white.

The lad approached her without fear,
And said, 'Give them to me, my dear.
The Bible should always be laid
Open, the chapters on display
From evening until morning'.

When morning came at last
Our lad was set to go away;
The lady held him fast
And said, 'Why don't you stay
Until we celebrate the mass?'

They raised a *Te Deum* with glee
As fits a Lollard company

.....
.....
And joined the treble clef.

When they had finished morning mass
They parted with one last embrace
In God's own love and grace.
It certainly was no disgrace,
I can attest to that!

And so, you handsome lads,
And all you fair young pages
Who wish to learn these ways,
Consult a Lollard lady
And mark well what she says.

How well she knows the rule,
The Book of Kings, the Song of Songs,
As well as David's Psalms.
She knows more than a minister,
And gladly might you wait on her.

O, her displays are ripe,
Full, round, and without flaw,
Whoever samples them has cause
To praise them joyfully.
God grant her rich fecundity!⁶⁸

Anti-ecclesiastical satire, couched in terms of lewdness and depravity are widely evident in the Hussite milieu. In the fourteenth-century play *Mastičkář* (The Quack) Rubín, the ointment seller's assistant, says to the merchant:

And this ointment was made by a monk
in a privy, a monk sitting on a nun.
Any one of you who tries it will get a
hard on like half a beggar's staff.⁶⁹

There is no reason to assume that the Hussites did not employ similar verses to castigate the clergy and associate them with lechery.

Among churchmen of official religion there was plenty of anti-clericalism in the fifteenth century. One notable example was the south Tirolean Oswald von Wolkenstein (c. 1376–1445) who for many years worked as a diplomat, translator and political representative for Sigismund. Oswald attended the Council of Constance writing many songs describing the events at Constance. His songs contain the oft-repeated themes of clerical immorality. He referred to a bishop as a comic figure and the phrase in his songs 'to act like a bishop' means to have sexual intercourse with a whore. His songs characterized clerics as fornicators and monks, nuns, priests and bishops have reserved places in hell. In another popular song Oswald counselled his friends not to stay out late at night lest their wives became prey for roaming monks and priests.⁷⁰

The attempt to determine whether the rise of certain popular songs was an aggressive attack or a defensive reaction is difficult to ascertain

⁶⁸ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, vol. I, pp. 281–3. The translation is by R.G. Vroon and A. Levitsky and published in *Anthology of Czech Literature*, compiled by Alfred French, (Ann Arbor, 1973), pp. 75–9.

⁶⁹ This passage is from the Prague fragment of the *Mastičkář*. I follow the text and translation in this and other references as given in Jarmila F. Veltruský, *A Sacred Farce from Medieval Bohemia*, (Ann Arbor, 1985), p. 343.

⁷⁰ See Albrecht Classen, 'Anticlericalism in Late Medieval German Verse', in *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, eds Heiko A. Oberman and Peter A. Dykema (Leiden and New York, 1993), pp. 94–9 with references to primary sources.

precisely. In all likelihood both elements were present in the rise and spread of Hussite propaganda. From the beginning Hussite songs decried the death of Hus and then later sang the praises of this 'holy saint'. In the song *Píseň o Husovi a o přijímání pod obojí* (A song about Hus and about communion in both kinds) the message of evil injustice was raised: Hus and Jerome suffered because they dared to defy the sin of the priests.⁷¹ The *Píseň O M. Janovi Husovi* (Song about Master Jan Hus)⁷² asserted that Hus was burned in Constance on account of the truth of God by a vicious *roty biskupské* (gang of bishops). This same 'gang of priests, monks and canons' declared false witness against Hus, but Hus, who was righteous before God, was received into heaven together with all the faithful. This song verbalizes the apotheosis of St Jan Hus so graphically illustrated in the Litoměřice graduale (see Plate 3.4, p. 134). This popular version of the *passio* of Hus can be found in liturgical texts nearly as frequently as it appears in the genre of popular songs.⁷³ The essential message about Hus in Hussite propaganda is well summarized in this verse:⁷⁴

And you, dear Hus ...
Czechs must love you
because they have no other
preacher so honest.

Jan Hus as a theme in popular songs became widespread during the first reformation.⁷⁵ In addition to this Hus motif the Hussites capitalized upon the common opinion of anti-clericalism and German conflict to summon the whole nation to enlist as warriors in the army of God to wage warfare against the infidels and the wicked. To accomplish this task the Hussites employed their ideology in a military context. They utilized Bernard of Clairvaux's song *Surge, miles, Christi, surge* in a literal sense.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Jiří Daňhelka, *Husitské písně* [Hussite songs], (Prague, 1952), p. 140.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 142. See especially lines 1–19.

⁷³ See for example, the Feast of St Jan Hus in the *Rackovský Kancionale*, Prague, National and University Library MS VI C 20^a fols 88^r–93^v where the martyrology of Hus, both in Latin and Czech, appears on fols 97^v–98^r, or the *Ioannis Hus ceterorumque martirorum* in Estergom, Metropolitan Library MS I 313, pp. 501–11. This latter text was discovered and published by David R. Holeton as 'The Office of Jan Hus: an unrecorded antiphony in the metropolitan library of Estergom', in *Time and Community* (Festschrift for Thomas J. Tally), ed. J. Neil Alexander, (Washington, 1990), see pp. 143–9. Holeton is currently preparing a catalogue of extant Hussite liturgical texts and thus we may look forward to perhaps even further instances of this motif in the Hussite literature of the fifteenth century.

⁷⁴ Daňhelka, *Husitské písně*, p. 143.

⁷⁵ The Czech and Latin texts have been collected in Fojtíková, 'Hudební doklady Husova kultu z 15. a 16. století', pp. 51–142.

⁷⁶ Nejedlý, vol. IV, p. 318.

Surge, miles Christi, surge,
excutere de pulvere,
revertere ad prelium,
unde fugisti fortius,
post pugnam praeliatorum,
gloriosius triumphaturus.

The soldiers of Christ must arise for the battle draws near and the warriors must go forth.

Hear, knights of God

Hear, knights of God
get yourselves ready for combat ...⁷⁷

The Hussites did not merely wish to build up a mass army. They were unprepared to sacrifice religious and social ideals to achieve a military victory. The Hussite soldiers must have a pure faith and be in community with those who practise the cult of the chalice. Hussite armies were not mercenary forces which by implication assumed that the crusading armies were.

Nowadays the question runs like this

And the knights who wish to be
prepared for this fight,
must have a pure faith
confirmed by virtue. For they
must well contemplate who
receive the blood of God often,
so that they may be worthy to
shed their blood for Christ.⁷⁸

If popular opinion *vis-à-vis* the Germans and Catholics shaped the content of some of the Hussite propagandist songs, it would also be instructive to note the elements of Hussite doctrine which likewise shaped the popular songs allowing them to function as a 'propaganda of irritation'. 'Propaganda of irritation' consists of five elements:⁷⁹ visible, widespread, commands attention, functions as subversion, and possesses a stamp of opposition. Hussite songs of agitation and war fulfil these criteria.

A song about Archbishop Zbyněk

Hear, knights of God,
prepare for battle ...

⁷⁷ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, vol. I, pp. 320–22.

⁷⁸ František Svejkský, *Veršované skladby doby husitské* [Verse compositions in the Hussite age], (Prague, 1963), pp. 94–5.

⁷⁹ Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Minds*, p. 71.

Antichrist is now marching
with his burning furnace, already
producing an arrogant clergy ...
whom he commands urgently to
ridicule the apostles.

Zbyněk, why did you resist so much,
to speak harshly against priests and
thus to suppress the truth of Christ
toward which you were angry in your heart?

In the past the hare ...
did not want to be concerned
with obeying the orders of the lion.

God, let the lion rise up,
tear to pieces the anger of the clergy,
and promote the law of Christ.
Let Hus instruct you how.⁸⁰

The battle is launched against Antichrist personified in the arrogant clergy following not Christ but an inferior authority. The Hussites railed against the Archbishop of Prague, Zbyněk, whom they castigated as an enemy of the truth of Christ. Punning on Zbyněk's surname, Zajíc, which means 'hare', they ridiculed the rabbit for defying the mighty lion, ostensibly Václav IV. The song calls upon the lion to destroy the foolishness of the unholy clerics in the example of Hus – 'let Hus instruct you how'. The most famous of all Hussite songs was their battle song which functioned primarily as a marching tune as they went into combat. Because of the ideology contained therein it deserves to be cited in full:

Ye warriors of God

Ye warriors of God
And of His Law,
Pray for God's help,
And believe in Him,
So that with Him you will
ever be victorious!

Christ will make good all your losses,
He promises you a hundred times more;
Whoever gives his life for Him,
Shall gain life eternal;
Blessed is everyone who dies
for the truth.

Our Lord bids us not to fear
The destroyers of the body,
He bids us even lay down our lives,
For love of our neighbours.

⁸⁰ Nejedlý, vol. III, pp. 442-3.

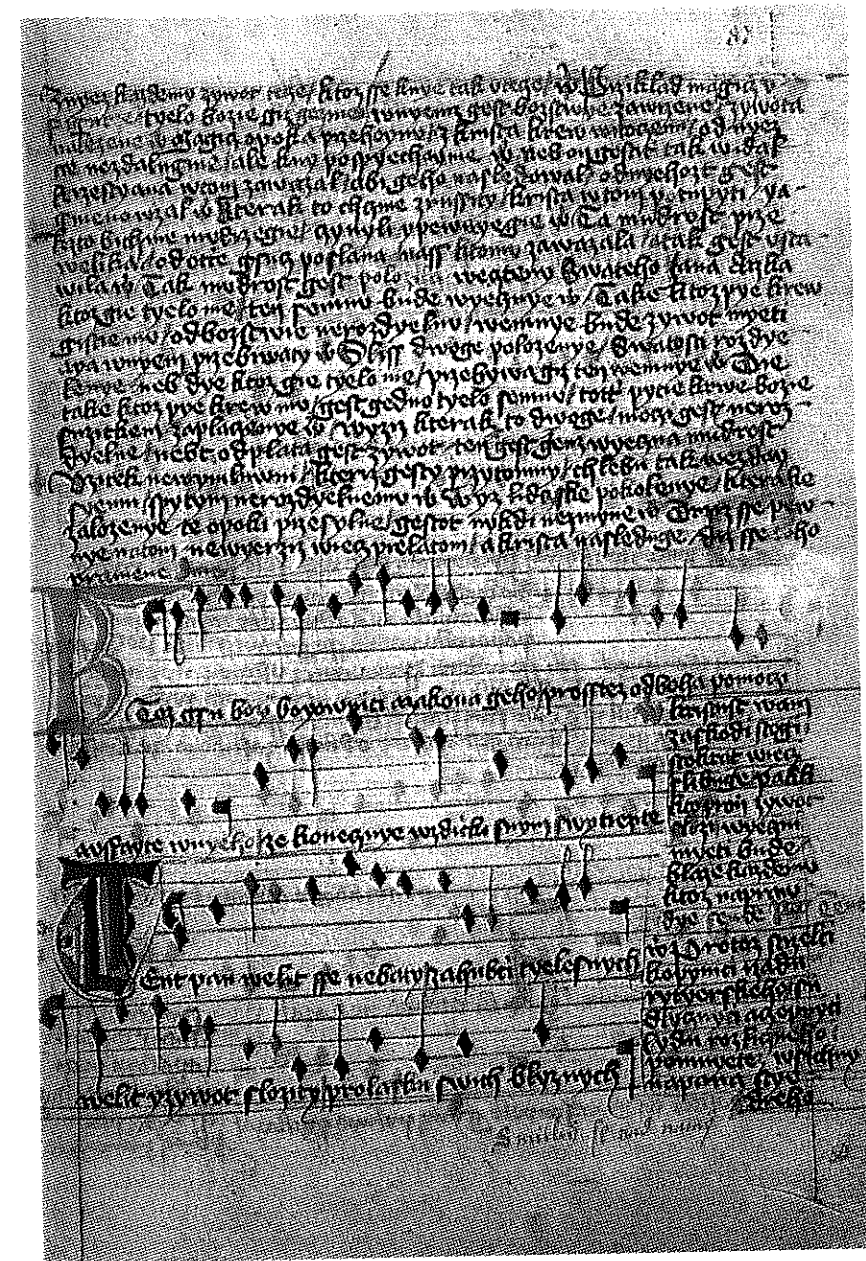


Plate 4.1 Hussite battle anthem, 'Ye warriors of God'

Therefore archers and lancers,
Of knightly rank,
Pikemen and flailmen,
Of the common people,
Keep ye all in mind the generous
Lord!

Fear not your enemies,
Do not heed their great numbers,
Keep your Lord in your hearts,
Fight for Him and with Him,
And never retreat before your enemies!

Long the Czechs have said
And have their proverb –
That under a good Lord
There is a good riding.

You men of supplies and advance guards,
Think of the souls
That you not forfeit lives
By greed and robbery,
And never let yourselves be tempted by spoil!

Remember ye all the password,
As it was given to you.
Obey your captains,
Let each man guard his fellow.
Let each seek out and stay in his own line!

Thus ye shall shout exultant:
'At them, hurrah, at them!'
Feel the pride of the weapon in your hands
And cry: 'God is our Lord!'⁸¹

The propagandist elements, cloaked in a rhetoric of militarism and theological ideology, are unmistakable. The Hussites were the warriors of God and God's law. With God they were invincible. Christ, not Žižka or Prokop Holý, was the true commander. In the Czech popular consciousness *Svatý Václav* (St Wenceslas) had fought for the Bohemians in battles against their foreign enemies since the eleventh century.⁸² Even the Hussites did not reject the cult of *Svatý Václav*.⁸³ None the

⁸¹ *Jistebnický kancionál*, Prague, National Museum Library MS II C 7 pp. 87–8. See also *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, vol. I, pp. 324–5. Translated in Josef Macek, *The Hussite Movement in Bohemia*, trans Vilém Fried and Ian Milner, (Prague and London, 1965), pp. 116–17.

⁸² On this see František Graus, *Lebendige Vergangenheit Überlieferung im Mittelalter und in den Vorstellungen vom Mittelalter* (Cologne and Vienna, 1975), pp. 165–70.

⁸³ František Šmahel, 'Archeologické doklady středověké duchovní kultury' [Archaeological evidence for a sacred culture in the middle ages], *Archaeologia historica*, 15 (1990), p. 302.

less, even so central a figure in Bohemian folklore had to play second fiddle to the divine leader of the Hussite warriors. In this army all those who lay down their lives for the cause are called blessed for they make a sacrifice for the Truth. These warriors of God fight with Christ and for Christ. In 1429 Peter Payne-Engliš, acting as a Hussite spokesman, declared in the presence of Sigismund that 'our Lord Jesus Christ is a most invincible soldier and Prague warrior'.⁸⁴ The power of this Hussite song is captured admirably in the final stanza:

Thus ye shall shout exultant:
'At them, hurrah, at them!'
Feel the pride of the weapon in your hands,
And cry: 'God is our Lord!'

Of course the Hussites went from victory to victory, and for them, this was obviously because of the 'truth' for which they contended. Hence, the song *Věrní se v bohu radujte* (Faithful ones, rejoice in God) sang the praises of divine deliverance from the crafty armies of Antichrist ensnared in the deceptions of Satan.⁸⁵ After the stunning defeat of Sigismund's superior armies by Žižka's Hussite troops in the Battle of the Vítkov in Prague in 1420, the Hussites took up the popular song written by Jan Čapek:

Children, let us praise the Lord

Children, let us praise the Lord,
Honor Him in loud accord!
For He frightened and confounded,
Overwhelmed and sternly pounded
All those thousands of Barbarians,
Suabians, Misnians, Hungarians
Who have overrun our land.
With His strong protecting hand
To the winds He has them waved,
And we children are now saved.
Faithful Czechs, let's sing our love
To our Father high above,
With the older folks along
Praising God in joyous song!⁸⁶

Here the notion of divine intervention is well placed. While the Hussites went into battle singing *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci* (Ye warriors of God) at least on one occasion the anti-Hussites, '*velut canes ululabant*' (howling like dogs) according to the chronicler, shouted their own refrain: 'Ha!

⁸⁴ František M. Bartoš, *Peter Payne Anglici*, (Tábor, 1949), p. 81.

⁸⁵ Nejedlý, *Dějiny husitského zpěvu*, pp. 800–801.

⁸⁶ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, vol. I, p. 327. Translated by Frederick G. Heymann in *John Žižka and the Hussite Revolution* (New York, 1969), p. 140.

Ha! Hus! Hus! Heretic! Heretic!⁸⁷ The Hussites, throughout the entirety of the revolutionary period, were especially sensitive to the label heretic. The song *Proti tupení Čechů podezíráním z kacířství* (Against calling Czechs heretics) enjoined the faithful to remember well and tell their children the solemn fact that even in the days of turmoil the Czechs were never heretical.⁸⁸ Notwithstanding this, a whole barrage of anti-Hussite popular songs circulated throughout Bohemia invoking the patron saint of the Czech lands, 'Good King Wenceslas', to deliver the 'righteous' from the heretics and to drive out the damnable Hussites.

When the lion died of right desire

Let us ask St. Wenceslas, who is
the head of the Czech land;
And also St. Vojtěch,
to drive the Hussites into a bag.
St Sigismund, Prokop, the
celebrated pope of the Czech land ...⁸⁹

The song implored '*Milý Orle*' (the beloved eagle), who should be understood as Sigismund, to come quickly and scare away the Hussites beyond the sea: 'Revenge the death of the lion, your brother King Václav', and expel all Hussites from this Christian land.

All give ear

St Wenceslas, our priest,
you have the power from God.
Ask him to please have mercy
and chase away the Wyclifites
because they commit evil.⁹⁰

This tune became a sort of theme song of the anti-Hussites.⁹¹ In terms of propaganda it sought to lay the blame for all evil in Bohemia at the doorstep of the 'goose-house'.

St Wenceslas or not, the Hussites continued their rhetoric of holy war, faithfulness to God, and raucous satirizing and parodying of the Catholics. It was not good, from the Hussite perspective, to refuse the practice of Utraquism. But that was hardly sufficient. So the Hussites

⁸⁷ *Historica Hussitica*, p. 384. Confirmed by German sources such as *Die Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*, ed. C. Hegel in *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte* (Leipzig, 1869), vol. VII, p. 354.

⁸⁸ Daňhelka, *Husitské písně*, p. 132.

⁸⁹ *KJBB*, pp. 50–52.

⁹⁰ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, vol. I, pp. 283–9.

⁹¹ František Šmahel, 'The idea of the "nation" in Hussite Bohemia', *Historica*, 16 (1968), p. 185.

sang *Časy Svými Jistými* (By the certain times)⁹² which focused upon the repeated theme, 'we ridicule those who refuse communion'. The decree of the Council of Constance had no effect upon the radicals who were more determined than ever to sup from the forbidden chalice. Insisting that the practice of communion in both kinds was the institution of Christ and not humankind, the Hussites sang their conviction 'that it was both proper and good for all people to eat the body of Christ and drink the blood of Christ' (see Plate 3.5, p. 136).⁹³

Hussite songs also included the issue of infant communion:

Rejoice, unhappy ones
Because all the little ones have been
invited to the banquet ... do not
prevent the little children from coming to Jesus
To eat his body
and drink his holy blood at the altar.

The two sacraments
of the body of Christ and baptism
should be given to all.
All who come
adults as well as children
should receive both.⁹⁴

Hussite songs not only encouraged the communion of all the baptized, but in at least one remarkable song attempted to set forth the historical tradition of the practice:

What is held about children
After what Cyprian, the great martyr,
Augustine, John Chrysostom,
Remegius, these saints said
We are faithful to them

Timotheus, this saint
whom non-believers laughed at,
gave to children
the body of Jesus Christ at baptism
He wrote what to do to Dionysius
Dionysius wrote back to Timotheus
and let him know
that he should carry it on
and gave both to children
for their salvation

Cyprian, the holy martyr
in his epistle said

⁹² Nejedlý, vol. VI, pp. 231–2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 244–5.

that one little girl who could not yet speak
was taught by the elders
to accept God's blood

To this St Augustine
Who in his books about the baptism of children
Confirmed that the body of Jesus Christ
is given for the life of the whole world
as well as the life of the children

And if children
do not have the body of the Son
in this world
they will not have
eternal life within
according to Augustine

John Chrysostom said that
no one will come to heaven
Unless that one has been born both of water and spirit
Has eaten the body
and drunk the blood

Saint Remegius said
that in order to be strong
The needy must receive
Christ's body and blood
There are six proofs for this
Which is certainly enough

Let us go then to Jesus
and to God the father
From the sacred writings
the truth about salvation
will be made clear through the Holy Spirit

In order for this to be recognized
and acted upon
with the assistance of the Holy Ghost
We should all say Amen
and thus receive the blessing of the Kingdom of God.⁹⁵

As late as 1710, Kateřina Černá, a servant woman of Prague, communed *sub utraque specie* (under both kinds) while her brother sang the song *Kdo by nebral z obojího, boj se pekla horoucího* (You who do not take in the two kinds, take great fear of the fires of hell).⁹⁶ Just as the 'fire of hell' had slowly burned Sigismund's leg off before finally consuming him in Znojmo, so likewise, according to Hussite propaganda, the same 'fires of hell' would ultimately destroy those who spurned the reality of God as given in the sacrament of the altar *sub utraque specie*.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 250–52.

⁹⁶ See Ducreux, 'Reading unto death', pp. 218–19.

When Archbishop Zbyněk ordered the burning of Wyclif's books on 16 July 1410 he found himself the object of contempt and scorn in the Hussite ditty which reverberated throughout Prague:

Bishop Zbyněk, ABCD,
burned books not knowing
what was written in them.

Zbyněk burned books
Zdeněk kindled a fire
he brought shame on all Czechs;
woe to all bad popes.⁹⁷

Not content to let bygones be bygones, the Hussites took up the familiar refrain of papal obsession with money as opposed to the gospel of Christ.⁹⁸ Thieves, ignoramuses, and crooks. Such Hussite propaganda could neither be ignored nor misunderstood. But Hussite propaganda could extend one step further and assert in the song *Radujme se, Dočekavše* (Let us rejoice, our time has come)⁹⁹ that the *věrní čechové* (faithful Czechs) could well rejoice in their recognition of the divine law (something their opponents by implication could hardly do) and thus escape to the heavenly heights of the hills (for example, Tábor) to fulfill the commands of Christ. Like most heretical movements, the Hussites practiced the dubious art of pouring scorn on the misguided theology of their opponents with biting invectives. The Hussites perfected the art to a significant level which commended itself to the strength of the movement. It was not simply madness – there was a method. This raging and violent jargon may be relegated to the well-defined historical shelves of polemical satire and parody. But this de-construction of Hussite popular songs is to run amiss of a vital element. Satire and parody abound, but these should be regarded as the framework for Hussite propaganda rather than as the sole content of the songs. In short, satire and parody were not the exclusive *raison d'être* of Hussite songs.

As early as 1417 Jan Čapek began to write songs for children with biblical paraphrases. These songs indicate an interesting dimension of the Hussite propaganda programme and give clear indication of the pervasive ideology of the radical Hussite movement.¹⁰⁰ A manuscript of Slovakian origin, now in Poland, contains Hussite songs from the 1430s

⁹⁷ Prague, National and University Library MS III G 16 fol. 18^r. This event and song is paralleled in the drawing in the Velislav Bible from the mid-fourteenth century. Prague, National and University Library MS XXIII C 124 fol. 132^r.

⁹⁸ 'Tabule veteris et novi coloris', in TAPS, 55 (March 1965), p. 61.

⁹⁹ Nejedlý, vol. VI, pp. 186–7.

¹⁰⁰ Noemi Rejchrtová, 'Dětska otázka v husitství' [The question of children in Hussitism], ČSČH, 28: 1 (1980), p. 66.

interspersed with biblical texts. The value of this particular manuscript lies in the unique juxtaposition of bible readings and Hussite songs which has the distinct value of demonstrating how some of these songs interacted in 'official' Hussite religious practice.¹⁰¹

Connection between official Hussite religion and popular propaganda were often marked by a blurred line of demarcation. The Hussite movement used songs primarily as propaganda to spread the gospel of Hus from Prague to the rural communities, to Moravia, throughout the Kingdom of Bohemia and beyond. Popular tunes reflected the Hussite message and witnessed back to its primordial beginnings.

If you want to know the bible
you must go to Bethlehem
and learn it on the walls
as Master Jan of Husinec preached it.¹⁰²

This popular song is a cryptic code but not difficult to decipher. The section below on images of dissent will explicate the meaning of this song as well as Hus's admonition to his followers from exile: '*Et si non vis credere, disce in Bethleem in pariete*' (and if you will not believe it, learn it on the wall in Bethlehem).¹⁰³ It is instructive and illuminating to consider the intriguing suggestion that the piety of a religious community or movement cannot be extrapolated fully from its creeds and theological writings alone but must also take into consideration its songs.¹⁰⁴ This axiom is especially true in the context of the radical Hussite movement.

As time went by the Hussites continued to repeat their polemical tunes and also added to their provocative repertoire of popular propagandist songs, to the deep chagrin of the adherents of Rome. As far as the Hussites were concerned the Romanists and the Germans had committed blasphemy by opposing the chalice, the law of God and St Jan Hus.¹⁰⁵ As might be expected it was the memory of Jan Hus and his diabolic influence which became the primary *sine qua non* for the dilemma of Hussitism and this conviction became a commonplace in anti-Hussite propaganda. Songs and sayings alike repeated the words of the conciliar fathers ever and again.

Rejoice now, holy church

¹⁰¹ *Corpus ewangelicum et nouum testamentum*, Kraków, Cathedral Chapter Library MS 82.

¹⁰² Daňhelka, *Husitské písně*, p. 133.

¹⁰³ *De ecclesia*, p. 217.

¹⁰⁴ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, (Leipzig and Berlin, 1914), vol. II, p. 515.

¹⁰⁵ See the 'Song about the battle at Ústí,' in Daňhelka, *Husitské písně*, p. 161.

How you are noisy like bulls,
cows, mice, Moors;
thievery, murder, unchristian tricks,
in reality this is your religion.
Woe to you, Hus!¹⁰⁶

It was only natural to ascribe to Hus the atrocities of the renegade Hussites and their devious defiance of both Church and State. Anti-Hussite propagandist songs identified the Táborites as culprits in the great conflict, when torrents of blood flowed in Bohemia.¹⁰⁷ After the demise of the Táborites popular street-ballads sung in Vienna decried the atrocities of the Hussite heretics. The chief heretic *Rockenzahn* (Jan Rokycana), so the song sings, gathered together a great gang of Hussite heretics and accosted their young king, Ladislav Posthumous (1440–57). They apparently did this after hearing a rumour that the boy king was going to expel all heretics from his domains. When the young king was faced with this sinister gang of thugs, he fell to his knees and begged for his life rescinding all claims toward expelling heretics. The song reached a climax by accusing those treacherous '*herren auss Böhmerlandte*' of falling upon the defenceless monarch and violently strangling him to death.¹⁰⁸ 'Woe to you, Hus – *ketzer* and *ketzergönner* – woe to you, Hus'. As late as 1466 a song circulated in Wrocław [Breslau] about the former Catholic bishop Jošt of Rožmberk who had lent his support to Jiří of Poděbrady – 'king of heretics':

One wolf does not bite another wolf, the Bohemians are villains.
The Christian Bohemians were not only called Christians but also
heretics. Bishop Jošt the old wolf taught the other wolves how to
eat geese.¹⁰⁹

It was bad enough that the old wolf should take a liking to geese. It was unconscionable that he teach other wolves to acquire this new taste as well. Perhaps unwittingly it would appear that the analogy of wolf and wolves could be interpreted in two ways. First, that the Hussites were vicious wolves – this would be the intended message of the song – or second, that it was Catholics as wolves preying on the weaker and helpless geese. An interpretation along these lines could potentially turn anti-Hussite propaganda into Hussite propaganda. In a sense it really did not matter. The lines were drawn between the camps. Conversely, it was the popular masses who were vulnerable to the propagandist cross-

¹⁰⁶ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, vol. I, pp. 290–92, at p. 291.

¹⁰⁷ Daňhelka, *Husitské písně*, p. 161.

¹⁰⁸ In the *Anonymi chronicon austriacum*. Text in Heinrich C. Senckenberg, *Selecta iuris et historiarum*, (Frankfurt, 1739), vol. V, pp. 42–9.

¹⁰⁹ *Peter Eschenloer's Geschichten der Stadt Breslau, 1440–1429*, ed. J.G. Kunisch (2 vols., Breslau, 1827–28), vol. I, p. 312.

fire and it was this audience whom the Hussites hoped to rescue from the 'night of antichrist', to use Želivský's phrase. Those loyal to the official church saw it as their duty to snatch the defenceless peasants from the path of the rabidly charging Hussite heretics. According to the *Píseň o Bitvě u Ústí* (Song about the Battle of Ústí), the Romanists sang, 'we will thrash those Hussites like geese with our clubs'.¹¹⁰ 'Woe to you, Hus'.

It has long been noted that satires on the clergy aided the Bohemian reform effort and especially the vernacular songs which may have indicated the presence of a religious piety which went beyond the rote repetition of *Paters* and *Aves* and the imposing and grandiose hymnody of the institutional church. Such judgement may be too sweeping and general but the popular songs of the first reformation in Bohemia certainly caught the imagination of the people, some for good and others for ill, depending on ones relation to the propaganda.

The function of popular songs assumed at least four rôles: a form of witness, sign of solidarity, polemical device and expression of militarism. It may be argued successfully that Hussite popular songs fulfilled all four rôles within a propagandist framework. The song *Ve jméno božie počneme* (Let us begin in the name of the Lord)¹¹¹ is provisionally a song of witness in that it sets forth the tenets of the Hussite faith in the form of 'this is what we believe'. Hussite hymnody played an essential role in popularizing the cause of the chalice.¹¹² The song *Povstaň, Povstaň, veliké město pražské* (Arise, arise great city of Prague)¹¹³ is an attempt at solidarity by calling the entire city of Prague to account for the faith. The song *Píseň o arcibiskupu Zbyňkovi* (A song about Archbishop Zbyněk)¹¹⁴ is a splendid piece of polemic wherein Antichrist with his arrogant clergy are named, Zbyněk subjected to scorn and Hus invoked to teach the ways of righteousness to the wicked. Finally, the song *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci* (Ye warriors of God)¹¹⁵ is the finest example of an expression of militarism in a popular song. The warriors are summoned to God's cause, instructed in the faith, and directed to slay the enemy with the cry 'God is our Lord'. Examples from the anti-Hussite camp could also be adduced to fit these categories.

It may be helpful at this point to attempt to articulate the common strands and ideas of the popular songs in a summary fashion. There is

¹¹⁰ Daňhelka, *Husitské písně*, p. 161.

¹¹¹ Nejedlý, vol. VI, pp. 190-93.

¹¹² David R. Holeton, *La communion des tout-petits enfants. Étude du mouvement eucharistique en Bohême vers la fin du Moyen-Âge* (Rome, 1989), p. 93.

¹¹³ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, vol. I, pp. 322-3.

¹¹⁴ Nejedlý, vol. III, pp. 442-3.

¹¹⁵ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, vol. I, pp. 324-5.

the conviction that the Hussites were absolutely convinced in a divine mandate for their cause. Their cause was God's cause and the Hussite armies waged holy battle as the warriors of God. God defended and sanctioned their actions as they strove to unite the Czechs under one nation and one God. The institutional church was spiritually bankrupt and hence apostate and was the exact representation of Antichrist in the current milieu. Thus, the Hussites, inspired by that holy man of God St Jan Hus, fought to liberate the Czechs from ungodly domination for the cause of truth, righteousness and holiness.

On the other side of the propaganda battlefield motifs of the resistance movement rose to challenge the onslaught of Hussite opinion. The counter-revolutionary force could claim even less unanimity than the sometime fragmented Hussite cause. This mosaic of Germans, Catholics, some Czechs, conciliarists and a hotchpotch of others were united in a common opposition to the Hussite threat. They called for a prohibition against Hussitism both legally and ecclesiastically. The diabolic influence of Hus, according to the official church, had given birth to an incorrigible generation of schismatics, blasphemers, and heretics. 'Woe to you, Hus'. Immoral doctrine had corrupted the simple and was nourished by the Devil and his chief lieutenant, Wyclif the heresiarch. The fidelity of the gospel was at stake and the faithful, in the fear of God, were called upon to root up heresy and put to shame the Hussites - the workers of iniquity.

Propagandist agitation certainly works out of a specific situation or context and utilizes images, ideas, and events to specific ends and in so doing stamps upon them a peculiar meaning and purpose compatible with the *Weltanschauung* of the propagandist. Literacy is formed, shaped, and conditioned by the world it penetrates.¹¹⁶ The social, cultural, and historic circumstances of late medieval Bohemia were utilized by all the propaganda players for the creation of a propagandist myth out of which to operate the desired agenda. For anti-Hussites, all Czechs were suspected Hussites, Hussites were heretics, heretics were obviously in league with the devil, and therefore must be opposed. This syllogistic deduction based upon the aforementioned factors was repeated by the Hussites with all the necessary alterations so that the bottom line was exactly opposite. More to the point are the observations that the '*víře české*' (Czech faith) was opposed to the 'Catholic faith' which was at times designated '*víře německé*' (the German faith).¹¹⁷ Doubtless, cultural conflict shapes ecclesiastical conflict and lines between religious

¹¹⁶ Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*, p. 224.

¹¹⁷ Rudolf Urbánek, *Věk Poděbradský* [The age of Poděbrady], (4 vols, Prague, 1915-62), vol. IV, p. 314.

and secular become blurred and, at least in Hussite Bohemia, fade into ill-defined images.

The important query is what was the effect of the popular songs as oral propaganda? This is a question which is always difficult to answer specifically, especially in the age in which we are investigating. The temptation to assess effectiveness in terms of the numbers of works located or the proliferation of evidence of the work in question must be resisted.¹¹⁸ The fact that a particular Hussite song can be found in records in Prague, Kutná Hora, Plzeň, Tábor, Jihlava, Hradec Králové and Cheb is no sure proof that it was especially influential nor particularly successful as a mode of propaganda. It must be assumed that the 'only reliable test is to study the impact of propaganda on behaviour ...'.¹¹⁹ A few postulations may be advanced though, in the absence of adequate fifteenth-century records, they remain tentative. For example, when Archbishop Zbyněk took steps against Hus's reforms during 1410–11, the popular movement sang against him the song:¹²⁰

(The hare [Zajíc] now challenges the lion ...) God, let the lion rise up, tear to pieces the anger of the clergy, and promote the law of Christ. Let Hus instruct you how.

The lion – Václav IV – did take action against Zbyněk which led to the latter's submission to the former and in 1411 precipitated Zbyněk's departure from Prague, a flight from which he never returned.¹²¹ It would be too presumptuous to make the assertion that Václav overheard the Hussite song and took action on that basis. All that can be affirmed is that the song was sung and the action it called for did take place. The evidence permits no further speculation. In an entirely different circumstance armies of crusading forces fled before the Hussite troops without ever seeing them, hearing only the thundering roar of the Hussite warriors, 'howling like dogs', to borrow the phrase of the chronicler cited earlier, the song 'Ye warriors of God'. The best recorded account of this phenomenon was at the Battle of Domažlice on 15 August 1431. Was the battle song the cause of terror, or was it simply the trigger for an inherent Hussite fear in the crusaders? It is impossible to say for certain. The final indecisive effect of the Hussite songs may be put forth in the despair experienced by people such as King Sigismund and Cardinal Cesarini who struggled with understanding 'the painful fact that God, throughout

¹¹⁸ Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, pp. 9–10.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹²⁰ Nejedlý, vol. III, pp. 442–3.

¹²¹ Texts of the conflict in *Documenta*, pp. 434–9.

[five crusades and 12 years] had always withheld his blessings from those who had tried to eliminate the "heresy".¹²² This cannot be attributed solely to the popular songs of the Hussite movement. Despair arose from the realities the songs attested to.

In spite of all this tentative indecisiveness it is possible to affirm that popular Hussite songs did have an effect upon the society at large. In 1408 the singing of new songs in Prague was restricted when the Prague synod banned using vernacular hymns in the liturgy with four exceptions.¹²³ Some of these forbidden songs were tunes favouring reform while others, like this example from the Czech play *Mastičkář*, were simply bawdy tunes:

A magpie on a magpie flew over a river,
flesh without bone pierced a girl,
round about the tourney, ho ho,
a lot got stuck between the legs.¹²⁴

In 1409 the synod repeated the ban on new songs.¹²⁵

During anti-indulgence demonstrations in Prague in 1412 the king issued a strict prohibition against the popular movement for opposing their sale. Additionally, he specifically forbade the singing of disparaging songs about the indulgence trade.¹²⁶ It is reasonable to assume that Hussite songs were seizing momentum as 'propaganda of irritation'. In 1418 the Council of Constance found it necessary to include in its articles a similar injunction against Hussites songs in the form of a stern command to the public not to sing the songs composed by the heretics, against the Roman Church and the council, in favour of Jan Hus and Jerome of Prague.¹²⁷ As late as the 1460s the papal diplomat Fantino de Valle, was still urging King Jiří of Poděbrady to suppress all Czech songs which defamed the pope and the Roman Church.¹²⁸ Surely there

¹²² See the discussion in Frederick G. Heymann, 'The crusades against the Hussites', in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. III, ed. Harry W. Hazard (Madison, 1975), pp. 640–41.

¹²³ The four songs were 'Hospodine, pomiluj ny' [Lord, have mercy upon us], 'Bóh všemohúci' [God almighty], 'Jesu Kriste, ščedry kněže' [Jesus Christ, bountiful priest], and 'Svatý Václave' [St Wenceslas]. The statute of 15 June 1408 in Jaroslav Kadlec, 'Synods of Prague and their statutes 1396–1414', *Apollinaris*, 54 (1991), p. 269.

¹²⁴ This song is from the Schlágel fragment of the *Mastičkář*. Veltruský, *A Sacred Farce from Medieval Bohemia*, p. 373. For the prohibition of this and other 'scandalous songs' see Konstantin Höfler (ed.), *Prager Concilien in der vorhussitischen Periode* (Prague, 1862), pp. 51–2.

¹²⁵ Kadlec, 'Synods of Prague and their statutes 1396–1414', p. 275.

¹²⁶ Novotný, *M. Jan Hus. Život a učení*, vol. II, pp. 105–7. See especially p. 107, n. 1.

¹²⁷ The article in question is number 17 from session 44 in 1418. Mansi, vol. XXVII, col. 1197.

¹²⁸ Otakar Odložilík, *The Hussite King: Bohemia in European Affairs 1440–1471*, (New Brunswick, 1965), p. 137.

would have been no prohibitions in these cases if popular songs were not having a profound effect upon the popular culture adverse to the sensibilities of both Church and State. This scenario is strangely antithetical to the times when indulgences were given in Prague for singing of pious hymns.¹²⁹ It is safe to say that all the varied emotions observed in the milieu of the Hussite movement – rage, revolt, despair, conversion, apathy, zealotry – may be connected to the effects of Hussite propaganda through popular songs. The nature of these songs was a venting of frustration and anger, as well as a social and religious form of protest. The song-makers, living in the midst of the revolutionary climate, did not fail to exploit the full spectrum of the collective Czech consciousness. Even some of the leading players, such as Jan Čapek and Jerome of Prague, composed tunes which may be considered tools of propaganda,¹³⁰ while groups existing outside the main locus of the struggle also utilized popular songs in an attempt to gain converts.¹³¹

Popular songs as propaganda in Hussite Bohemia appeared during the first years of the movement for reform. Even before the songs took on a popular and propagandist flavouring the singing of songs in the Czech vernacular began to pave the way. As early as 1399 the parish priest Jan of Vartenberk forbade the singing of *Buoh všemohúci* (God Almighty)¹³² in the Týn Church in Prague. Earlier in the fourteenth century the Austrian reformer in Prague Konrad Waldhauser, taught his German adherents to sing it in Czech.¹³³ During the first decade of the fifteenth century Hus wrote or translated into Czech a number of hymns for use in the Bethlehem Chapel.¹³⁴ This stress upon the vernacular led to a unique practice in Hussite religion, to wit the introduction of the *cantus in vulgari* in divine worship. Such singing took place during the silent mass. Apparently these songs were not translations of the canon of the mass. The themes were taken from the liturgy and holy

¹²⁹ Jaroslav V. Polc, 'Councils and synods of Prague and their statutes 1362-1395', *Apollinaris*, 52: 1-2 (1979), pp. 214-15.

¹³⁰ The evidence for Jerome as a propagandist songwriter is slender, see Hardt, vol. IV, col. 669.

¹³¹ For example see Ruth Gladstein, 'Eschatological trends in Bohemian Jewry during the Hussite period' in *Prophecy and Millenarianism*, (Essays in honour of Marjorie Reeves), ed. Ann Williams, (London, 1980), p. 245.

¹³² Text in Daňhelka, *Husitské písně*, pp. 8-10.

¹³³ Nejedlý, vol. II, pp. 123-4.

¹³⁴ Emil Pražák, "'Jesus Kristus, nostra salus" – skladba mladého Husa?' [Jesus Christ, our salvation' – composition of the young Hus?], *Slavia*, 62: 2 (1993), pp. 145-9. See the brief but useful article by Enrico C.S. Molnar, 'The liturgical reforms of John Hus', *Speculum*, 41 (April 1966), pp. 297-303 and František Mužík, 'Nejstarší nápěv písně "Jezu Kriste, Štědrý Kněže" a jeho vztah k Husově' [The oldest melody of the song 'Jesus Christ, bountiful priest' and its relation to Hus], *AUC-PH*, 1 (1958), pp. 31-53.

scripture.¹³⁵ This emphasis on vernacular singing logically gave way to the rise of popular songs. It would seem that the rise in popular songs may be attributed to the need for communication among the faithful as well as the desire to inflict damage upon the enemy. Certainly, for the most part, popular songs served the interests of the particular group of propagandists employing them, although the occasional backfire could occur.¹³⁶

'Songs of protest, satire, praise, or scorn from all times fall into the category of music as propaganda'.¹³⁷ It is also quite impossible to exercise total control or censure of all music, even with imposed prohibitions. In a sense popular songs do function as a system in Hussite Bohemia especially if the idea is retained that the songs are an expression of a societal spirit. Individuals may compose songs or make up ditties, but in a predominately oral culture it is the community which selects and implements particular songs as expressions of the representative attitude.¹³⁸ For example, it would seem that an idea could not gain a wide hearing in an oral culture if it did not reflect the sentiment of a fairly wide segment of that society. Obviously this type of oral propaganda can be distinguished from other forms of communication and propaganda. The nature of its presentation sets it apart from woodcuts, ecclesiastical art forms, manifestos, treatises, and diplomatic communiqués. The difference need not be underscored even when the message remains essentially the same. Popular songs are both an expression of the struggle, as well as a vital weapon in the struggle. Subversive messages can only be effective if there is an audience for the propaganda. If there is no audience there is no propaganda and all that remains are songs, words, and music. Judging from the material discussed above, it is reasonable to assume that propaganda in Hussite Bohemia had a very intense and reactionary audience as the drama of the Hussite revolution well reveals.

Happily the oral propaganda of Hussite Bohemia is generally overt as opposed to covert and blatantly obvious rather than cleverly disguised. Verbal clues such as descriptive titles and provocative words to be sung identify the songs as propaganda¹³⁹ and serve notice of their basic intention. Perhaps this is to be attributed more to the fact that the

¹³⁵ František Svejkovský, 'The conception of the "vernacular" in Czech literature and culture of the fifteenth century', in *Aspects of the Slavic Language Question*, vol. 1, eds Riccardo Picchio and Harvey Goldblatt (New Haven, 1984), p. 328.

¹³⁶ Emil Pražák, 'Otázka významu v latinské písni o Roháčovi' [The question of meaning in the Latin song about Roháč], *Česká literatura*, 32: 3 (1984), pp. 193-201.

¹³⁷ Perris, *Music as Propaganda*, p. 5.

¹³⁸ Burke, *Popular culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. 115.

¹³⁹ Perris, *Music as Propaganda*, pp. 17-18.

Hussites really did not perceive their popular songs as propaganda than it is to regard them as lacking in the necessary art of subtlety. Just as the German reformation propaganda of the century yet to come, the Hussite agenda, through the means of popular songs, went about the task of transmitting a message, breaking down old patterns and values, creating new symbols and integrating the new world into a structure of acceptable and defensible proportions.¹⁴⁰ And if their songs seemed wholly in tune with the spirit and intent of the movement at large, perhaps it was because they imitated to the end their spiritual father and patron saint, Jan Hus. He died singing.

Slogans and proverbial sayings: no whispering campaign

'Heretics.' 'Woe to you Hus.' With these taunts ringing in their ears the Hussites crystallized their agenda in their own set of slogans: 'thieves of the sacrament', 'the law of God', 'Hus forever', and 'truth conquers'. The sounds of propaganda in the form of slogans and sayings reverberated throughout the theatre of the Hussite revolution witnessing resoundingly to the Hussite gospel, myth and heresy.

From the beginning, Hussite slogans and sayings were not simply abusive epithets hurled at the enemy. These verbal texts functioned as abbreviated popular renditions of scholarly Hussite ideology. The Hussite commonplace of Utraquism has been considered. At the popular level the song *Časy Svými Jistými* (By the certain times) focused upon the derisive theme, 'we ridicule those who refuse communion'. A byword among the adherents of the popular movement was 'thieves of the sacrament'. This slogan found its *Sitz im Leben* in the founders of utraquism. After its inception in Prague in 1414 priests of the Hussite cause went throughout the land celebrating the sacrament *communio sub utraque specie* and condemning priests of the old order as '*fures esse huius sacramenti*' (thieves of the sacrament).¹⁴¹ Under the banner 'law of God' the propaganda campaign moved alongside the developing myth and heresy.

Hussite and anti-Hussite propaganda alike exploited the long-standing conflict between the Czechs and the Germans. German domination over Czechs was an intolerable conundrum aptly illustrated by this witty proverbial saying:¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, p. 9.

¹⁴¹ *Chronicon universitatis pragensis*, in *FRB*, vol. V, p. 580.

¹⁴² Václav Flajšhans, 'Staročeské sbírky přísloví' [Old Czech collection of proverbial sayings], *Časopis Musea Království Českého*, 82 (1908), p. 292.

A thorn in the foot, a mouse in a sheaf, a fly in the broth, a moth in a costly garment, a goat in the garden and a German on a Czech council; a viper between a woman's breasts, a clash between brothers, a wolf among goats, a devil among old women. Where it dwells, you do not live well.

Germans and Czechs, apples and oranges – they simply do not mix. This has to do with a basic historic animosity fostered and perpetuated by both extremes.

A snake will warm itself on ice before a German will wish a Czech well.¹⁴³

This Czech saying has equal validity when spoken from the German perspective. The intention of the propaganda was clear and overt: the Czechs could do much better without the German presence in Bohemia. This theme predates the Hussite age as is evidenced by an anonymous pamphlet from around 1325:¹⁴⁴

Dear God! The foreigner is preferred, the native oppressed. The usual and just thing is for the bear to remain in the woods, the fox in the cave, the fish in the water and the German in Germany. In this manner the world would be better off.

From the Czech perspective the Germans were the '*proradné plémě*' (perfidious race) who one day would suffer destruction.¹⁴⁵ A Hussite manifesto of 3 April 1420 referred to the Germans as the natural enemy of the Czechs.¹⁴⁶ To the growing numbers, anti-Hussite sentiment was associated with Germans and their own experience with the Teutonic peoples informed, to a large degree, their loyalties in the Hussite conflict.

See in what manner the Germans wish the Czechs well, when evil overtakes them they laugh until they cry ...¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Jiří Daňhelka (ed.), *Husitské skladby Budyšínského Rukopisu* [Hussite compositions of the Budyšínský Manuscript], (Prague, 1952), p. 77.

¹⁴⁴ Wilhelm Wostry, 'Ein deutschfeindliches Pamphlet aus Böhmen aus dem 14. Jahrhundert', in *Mitteilungen des Vereines für Geschichte der Deutschen in Böhmen*, 53: 3-4 (1915), pp. 193-238, at p. 231.

¹⁴⁵ This is expressed in an old legend about Judas Iscariot. Jiří Cejnar, *Nejstarší české veršované legendy* [Old Czech legends in verse], (Prague, 1964), p. 169.

¹⁴⁶ *AČ*, vol. III, pp. 212-13.

¹⁴⁷ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské*, vol. II, p. 105.

The Czechs took this adage to heart and thus practiced both theologically and existentially the message in the rhyme, '*Czechu srdce wierneho Waruy se Nyemcze falessneho*' (Czech, true of heart, beware the false German).¹⁴⁸

Ancient is the enmity and rooted deep
between the Czechs and Germans.
Just as the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans
so likewise now the very sight of a German
produces an aversion in the Czech.¹⁴⁹

Czechs identified Germans with one of the most despicable of all historical figures in the affirmation, '*Jidáš byl taký lakomec někteří tomu chtěli, že byl Němec*' (Judas was such a miser that some affirmed he was a German).¹⁵⁰ Another proverbial saying suggested that 'Germans originated in, and sprang from, Pontius Pilate's arse'.¹⁵¹

Because Hussitism came to be identified almost exclusively with the Bohemians the term German-Hussite is a problematic anomaly. Attempts to define the term may find its best example in the case of Žatec. More than any other Czech town, Žatec demonstrated that 'ark against ark' has its foundation in ethnic conflict. In the context of Žatec we see that Czech against Czech and German against German was rooted in the struggle for the Hussite confession of faith.¹⁵² For their part, the slogan 'the worse for Bohemia, the better for us' guided the Germans especially in their view of the Hussites.¹⁵³

The main focus of Hussite propaganda was its anti-Roman sentiment. Immediately after the death of Hus unrest in Bohemia escalated sharply. The followers of Hus battled the followers of Rome. The former looted monasteries and destroyed the 'abominable' churches of the 'priests of Pharaoh'¹⁵⁴ with the shout, 'Hus forever'. The latter attempted to stamp out those 'rascal Husses and Heretics' with the

¹⁴⁸ Jan Vilikovský, 'Latinská poesie žakovská v Čechách' [The Latin poetry of scholars in Bohemia], *Sborník filosofické fakulty University Komenského v Bratislavě*, 8: 61 (2), (1932), p. 115.

¹⁴⁹ Ludolf of Sagan, 'De longevo schismate', ed. Johann Loserth, in *AÖG*, 60 (1880), p. 426.

¹⁵⁰ Cited in Jan Herben, *Huss and his Followers*, (London, 1926), p. 115.

¹⁵¹ Cited in Roman Jakobson, *Moudrost starých Čechů* [The witness of old Czechs], (New York, 1943), pp. 118-19.

¹⁵² Frederick G. Heymann, 'Česká města před husitskou revolucí, v době jejího trvání a jejich etnický vývoj', pp. 52-3.

¹⁵³ Macek, *The Hussite Movement in Bohemia*, p. 69.

¹⁵⁴ Nicholas of Dresden, *Puncta*, Prague, National and University Library MS IV G 15 fol. 8^v. The same phrase appears in a treatise by Jakoubek of Stříbro, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS 4937 fol. 141^r.

slogan, 'long live Rome'.¹⁵⁵ Some onlookers may have viewed such proceedings with amusement, but the Hussites were not amused. The heretics perceived themselves as the warriors of God on a divine mission to cleanse both church and society of its ills. This propagandist verse vehemently ridiculed the traditional church.

Money is what the Curia likes
best, it empties many a purse
and chest. If you are stingy
with your marks, stay away from
popes and patriarchs. But give
them marks, and once their
chests are filled you will be
absolved from the bondage of all your guilt.

Again, the system of the Curia:
Someone wishes to enter. Who
are you? Me. What do you want?
To enter. Do you bring anything?
No. Stay out! I do bring
something. What? Enough. Enter!¹⁵⁶

To oppose such simoniacal 'enemies of God' was at the forefront of the Hussite agenda.¹⁵⁷ These 'unbelieving seducers'¹⁵⁸ and 'Judas clergy'¹⁵⁹ are the focus of this proverbial saying: 'Have nought to do with a priest, but, shouldst thou insult him, better kill him at once, otherwise he will never give thee rest!'¹⁶⁰ The Hussite aversion to ecclesiastical wealth as codified in the third of the Four Articles of Prague is also reflected in this popular verse:

Concerning the venality of the Roman curia

If you want to see the pope
remember, it is always true
poor people can never get in.
Those who give are welcomed and praised.
Hence the pope, they say

¹⁵⁵ The opposing slogans cited in Jacques Lenfant, *The History of the Council of Constance*, (2 vols, London, 1730), vol. II, p. 58 with reference to a manuscript I have been unable to locate.

¹⁵⁶ '*Tabule veteris et novi coloris*', eighth table, lines 52-6. Printed in 'Master Nicholas of Dresden: the old color and the new', eds Howard Kaminsky, Dean Loy Bilderback, Imre Boda and Patricia N. Rosenberg, *TAPS*, 55 (March 1965), p. 61.

¹⁵⁷ *Žižkův vojenský řád* [Žižka's military rule] in František Svejkovský, *Staročeské vojenské řády* [Old Czech military rules], (Prague, 1952), p. 24.

¹⁵⁸ *AČ*, vol. VI, p. 44.

¹⁵⁹ See the song *Slýchal-li kto od počátka* [If anyone has heard from the first], in *Nejedlý*, vol. VI, pp. 181-3.

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Herben, *Huss and his Followers*, p. 55.

if we want to understand well:
wants to devour
everything everyone else has ...

The porter is craving for gifts,
the writer and chancellor crave,
cardinals have a desire for gifts,
the pope desires gifts.
You give the gifts to these and even to
those, you give the presents thrice,
and always when you have given enough
they want more and more.
Go to Rome with thick wallets,
in Rome they know how
to take care of you,
and immediately you are thin!¹⁶¹

Preaching served as a medium for employing these ideas and stirring the people up. Nicholas of Dresden roared against the wealthy who benefited from the social prestige of the church. 'Behold ... these nobles will be decapitated this year and their heads will swim in blood; they will either be killed by their own servants or by those who accompany them'. When the incensed nobles left in anger Nicholas called after them, 'Behold, devils are leading them from the church'.¹⁶² In one of his sermons Jan Želivský turned to the mayor and denounced bitterly high taxes and the ongoing exploitation of the poor and addressed the civic official as the 'robber of the community'.¹⁶³ Jakoubek of Střibro called upon the secular authorities to deprive the Church of her great wealth and give it to the poor.¹⁶⁴

According to the Hussites, all *věrní Čechové* (faithful Czechs) must hold to the law of God in God's fight¹⁶⁵ and stand beside St Jan Hus and Brother Jan Žižka against the evil and blaspheming enemies of the truth.¹⁶⁶ The conservative Hussites refused the title 'faithful Czechs' not only to adherents of Rome, but also to the radical Táborites and

¹⁶¹ Rudolf Mertlík, *Pisně žáků darebáků* [Naughty schoolboy songs], (Prague, 1951), pp. 96-7.

¹⁶² Cited in *Soudní akta konsistoře pražské (1373-1424)* [Judicial acts of the consistory of Prague], ed. Ferdinand Tadra, (7 vols, Prague, 1893-1901), vol. IV, p. 128.

¹⁶³ Cited in Macek, *The Hussite Movement in Bohemia*, pp. 50-51. In this stance, Želivský was already making the transition from social critic to revolutionary. Božena Kopiczková, *Jan Želivský*, (Prague, 1990), p. 28.

¹⁶⁴ See his sermon of 21 March 1416 in *Mistr Jakoubek ze Střibra: Betlemská kázání z roku 1416* [Master Jakoubek of Střibro: Bethlehem sermons from the year 1416], ed. Karel Sita, (Prague, 1951), p. 69.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. the terminology in *Žižkův vojenský řád*, p. 24.

¹⁶⁶ *Historia Hussitica*, p. 351.

Orebites.¹⁶⁷ Notwithstanding this, the Hussite struggle and complaint, voiced near and far concerning the Church's refusal to practise the true faith, could receive a wide hearing as well as support in the days of the Hussites and be reflected in a proverbial saying as late as the sixteenth century:

As many millers as run a mill,
So many sacks with grain they fill;
As many pastors as preach the Word,
So many creeds – and so absurd!¹⁶⁸

In the first half of the fifteenth century a provocative poem was composed by Andrzej Galka of Dobczyn in the diocese of Płock in Poland.¹⁶⁹ In this particular region there had been strong Hussite influence and the poem, lauding Wyclif, demonstrates the influence of Hussite songs, sayings and general propaganda.¹⁷⁰

Wyclif shall tell you truth

He has unveiled divine
Wisdom and problems of the
human mind, which were
hitherto hidden to
many philosophers.

He has written about the unity
and sanctity of the Church, of
the Kingdom of Antichrist, and
of the weaknesses of the
present clergy.

The imperial robes are
antichrists and derive their
power not from Christ, but
from antichrist and from
the Emperor's charter.

Sylvester was the first pope
who received his power from
the monster Constantine and

¹⁶⁷ František Šmahel, 'À l'aube de l'idée œcuménique: la réforme hussite entre occident et orient', in *L'Église et le peuple chrétien dans les pays de l'Europe du centre-est et du nord (XIV^e-XV^e siècles)*, (Collection de l'École Française de Rome, 128), (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1990), p. 283.

¹⁶⁸ Cited in František Bednář, 'The ecumenical idea in the Czech Reformation', *Ecumenical Review*, 6 (January 1954), p. 162.

¹⁶⁹ Text of the poem twice translated into English. H.M. Swiderska, 'A Polish follower of Wyclif in the fifteenth century', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal*, 6: 1 (1957), pp. 88-92, and Margaret Schlauch, 'A Polish vernacular eulogy of Wycliff', *JEH*, 8 (April 1957), pp. 53-73.

¹⁷⁰ Schlauch, *ibid.*, p. 69.

every year diffuses his
venom in the Church.

Led by the devil, Sylvester
cheated Constantine of
his property and
fraudulently coaxed
Rome out of him.

Afterwards laymen
likewise were cheated
and now their poor
descendants are in
great distress.

Now if we want to forget
our sorrows, we must pray
to God, sharpen our
swords and slay
the antichrists.

Truth is the attribute of
Christ and lies of Antichrist.
The priests tell lies to the
people and conceal truth,
for they are afraid of it.

The type of satirical anti-clericalism found in Bohemia clearly existed in Poland. 'Chaplain, if you wish to improve your spirit, pour in the beer, because beer is a strange drink which influences people more than the pope'.¹⁷¹

When Sigismund and his armies besieged Kladruby, held by the Hussites since the beginning of 1421, the Hussite warriors taunted their enemies by shouting – 'where is the antichrist, the heretical king'?¹⁷² The previous year at the Battle of the Vítkov in Prague, Royalist soldiers, 'howling like dogs', bellowed the refrain 'Ha! Ha! Hus! Hus! Heretic! Heretic!' The anti-Hussite forces also had an arsenal of slogans and sayings with which to irritate the Hussites. The most obvious slogan was the term 'Hussite' itself. This term arose as an abusive designation for the Czech heretics at the time of the Council of Constance.¹⁷³ Concomitant with this phrase was the epithet 'Wyclifite'. It can be demonstrated that the former term gradually replaced the latter as the Bohemian reformation began to shed the largely inaccurate

¹⁷¹ The poem is cited in Ewa Maleczyńska, 'Vliv husitského hnutí na Polsko', translated by Věra Ostrouchová in *Mezinárodní ohlas husitství* [The International Response to Hussitism], ed. Josef Macek (Prague, 1958), p. 58.

¹⁷² *Historia Hussitica*, p. 471.

¹⁷³ Seibt, *Hussitica. Zur Struktur einer Revolution*, pp. 10–14.

latter title. During the 1420s there was a steady decline in the use of the term 'Wyclifite' to describe the Czech reform movement.¹⁷⁴

The evil Wyclif having poisoned Hus, who in turn deceived an entire nation, was classic Roman propaganda. The Moravian Carthusian abbot Štěpán of Dolany relates the extraordinary tale of Wyclif's posthumous murder.¹⁷⁵ One night in the cloister while someone was reading Wyclif's book *Trialogus*, Wyclif himself burst into the room, foaming at the mouth, knocked the man to the floor, and began to berate the reader for having doubted the truth of the text. Finding a pitchfork the poor reader lashed out against Wyclif in an act of self-defence. Knocking the heretic to the floor he proceeded to smash Wyclif's brains in and thus slew the evil monster. Evidently there were witnesses who together gave God praise. The murderer was then admonished that his deed was no crime and hence there could be no guilt. Štěpán of Dolany's nightmare might well be interpreted as the wish of the official church for the entire Hussite movement. Even though 'the fat goose had been fried at Constance'¹⁷⁶ that 'base fellow' Jan Žižka and his Táborite cohorts continued to propagate a great cloud of errors. Johannes Peklo, Hus's adversary at Constance, claimed to have actually seen Wyclif in hell.¹⁷⁷ With saints like Hus and Wyclif it is no wonder the rumour resounded throughout all Europe: 'The Bohemians are the sons of heretical depravity'.¹⁷⁸ Adherents of Rome accused the radical Hussites of preaching with swords¹⁷⁹ and encouraging the final destruction of all who did not hold to the Hussite law of God.¹⁸⁰

O you wonderful preachers!
You are destroying churches;
former executioners
could get a lot of work from you.
They drown some and strangle others

¹⁷⁴ Based upon notes compiled by Johann Loserth from primary sources, easily supplemented from other manuscripts. See Johann Loserth, *Wyclif and Hus*, trans. M.J. Evans, (London, 1884), pp. 82–6.

¹⁷⁵ Štěpán of Dolany, *Medulla Tritici*, in *Pez*, vol. IV, pt 2, cols 246–7.

¹⁷⁶ A popular satire repeated by the Hussite enemy John Capistrano in his *Epistola responsiva ad praefatam epistolam Johannis Borotini*, preserved in a manuscript in Olomouc. Text edited in František Walouch, *Životopis swatého Jana Kapistrána* [Biography of St John Capistrano], (Brno, 1858), p. 840.

¹⁷⁷ Reported by the university master and later Táborite, Jan of Jičín, in defence of Wyclif, *Pro tractatu materiae et formae*, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS 4002 fols 33^r–38^r. See fol 38^r.

¹⁷⁸ Ludolf of Sagan, 'De longevo schismate', p. 433.

¹⁷⁹ Svejkovský, *Veršované skladby doby husitské*, p. 111, lines 335–8.

¹⁸⁰ Václav Nebeský, 'Verše na Husity' [Verses on the Hussites], *Časopis českého museum*, 26 (1852), p. 140, lines 355–6.

they hang some and decapitate others.
O wonderful solace!

There is nothing good in you.
You preach with gloves and sword,
always ready to fight with lances
and pikes, javelins and wooden
hammers. You do this all the
time with force, in day and night
whenever you want.¹⁸¹

These Hussite heretics do not fear God, they rob burghers and priests.¹⁸² According to Petr of Uničov Hussites were 'typical pale-faced heretics ... blasphemers who drunkenly guzzled their utraquist Eucharist ... who beat people, carried long swords, and killed people without any fear'.¹⁸³ Ludolf of Sagan referred to the Táborites as arrogant and incorrigible.¹⁸⁴ While the Hussites claimed they wanted peace they were unprepared to accept the 'holy peace' slogan shouted by anti-Hussites in the Old Town Square on 6 September 1428.¹⁸⁵ After the passing of the militant radical movement the remnants of the Táborites were suspected of hiding in the *sektě Rokycanově* (sect of Rokycana).¹⁸⁶ The term 'Rokycanites' can be found juxtaposed to the phrases 'Wyclifites' and 'Hussites' in some sources.¹⁸⁷ Anti-Hussite propaganda assailed Rokycana as 'the Devil', 'a follower of Wyclif', 'the predecessor of antichrist' and 'the son of darkness'.¹⁸⁸

Is he the elected bishop?
He is a madman,
he read it in the black books
of Arian heretics
to abolish the orders.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 148, lines 326–40.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 142, lines 37–40.

¹⁸³ Cited in Howard Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 238.

¹⁸⁴ Ludolf of Sagan, 'De longo schismate', pp. 533–4.

¹⁸⁵ See the account of this demonstration and the ensuing violence in František M. Bartoš, *The Hussite Revolution 1424–1437*, ed. John Klassen (New York, 1986), pp. 32–3.

¹⁸⁶ The polemical tract *De signis hereticorum* from circa 1462 makes this claim. See György Székely, 'Husitství a maďarský lid' [Hussitism and the Hungarian people], trans. Jan Průcha, in *Mezinárodní oblas husitství*, p. 157.

¹⁸⁷ See the note 'contra Wiclephistas et hussitas et Rokycanistas', appended to Stanislav of Znojmo's treatise *Tractatus de ecclesia contra errores Wicleff et Hus*, Prague Castle Archive MS C 66.1 fol. 168^r.

¹⁸⁸ See the verse on Rokycana in Václav Nebeský, 'Dvě staré satyry' [Two old satires], *Časopis českého museum*, 26 (1852), pp. 44–5.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 45.

If Rokycana were a legitimate archbishop, asked the enemies of the Hussites, what was he doing in the company of the 'king of heretics ... *Georgio ... damnate memorie*'?¹⁹⁰ All Christians must hate the Hussites,¹⁹¹ only God knows what they are doing on Mount Tábor.¹⁹² Long after the days of the magnificent ride adherents of Rome continued to parody the Hussites in the worst context just as the Hussites had fermented public opinion against the official church in the fifteenth century. A town official at Cheb described the Hussite priest and military captain, Prokop Holý thus: 'He was Žižka's friend, stubborn, he was black like a robber, children in the streets were afraid of him'. The same official affirmed 'there were many demons in a Czech [Hussite] warrior'.¹⁹³

None of this anti-Hussite campaign seemed to bother the Hussites for long. Convinced as they were of their own rightness, based on *revelatio*, the Hussites ignored the knife of ecclesiastical authority and Sigismund that 'great red dragon'. Having completely abandoned the stalled horse cart the proverbial wild horse began to roam through the 'night of antichrist' on what the Hussites perceived as a magnificent ride. Their propaganda assured them of the establishment of God's law in Bohemia and that their enemies would reap the whirlwind of the 'fire of hell'.

The proliferation of insults, nicknames, and slogans was not confined to the writers of treatises or pamphlets on either side but rather extended to the popular movement possibly through the widespread use of songs and sayings. It would appear that oral propaganda in Hussite Bohemia was a tool for instruction and a cleverly composed series of slogans and labels. It is possible to find Hussite slogans used in other countries, a testimony to the popular appeal of such tactics.¹⁹⁴ The upshot of all this is that this particular type of propaganda aroused both religious emotion and secular belief. It spurred the Hussites on in their faith in God, in their particular agenda, as well as in their social

¹⁹⁰ This reference to King Jiří of Poděbrady in a letter of July 1471 from Pope Paul II to the papal legate in Hungary, Lorenzo Roverella. See Augustin Theiner (ed.), *Vetera monumenta historica hungarum*, (Rome, 1860), vol. II, pp. 424–5. This is the description used by Capistrano in his treatise to the priests in Kroměříž. Walouch, *Životopis Swatého Jana Kapistrána*, p. 702.

¹⁹¹ Nebeský, 'Dvě staré satyry', p. 48.

¹⁹² Sentiment expressed in an anti-Hussite rhyme composed circa 1420. Cited in Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution*, p. 299, n. 117.

¹⁹³ See František Kubů, 'Cheb v době husitské' [Cheb in the Hussite age], in *Soudce Smluvený v Chebu* [The agreement of the judge in Cheb], ed. Jindřich Jirka, (Cheb, 1982), p. 118.

¹⁹⁴ Benedykt Zientara, 'Foreigners in Poland in the 10th–15th centuries: their role in the opinion of Polish medieval community', trans. Halina Górska, *APH*, 29 (1974), p. 23.

and nationalistic aspirations. Popular Hussite songs, slogans, and proverbial sayings constituted a rather effective, if scurrilous, form of oral propaganda.

Learn it on the wall – images of dissent

Pictures are the books of the illiterate.¹⁹⁵ Jan Hus agreed maintaining that visual images were retained in the mind longer than words.¹⁹⁶ Despite the fact that the radicals engaged in iconoclasm¹⁹⁷ and viewed art with suspicion, it was only natural that the Hussites should employ art as visual propaganda to promote their ideas.¹⁹⁸ While it has been argued that no heretical movement left a legacy in terms of a specific heretical art form¹⁹⁹ it is possible to argue that the Hussite movement possessed a distinct form of heretical art. In the context of Hussite Bohemia art became a means of social conflict.²⁰⁰

In the early days of the movement one of the radical factions in Prague was the 'Dresden School' *U černé růže* (At the Black Rose). Around 1412 Nicholas of Dresden, one of its members, produced a

¹⁹⁵ Letter of Gregory the Great to Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles in 600 CE. Latin text and translation in Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, ed. C. Barrett, trans. R.M. Montgomery, (The Hague, Paris and Warsaw, 1970), vol. II, pp. 104–5.

¹⁹⁶ *Expositio decalogi*, in *Spisy M. Jana Husi* [The collected works of Master Jan Hus], ed. Václav Flajšhans, (Prague, 1903), vol. I, pp. 7–8.

¹⁹⁷ William R. Jones, 'Art and Christian piety: Iconoclasm in medieval Europe', in *The Image and the Word*, ed. Joseph Gutmann, (Missoula, 1977), p. 75. As time went by some radicals became less hostile to art. See Josef Krása, 'Studie o rukopisech husitské doby' [Studies on manuscripts from the Hussite age], *Umění*, 22: 1 (1974), p. 29 and Pavel Spunar, 'Poznámky k studiu husitského ikonoklasmu' [Remarks on the study of Hussite iconoclasm], *LF*, 110: 2 (1987), p. 124.

¹⁹⁸ For a fine collection of woodcuts, illuminations and drawings from the time of the first reformation see František Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, (4 vols, Prague, 1993), vol. IV, pp. 385–460.

¹⁹⁹ P. Francastel, 'Art et hérésie', in *Hérésies et sociétés dans l'Europe pré-industrielle 11^e–18^e siècles*, ed., Jacques LeGoff, (Civilisations et Sociétés, X), (Paris and The Hague, 1968), pp. 31–46. The point is well taken though the tens of thousands of tombstones of the Bogomils in Bosnia and Herzegovina should not be ignored. See Oto Bihalji-Merin and Alojz Benac, *Bogomil Sculpture* (New York, n.d.). I am not arguing that Hussite art represents a particular unique school or that the form was original. Art historians have demonstrated conclusively that Hussite art was neither. However, there was a distinct 'heretical' genre of art used for propagandist purposes by the Hussites.

²⁰⁰ Essentially this is the sustained argument in Horst Bredekamp, *Kunst als Medium sozialer Konflikte. Bilderkämpfe der Spätantike bis zur Hussitenrevolution*, (Frankfurt a.M., 1975). See also Thomas A. Fudge, 'Art and propaganda in Hussite Bohemia', *Religio. Revue pro religionistiku*, 1: 2 (1993), pp. 135–52.

highly influential work titled *Tabulae novi et veteris coloris*.²⁰¹ This work contrasted the primitive church (the old colour) with the Roman church (the new colour) employing the effective mode of juxtaposing antithetical texts. The original text was illustrated. Unfortunately the pictures have been lost. However, from the text it is possible to determine what the pictures were and in some manuscripts there are picture-titles.²⁰² The antithetical 'tables' show Christ carrying his cross against the Pope riding a horse. Christ washes the feet of the disciples while monks kiss the pope's feet. This latter picture is titled 'the servant of the servants of the Lord having his blessed feet kissed' (see Plate 4.2, p. 230). Another picture featured the Pope as Antichrist attended by a number of whores. In 1415 Rome's supporters protested about this crass propaganda accusing the Hussites of painting inflammatory pictures.²⁰³ While no known copy exists, Hussites in Hungary were reported to have depicted the Pope celebrating mass being served by the devil while an entourage of demons stood around the altar.²⁰⁴ The type of propaganda in the *Tabulae* was 'so stark and simple that it could be embodied in pictures to be carried in street demonstrations',²⁰⁵ a fact we shall consider below. The scathing texts themselves posited the true church against the apostate church of Rome. Jesus says, 'the Son of Man does not have where to lay his head' while Constantine says, 'we give to Blessed Silvester and his successors the palace of our Empire'. Christ, as he is being whipped, says, 'I gave my body to the smiters ...' while the Pope says, 'whoever does injury to the ... priesthood will be sentenced to death'. The emperor places a gold crown on the head of the Roman pontiff while Mary wraps baby Jesus in swaddling clothes and puts him in a manger.

As early as 1417 an anonymous refutation of the *Tabulae* was put forth decrying the blatant heresy of the work. This short rebuttal is important for its description of a number of the lost pictures.²⁰⁶ Similar

²⁰¹ This work survives in single manuscripts in Basel, Kraków, Karlsruhe and Herrnhut. There are a number of manuscripts in Vienna and Prague. An edited and translated critical edition has appeared. See also František Šmahel, 'Die Tabule veteris et novi coloris als audiovisuelles Medium hussitischer Agitation', *Studie o rukopisach*, 29 (1992), pp. 95–105.

²⁰² Kaminsky, 'Master Nicholas of Dresden: the old color and the new', p. 34.

²⁰³ The conclusions of the theologians of the Council of Constance against Jakoubek of Stribro and his doctrine of Utraquism, *De communionem plebis sub utraque specie*, in Hardt, vol. III, col. 682.

²⁰⁴ Article 32 of the *Articuli Hussitarum Hungarum*, Rome, Vatican Library MS Vat. Lat. 7307 fol. 23^v.

²⁰⁵ Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution*, p. 40.

²⁰⁶ *Responsiones ad obiectiones et picturas Huss*, Prague Castle Archive MS O 50 fols 133^v–137^v.

pictures or redactions of the originals were also to be seen at the 'Dresden School at the Black Rose', another Prague building called *U kos* (At the Scythes) and on the walls of the Bethlehem Chapel and are preserved in the Jena Codex and the Göttingen manuscript.²⁰⁷ Hence, the *Tabulae* may rightly be considered the prototype of the burgeoning Hussite visual propaganda.

Arguably one of the most important centres of the reform movement in the early years was Prague's Bethlehem Chapel. During the years when Jan Hus and Jakoubek of Stříbro were rectors, the chapel became a place of reformation preaching and activity with emphasis on the vernacular. To the Hussites the use of the vernacular at the highest levels of spiritual expression came to be regarded as a component of adhering to the law of God.²⁰⁸ In addition to these emphases the chapel became a centre of visual propaganda.

The interior of the chapel had the interesting feature of contrasting pictures on the walls. One of the pictures portrayed the Pope riding on a powerful steed, arrayed in the pomp and splendour of the papal garb, its counterpart featured the poverty-stricken Christ weighed beneath the bulk of the cross. This motif can be indubitably found in the *Tabulae*. A second set of pictures depicted the 'Donation of Constantine' wherein the emperor gives the city of Rome to the Pope along with the glory and magnificence of a palace. Constantine places a crown of gold upon the Pope's head, clothes him in a purple mantle, and assists the holy father into the saddle of a mighty stallion. On the companion portrait is the lowly Christ before the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, wearing a crown of thorns, and being subjected to the abuse and humiliation of the rejected outcast. Again, the influence of the *Tabulae* is evident. The third set of pictures finds the Pope seated upon his throne while his feet are being kissed by adoring followers. By contrast we find Christ kneeling upon the floor in the act of washing the feet of the disciples.²⁰⁹ The consequence of these pictures upon the minds of those gathering for worship in the chapel suggested, as its immediate result, the conclusion that the Pope is not the vicar of Christ but rather the servant of Satan and furthermore that the Roman curia is the playground of Antichrist.²¹⁰ That there were pictures on the walls of

²⁰⁷ Kaminsky et al., 'Master Nicholas of Dresden: the old color and the new', p. 36.

²⁰⁸ Svejkský, 'The conception of the "vernacular" in Czech literature and culture of the fifteenth century', p. 331.

²⁰⁹ František M. Bartoš, 'Po stopách obrazů v Betlemské kapli z doby Husovy' [An investigation of the symbols at the Bethlehem Chapel from the time of Hus], *JSH*, 20 (1951), pp. 121-7, especially p. 127.

²¹⁰ Bartoš, 'Po stopách obrazů v Betlemské kapli z doby Husovy', pp. 121-2.

Bethlehem is not to be doubted. While in prison at Constance Hus dreamed that prelates were seeking to destroy the pictures. Furthermore, visitors to Prague in the fifteenth century noted and described the unusual ecclesiastical decor of the chapel.²¹¹

In 1949 during the reconstruction of Bethlehem Chapel a remarkable discovery was made beneath the plaster on the walls. During the counter-reformation period, when Bohemia had later passed back under the control of Rome following the triumph of the official church over heresy in 1620, the walls of the Bethlehem Chapel had been covered over with a layer of plaster. In 1786 the chapel was ordered to be demolished by the Habsburg emperor, Joseph II of Austria. But not all the chapel was laid waste. The massive Gothic walls were not pulled down but rather incorporated into newer structures. During the reconstruction period fragmentary evidence of Gothic inscriptions were found on the walls behind a layer of plaster. These inscriptions were identified as the original text of Jan Hus's *De sex erroribus*. Hus had this text, in abbreviated fashion, put on the Bethlehem walls and later, likely in 1413, expanded into a Czech translation and inscribed upon the north and south walls of the chapel.²¹² Essentially, *De sex erroribus* was intended to enlighten the congregants of Bethlehem *vis-à-vis* the six errors of the mass. Namely, that the priest creates the body of God, that faith is exercised also in Mary, that a priest may absolve whomever he wills, that subjects are bound to obey all commands issued by superiors, a reinterpretation of excommunication, and finally an injunction against simony. Hus considered these texts and the aforementioned paintings as pedagogical aids. While writing from exile and expounding upon the same errors Hus admonished his followers: '*Et si non vis credere, disce in Bethleem in pariete*' (and if you will not believe it, learn it on the wall in Bethlehem). Thus the popular song, 'If you want to know the bible you must go to Bethlehem and learn it on the walls as Master Jan of Husinec preached it', and this remark by Hus refers to the same idea, the visual texts and paintings in the chapel.

This reference to learning from the illustrations on the wall strengthens the idea that Hus had begun to see reform in a thoroughgoing manner as had his predecessor Jan Milíč of Kroměříž. Bethlehem Chapel became a centre of popular rebellion against the abuses and

²¹¹ See Hus's letter of 5 March 1415 to Jan of Chlům in *Letters*, pp. 147-9. The three sets of antithetical pictures just described are based upon the account of the Franciscan Matthias Döring who saw them around 1440. See Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek MS 181. I have been unable to consult this source.

²¹² Both Latin and Czech texts have been edited and published in Bohumil Ryba, *Betlemské texty* [The Bethlehem texts], (Prague, 1951), pp. 39-103.

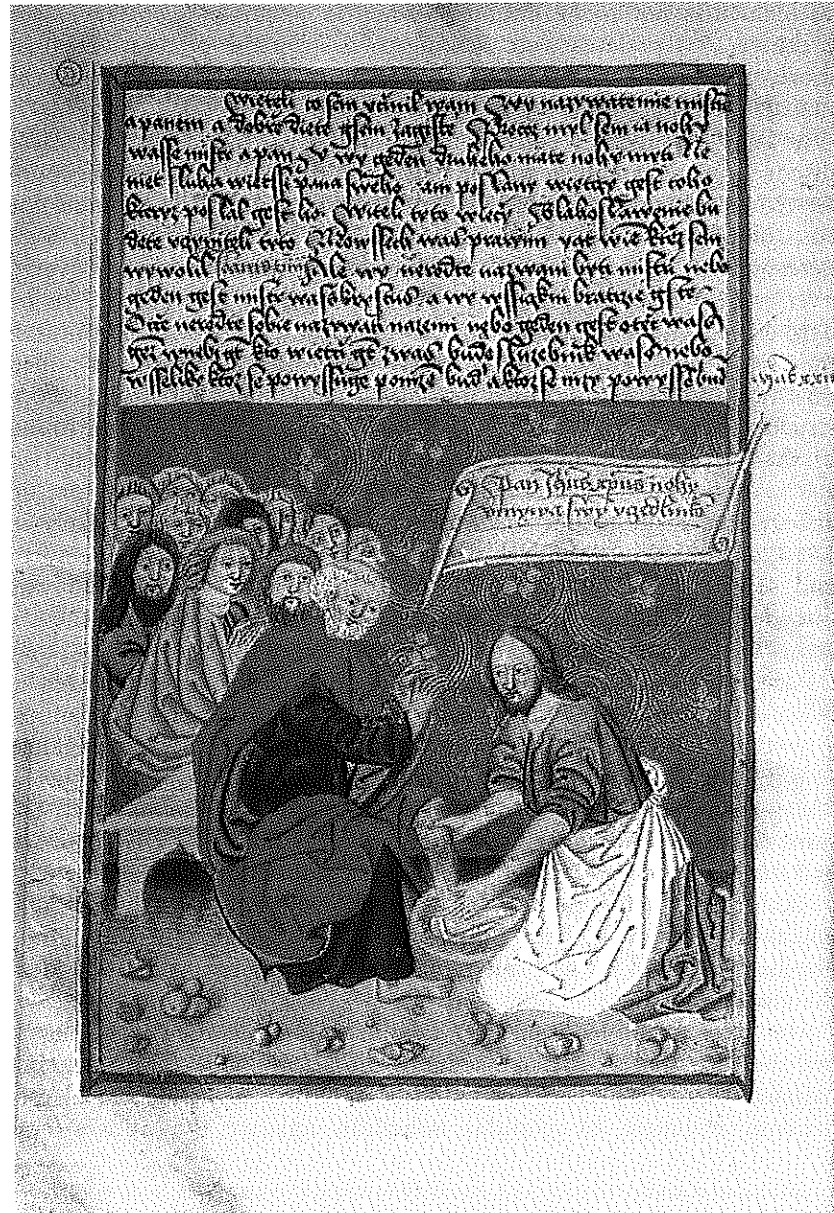


Plate 4.2 Antithesis of Christ and (facing) Antichrist



institutionalism of the Roman Church. When Hus implored his followers 'to learn it on the wall at Bethlehem' he did not have in mind only the errors of the mass. Instead, he included those other texts also inscribed on those same walls, the Credo and the Decalogue, both written in Czech.²¹³ During Jakoubek of Stříbro's tenure the repertoire of radical representations was further expanded. Around 1416 Jakoubek caused *De communione spirituali et sacramentali integra sub duplici forma panis et vini*, his justification for the practice of utraquism, to be placed upon the west wall of the chapel. Around 1419 his plea for infant communion, *De communione parvulorum* was added thus completing the unusual decor of what should rightly be seen as the mother church of the first reformation in Bohemia.²¹⁴ A doubtful, but interesting comment is the one allegedly made by one of Hus's enemies concerning the chapel: 'Its pulpit is [Jan] Hus's triumphal chariot, and the paintings upon the walls are the blazonry of his armour'.²¹⁵ It may in some ways have been opposed to Rome but it is impossible to say that the Bethlehem Chapel was anti-liturgical and anti-Catholic and therefore a statement against the official church.²¹⁶

These ideas became popular with the poor people and also among the gentry and burghers both in Bohemia and abroad.²¹⁷ Hussite visual propaganda made a concerted attempt to connect the movement to the 'authority of the eternal yesterday', to use Max Weber's phrase,²¹⁸ and not only couched its agenda in scriptural terms but also transmuted biblical characters into Hussites and managed to get some Hussites into the Bible itself. The earliest portrayal of Jan Hus at the stake is found in a Bible from around 1430.²¹⁹ A Czech Old Testament contains an

²¹³ This conclusion was reached in a preliminary report by Bohumil Ryba, 'Nápisné nálezy v kapli Betlémské' [The discovery of inscriptions in the Bethlehem Chapel], *LF*, 73: 4-5, (1949), pp. 163-70 and then more conclusively in his book, *Betlémské texty* [The Bethlehem Texts], (Prague, 1951).

²¹⁴ The entire texts were not inscribed on the walls. They appear in Ryba, *Betlémské texty*, pp. 105-163.

²¹⁵ Cited in S.E. Herrick, *Some Heretics of Yesterday* (Boston and Cambridge, 1885), p. 54 without reference to a primary source.

²¹⁶ As expressed by Horst Bredekamp, *Kunst als Medium sozialer Konflikte. Bilderkämpfe von der Spätantike bis zur Hussitenrevolution*, p. 308.

²¹⁷ A.I. Ozolin, 'Oblas husitství v některých zemích střední a západní evropy' [The response to Hussitism in some countries of central and western Europe], trans. Věra Ostrouchová, in *Mezinárodní oblas husitství*, p. 310.

²¹⁸ Max Weber, 'Politik als Beruf', in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, ed. Johannes Winkelmann, (Tübingen, 1971), p. 507.

²¹⁹ *Martinická bible* [Martinic Bible], Prague, National and University Library MS no signature fol. 11^v. This Bible was illuminated for, and presented as a gift to, Petr of Mladoňovice.

exquisite pencil drawing of a war scene in the bottom margin. The battle depicts the Hussites against the crusaders as can be determined readily from the unique Hussite weapons and battle formations.²²⁰ Such evidence gives further support to the idea that the Hussites thought of themselves as the true people of God and the popular impact of seeing Hussites on the pages of scripture²²¹ would certainly have been positive. More interesting is the portrayal of the biblical King David as a Hussite warrior carrying a Hussite shield, emblazoned with a large chalice, sword aloft, standing over his vanquished foes.²²² In the same manuscript an illumination portrays the Hussite chalice beside a monstrance on an altar with a group of people kneeling before it.²²³ Painted Hussite war shields portraying the encounter between David and Goliath or other themes could be considered visual propaganda. The visual reinforcement of Hussite teaching could further strengthen the Hussite influence at the popular level and make the authority of the eternal yesterday a present reality.

Representations of Jan Hus at the stake began appearing in liturgical books sometimes in connection to the Feast of St Jan Hus or simply as an independent illumination. There are a number of examples.²²⁴ The apotheosis of St Jan Hus is certainly a fine example of what must have been an entire genre of visual propaganda which has now almost entirely disappeared (see Plate 3.4, p. 134). Even Jan Žižka can be found in liturgical books.²²⁵ Anti-Hussite sentiment could neither ignore such glaring propaganda nor tolerate its presence. Manuscript illuminations and drawings became easy targets for selective private iconoclasm²²⁶ especially in the context of Hussite Bohemia where in most places it would have been virtual suicide to publicly attack Hussite iconography. While it would be too tedious and in the end impossible to discuss all examples of this private iconoclasm, it will suffice to mention only a few representative examples. One Hussite liturgical text (for example, an antiphony) from the fifteenth century has been preserved although a number of the illuminations have

²²⁰ Prague, National and University Library MS XVII A 34 fol. 115^r.

²²¹ See for example the *Zámojských Bible*, Prague, National and University Library MS XVII C 56 fol. 95^v.

²²² *Krumlovský sborník*, Prague, National Museum Library MS III B 10 fol. 20^v.

²²³ *Ibid.*, fol. 95^v.

²²⁴ For example *Malostranský graduál* [The Graduale of the Lesser Town], Prague, National and University Library MS XVII A 3 fol. 263^r and *Litoměřický graduál* [Litoměřice Graduale], Terezín, Regional Archives MS IV C 1, fol. 43^r.

²²⁵ See for example the *Jistebnický graduál*, Prague, National Museum Library MS XII F 14 fol. 61^r.

²²⁶ Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art*, pp. 18-19.

been removed.²²⁷ This could be due either with regard to their value or the illuminations may have been explicitly Hussite and thus someone wanted to expunge an otherwise clearly orthodox text of some objectionable visual aids. This latter possibility is most certainly valid in the case of another Hussite antiphonary also dating from the fifteenth century. Where the Office of the Feast of St Jan Hus would have occurred, at least ten pages have been crudely cut out of the text.²²⁸ In other instances, a later hand has crossed out part of the text, or a marginal notation, and affixed a contradictory note to the original passage.²²⁹ This sort of thing can be regarded as private propaganda or private iconoclasm depending upon the perspective.

During the early days of the revolution when challenges from within Bohemia threatened the movement,²³⁰ the radicals engaged in propagandist activities all the more and went as far as to tear down the regent banner of the Lord High Burgrave, Čeněk of Vartenberk, from the Old Town Hall and put it in the pillory.²³¹ The effect was more than superficial though the radicals would have to wait for their victory. From the days when the radicals carried belligerently the antithetical pictures of the *Tabulae* through the streets of Prague to when they showed up, *en route* to the Council of Basel, with propagandist banners displaying offensive emblems and slogans,²³² the revolutionary movement engaged in promoting visual propaganda and also in destroying Roman images under the influence of Wyclif whom some have regarded as a source of Hussite iconophobia.²³³ The adherents of Rome were also quite capable of formulating their own response. In 1417 the priest Lénárt Fuchs in

²²⁷ *Husitský antiphonale*, Prague, National Museum Library MS XII A 21. The Roman Church in Bohemia had its own distinctively anti-Hussite liturgical books. For example *Protihusitský postila*, Prague, National Museum Library MS I E 6 fols 152^v–175^v.

²²⁸ Prague, National and University Library MS IV H 12. My reasons for making this assumption have been outlined in Chapter 3 of this volume and have been confirmed by David R. Holeton.

²²⁹ See for example Prague Castle Archive MS D 48 fol. 91 and Prague, National and University Library MS III G 16 fol. 73^v. This latter example has this Czech comment added to a Latin text: 'Take care, you little monk, don't go running all around the world telling lies about Czechs.'

²³⁰ There were more than 300 letters of challenge from opponents of the Hussite movement. See *AČ*, vol. IV, pp. 378–81.

²³¹ Frederick G. Heymann, *John Žižka and the Hussite Revolution* (New York, 1969), p. 119.

²³² Christianson, *Cesarini: The Conciliar Cardinal. The Basel years, 1431–1438* (St Ottilien, 1979), p. 75.

²³³ Jana Nechutová, 'Traktat "De ymaginibus", připisovaný Petru Paynovi (Pražský univerzitní kodex IX E 10, ff. 210^v–214^r)' [The tractate 'On Images', attributed to Peter Payne], *HT*, 9 (1986–87), p. 325.

Šopron, Hungary built an altar in his parish church for the suffering souls in purgatory in direct opposition to the Hussite heresy.²³⁴ A classic example of anti-Hussite visual propaganda occurred in Silesia around 1471. After the 'king of heretics', Jiří of Poděbrady, died the abbot of the Monastery of the Virgin in Wrocław (Breslau) ordered a new chapel to be erected. In the chapel the abbot had a mural painted which depicted the last great judgement. Among those cast out of the kingdom of God and delivered to the fires of hell was King Jiří, shown being sent to hell carried downward by two demons.²³⁵

The ultimate surviving source of Hussite visual propaganda is the Jena Codex.²³⁶ While it dates from the later fifteenth century it is based upon Hussite motifs, albeit redacted forms, and demonstrates the strength and vitality of the Hussite revolution long after the end of the magnificent ride. Rather than a simple historical artefact, this source is a powerful witness of Hussite propaganda compiled and preserved from a broadcasted agenda which was echoed throughout Bohemia. The Jena Codex as the summation of Hussite heretical art and propaganda performs two exceptionally important functions. For example, 'a painting of the crucifixion is both a kind of message which conveys information and a collection of stimuli designed to provoke reactions'.²³⁷ As propaganda, the Jena Codex fulfils the functions of conveying the Hussite myth and heresy and also, in its basic design, provoking a reaction.

Though the codex contains some interesting non-visual features such as a Hussite hymn and a satirical letter from the Devil to Lev of Rožmitál,²³⁸ it is the pictures which are relevant in this context. Many of the pictures are based upon Hussite motifs and indeed can be traced back to lost visual propaganda from the second decade of the fifteenth century especially the *Tabulae* of Nicholas of Dresden. The codex features in a number of places carefully juxtaposed pictures articulating what fol. 1^r calls the '*Antithesis Christi & Antichristi*'. It is these anti-

²³⁴ Székely, 'Husitství a maďarský lid', p. 129.

²³⁵ *Peter Eschenloer's Geschichten der Stadt Breslau, 1440–1479*, vol. II, p. 274.

²³⁶ Some of the pictures reproduced in Karel Chytil, *Antikrist v naukách a umění středověku a husitské obrazné antithese* [Antichrist in the teaching and art of the middle ages and the Hussite symbolic antithesis], (Rozpravy české akademie věd a umění, 59), (Prague, 1918); Václav Husa, 'O době vzniku Jenského kodexu' [Concerning the time of the origin of the Jena Codex], *Sborník historický*, 5 (1957), pp. 71–108, and Zoroslava Drobná, *The Jena Codex: Hussite Pictorial Satire from the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Eleanor Wheeler, (Prague, 1970).

²³⁷ Vovelle, *Ideologies and Mentalities*, p. 57.

²³⁸ Jena Codex, Prague, National Museum Library MS IV B 24 fols 8^r–8^v and fols 57^r–65^v. Hereafter, references shall be abbreviated to Jena Codex followed by the folio number(s).

thetical pictures which function as the most powerful Hussite propaganda. One portrait shows Christ on the cross with another figure approaching the crucified Christ carrying a cross. The message is quite clear: pick up your cross and follow the narrow road to Christ. Its counterpart shows nine figures – a pope, cardinal, bishop, Holy Roman emperor, king, a female religious and three nobles – all riding horses along a road. The message is unambiguous: the wide road to damnation.²³⁹ The solemn 'Last Supper' of Jesus and his disciples is offset by the 'Nová mše' (New Mass) which features monks dancing merrily with girls. A little demon on the roof of the church encourages the activity.²⁴⁰ In the former all eat and drink, while in the latter the people kneel to gaze merely at the elevated host. While the apostles pray together a sinful woman is crowned pope by a cardinal,²⁴¹ an allusion to the legend that once there had been a female pope. The patriarch Joseph in Egypt is shown spurning the advances of Potiphar's lecherous wife even though she has already grasped hold of him. The prior antithesis portrays a monastic community in a village where the central object is a woman upon whom the brothers gaze raptly. The facing antithetical portrait is even more stark in its contrast. Traces of sexual indulgence are everywhere. The setting is a cloistered abbey. Two monks have climbed up into a tree while two nuns below are either attempting to climb up and join the brothers in contemplation, or they are attempting to shake the monks down. Another tree has a monk starting up to join two nuns. Another couple are embracing while several others are making sport with each other. At the bottom of the page is the statement, 'where Jesus is, there is no childish play'.²⁴² The Göttingen manuscript features a similar scene. A bishop outside a church holds a thurible. Inside, a monk, with a woman, tries to hide his face with his habit. Outside the church door, a woman holds on to the stole of a cleric while another priest covers the mouth of yet another woman.²⁴³ This tradition has deep roots. The merchant's apprentice, Rubin, tells his associate Pusterpalk in the *Mastičkář* that his 'aunt Vavřena was shut in a barn with a certain monk-commendator just below his estate'. More than that, Rubin says, 'my Aunt Jilka and the other one, Milka, they wander

²³⁹ Jena Codex, fols 4^v–5^r.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., fols 67^v–68^r and Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 pp. 18–19.

²⁴¹ Jena Codex, fols 69^v–70^r and Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 pp. 62–3.

²⁴² Jena Codex, fols 72^r–73^r. See also Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 pp. 67–9. In this latter manuscript the woman says, 'come, visit me'.

²⁴³ Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 p. 71.

the world over but they know all the monks around Prague. And my sister Běta and the other one, Květa, catch crabs with their petticoats'. Pusterpalk is unimpressed and makes this boastful rejoinder: 'My mother is called Havlice, she has seduced all the monks in Prague'.²⁴⁴

The Ethiopian eunuch, in the canonical Acts of the Apostles, is baptized by the Apostle Philip. The counterpart here shows a monk stabbing what appears to be a new-born baby while a woman looks on. A recently dug grave can be seen in the foreground, shovel still in place, along with a baptismal font. The propaganda is stark. The monk is slaying his own illegitimate child after having baptized it. The woman is obviously the mother of the child and the participant in this insidiously immoral affair.²⁴⁵ Other sources confirm that this illumination was not merely an allegorical Hussite comment on the morality of the monastic community. This portrait finds historical basis in the crime committed in the town of Brožany in 1458. The incident was related by Zdeněk Kostka in 1463 before King Jiří of Poděbrady and the assembly of the Diet of Nobles in Prague. 'A priest from the castle, on land owned by Boreš of Osek, got his cook pregnant. He was the child's godfather, he baptized it, killed it, buried it and said the prayers for the dead'.²⁴⁶ In the context of Hussite Bohemia conservatives like Jan Příbram accused Táborite priests of indulging in promiscuous sex. The implication being, though not clearly stated, that they were not married to the women.²⁴⁷

The antitheses continue with the apostles in stocks in one portrait, one already beheaded, while on the other hand other apostles are held in a pillory and subjected to the whip of the magistrate. Between these two pictures a priest of the 'new' church is shown interfering in civic affairs, wielding his own power, with his own people.²⁴⁸ While St Lawrence is martyred torturously on a bed of hot coals, two monks recline in a bathhouse attended by four seductive women. One monk, in the bath, is embraced by one of the women, whose thigh he caresses, while the other two ladies wash the monk's body. The second monk reclines on a couch to allow his female attendant to rub his stomach while he fondles her breast.²⁴⁹ The city of Antichrist is juxtaposed to the city of Christ in the

²⁴⁴ Veltruský, *A Sacred Farce from Medieval Bohemia*, pp. 355, 371. The first quotation is from the Prague fragment, the second and third from the Schlägel fragment.

²⁴⁵ Jena Codex, fols 76^v–77^r and Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 pp. 76–77.

²⁴⁶ Jena Codex, fol. 77^r.

²⁴⁷ Jan Příbram, *Život kněží tábořských* in *KJBB*, pp. 283–4. Since Táborite priests did marry legitimately, it seems doubtful that Příbram could be referring to that. The implication is clearly in terms of illicit sex.

²⁴⁸ Jena Codex, fols 74^v–75^v.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., fols 78^v–79^r.

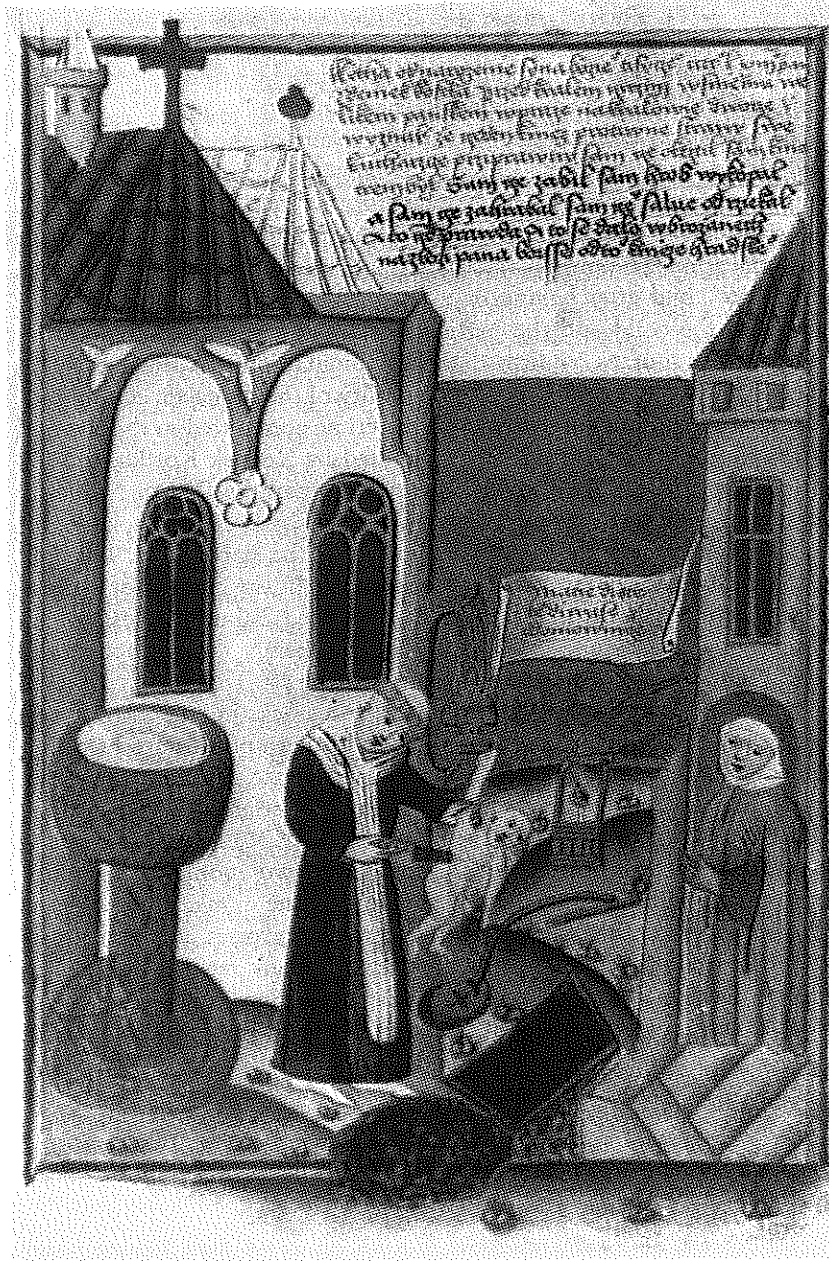


Plate 4.3 Anti-monastic Hussite propaganda

same manner. The earthly city of Rome is countered by the heavenly city of Jerusalem. In the former, Antichrist rules with his demonic friends while in the latter, Christ reigns with all the angels and saints. The tower of the *civitas diaboli* is being built by devils, while the tower of the latter is constructed by angels. A beast wearing a tiara sticks his head out of the tower window in the city of Antichrist, while in the city of Christ, Jesus sits holding a book, probably symbolizing the Bible.²⁵⁰ While Christ invites the faithful into heaven, two large horned demons with protruding red tongues shove people into the jaws of hell.²⁵¹ As St Peter hangs upside down in the agony of crucifixion, the Emperor Ludwig gives the Pope world dominion. This set of illuminations can also be found in the antithetical drawings of the Göttingen manuscript.²⁵² The contrasting portraits allegedly in the Bethlehem Chapel are also repeated here with Christ carrying his cross while the Pope rides a horse. Later Christ washes the feet of his disciples humbly, while the papal '*servus servorum Dei*' (servant of the servants of the Lord), arrogantly has his feet kissed by two monks (see Plate 4.2, p. 230).²⁵³

According to the Hussites, the ship of Rome had sailed into the eye of the storm and in the tempest had begun to founder and was now being scuttled by its own crew. The Jena Codex shows a church building falling over. Two monks place two support beams up against the building in an attempt to save it. Two other monks, holding a large saw, have begun to cut one of the support beams in two.²⁵⁴ This conundrum exists, according to the Hussites, because a wolf has come in among the sheep and the Church has turned away from truly following after Christ.²⁵⁵ This reflects in visual manifestation what the Hussites were teaching in theory. Jan Hus wrote to Křišť'an of Prachatice and articulated the 'abomination of desolation' in terms of the debauched papacy. Instead of 'the holiest, most pious, gentlest, humblest, poorest, most untiring, most patient, most chaste man' occupying the See of Rome, there is 'the worst, cruellest, most vindictive, proudest, richest in the

²⁵⁰ Ibid., fols 10^v–11^r.

²⁵¹ *Krumlovský sborník*, Prague, National Museum Library MS III B 10 fol. 47^r.

²⁵² Jena Codex, fols 14^v–15^r. Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 pp. 37–8.

²⁵³ Jena Codex, fols 12^v–13^r, 34^v–35^r. Göttingen Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 pp. 34–5 and 79. Another antithetical variation appears in the Velislav Bible, Prague, National and University Library MS XXIII C 124 fol. 149^r where 'the good shepherd' is juxtaposed to 'the bad shepherd'. Christ, the good shepherd, holds a lamb while a monk is accompanied by two winged monsters. As one of the monsters rubs the monk's tonsure, a wolf attacks a lamb.

²⁵⁴ Jena Codex, fol. 3^v.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., fol. 4^r.



Plate 4.4 Satan in a monk's gown: the Hussite Antichrist

world, laziest, most impatient, and most unchaste' monster sitting 'in that holy place ...'.²⁵⁶ This 'abomination of desolation', a term itself

²⁵⁶ Dated April, 1413 in *Letters*, p. 100.

extracted from the apocalyptic literature of the Hebrew Bible, is aptly portrayed in the Jena Codex. 'Today, poison is poured into the church', says a voice from heaven, as Emperor Constantine makes his 'Donation' to the Church and to 'Mr Pope'.²⁵⁷ The Pope is no longer the vicar of Christ, but rather the emissary of Antichrist. While the holy father cavorts with whores his true identity is revealed by claws protruding from beneath his pontifical robes.²⁵⁸ This association of Rome with Antichrist is strengthened further by the illustration of the seven-headed dragon of the Apocalypse pursuing the woman of the sun. The 'whore of Babylon', sitting upon the dragon's back in the Apocalypse, is here portrayed as a basilica marked with three papal crosses.²⁵⁹ The idea of the corruption of the official church is unmistakable. In both the Jena Codex and the Göttingen manuscript antichrist is portrayed prominently.²⁶⁰ The intended equation of Rome and Antichrist is not to be missed. Instead of apostolic poverty and simplicity, the papacy have indulged in wealth and affluence. 'Naked, they follow a naked Christ.'²⁶¹ This commonplace designation of the medieval Waldensians, Cistercians and others, could in no wise be applied to the papacy. The apocryphal, but instructive story of Thomas Aquinas's visit to Rome is worth repeating here as it reflects expressly the Hussite view of Rome. When Aquinas was shown the great papal treasure-houses in Rome he was told, 'Peter can no longer say, "silver and gold have I none"', to which Thomas supposedly replied, 'neither can he any longer say "in the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk"'.²⁶² In the Jena Codex this motif is vividly displayed in the picture of the priest moving all of his many belongings, including his mistress, in several large wagons.²⁶³

²⁵⁷ Jena Codex, fol. 28^r. See also Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 p. 21. A manuscript from c. 1350 shows the great red dragon of the Apocalypse. Its seven heads are labelled with the names of seven powerful rulers including Constantine the Great. Prague, National Museum Library MS XIV B 17 fol. 3^v.

²⁵⁸ Jena Codex, fol. 35^v.

²⁵⁹ Velislav Bible, Prague, National and University Library MS XXIII C 124 fol. 163^r. Bernard McGinn does not agree with this, claiming the church is not actually on the dragon's back, but above it indicating the heavenly realm. See his, 'Portraying Antichrist in the Middle Ages', in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, eds Werner Verbeke, Daniel Verhelst and Andries Welkenhuysen, *Mediaevalia Lovaniensia*, 15 (1988), p. 18, n. 81.

²⁶⁰ Jena Codex, fol. 71^v and Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 p. 66.

²⁶¹ Walter Map, *De nugis curialium*, ch. 31 in *Anecdota Oxoniensia*, ed. Montague Rhodes James, (Oxford, 1914), p. 61.

²⁶² Cited in the introduction to the English translation of Hus's *De ecclesia*. John Huss, *The Church*, trans. David S. Schaff, (New York, 1915), p. xviii, n. 1.

²⁶³ Jena Codex, fol. 67^r. The same drawing appears in Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 p. 17. Also in the Göttingen manuscript is the antithesis of Jesus and a

According to Hussite teaching, the papacy was completely in the clutches of the forces of darkness which produced the 'night of anti-christ' over the entire world. A seven-headed dragon, symbolizing Antichrist, is devouring the Pope, along with his cardinals and bishops in a deadly embrace.²⁶⁴ This particular picture may indicate a distinctive contribution of Hussitism to the Antichrist tradition. The papacy is both associated with the Antichrist as well as the victim of Antichrist. Another portrait shows a warrior (possibly a Hussite) stuffing a little monster and the Pope head first into the open jaws of a huge dragon. Marginalia, commenting on this picture, is fully in line with Hussite theology in the remark, 'caught by the peasant'.²⁶⁵ With his moneybag hanging from a waist-belt, Judas kisses Jesus as armed hoodlums move in. The companion portrait shows the Pope kissing a woman as two others look on.²⁶⁶

The rider of the Apocalypse, seated on a pale horse, sounds very much like the description of Jan Žižka in a fifteenth-century chronicle.²⁶⁷ However, the rider of the Apocalypse who appears in the Jena Codex is based upon the horseman who emerged when 'the third living creature' opened 'the third seal'. 'And I saw, and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a balance in his hand.'²⁶⁸ The Roman Church is weighed in the balances and found wanting.²⁶⁹ The Hussite alternative, of course, is far superior. Matěj and Milíč demanded apostolic poverty, Jan Želivský denounced priests as thieves and the result of this tradition was the radical Hussite-Táborite communism,²⁷⁰ or the true community of Christ.

There are a number of explicit Hussite illuminations in the Jena Codex. First, there is a cardinal holding scales weighing the law of the

disciple standing barefoot teaching while the Pope reclines on his throne, see pp. 40–41. This critique of ecclesiastical wealth and indulgence is stated well by Jakoubek in his satire against clerics who wear vestments more suited for 'parties' than worship and who strut about in search of carnal delights. 'It is a shameful reproach to preach Christ crucified with fat bellies and to admonish to fasting with red lips and double chins.' *Apologia pro communione plebis sub utraque specie*, in Hardt, vol. III, col. 605.

²⁶⁴ Jena Codex, fol. 69^r and Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 p. 33.

²⁶⁵ Jena Codex, fol. 80^r and Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 p. 13.

²⁶⁶ Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 pp. 80–81.

²⁶⁷ Revelation 19:11–15 RSV. *Kronika velmi pěkná o Janovi Žižkovi, Čeledína Krále Václava* [The very pretty chronicle of Jan Žižka, the servant of King Václav], ed., Jaroslav Štůla, (Hradec Králové, 1979), p. xxiii.

²⁶⁸ Revelation 6:5b RSV.

²⁶⁹ Jena Codex, fol. 24^v. Cf. the same illustration in Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 p. 58.

²⁷⁰ Vladimír Denkstein, 'Husitský kodex z Jena' [The Hussite codex from Jena], *Časopis národního musea*, 120: 1 (1951), p. 8



Plate 4.5 Final defeat of Rome and her accomplices

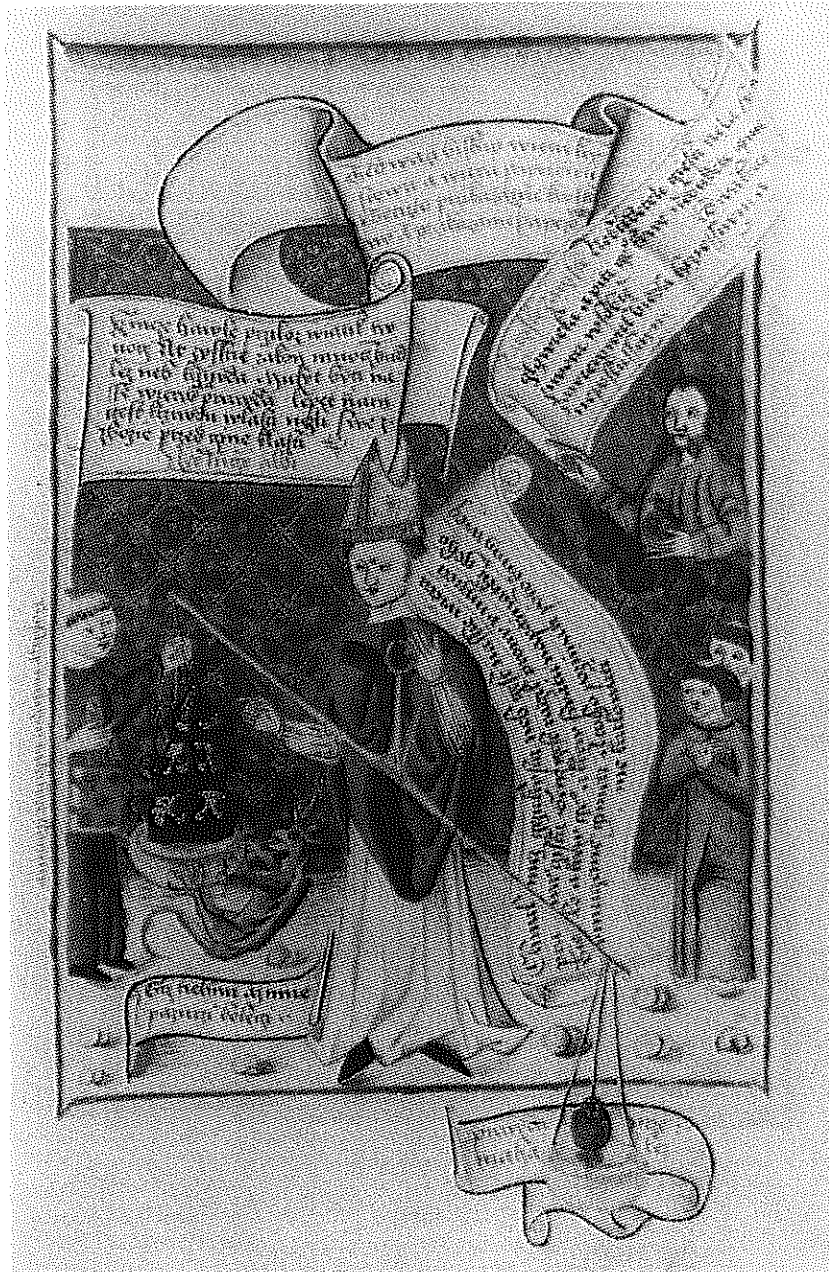


Plate 4.6 Triumph of the Hussite chalice over papal religion

pope against the law of God. The Roman law is represented by the papal tiara while the law of God is represented by the Hussite chalice. In the Göttingen manuscript several onlookers are identified including the Hussite Archbishop Jan Rokycana. In the Jena Codex the cardinal says to a monk standing near the tiara, 'Priest Havel, give me your bag so that you can get my law'. This means 'help me weigh the tiara down'. Already, the chalice has won the test. Notwithstanding this, a little devil has latched onto the tiara side of the scale in a hopeless attempt to help Rome prevail. He plaintively says, 'I'm getting tired and my legs are hurting'. The triumph of the chalice over Rome is expressed most vividly.²⁷¹ Elsewhere, a drollery of a monk beneath a capital letter in a Hussite influenced Latin graduale bears this inscription: '*Ha ha, Monachus, Veritas Vincit*'.²⁷² With the slogan 'truth conquers' hailing the victory of the chalice the Hussites could then denounce easily some of Rome's leading personalities. The 'monk of Satan', John Capistrano, appeared in a polemical caricature in 1451, evidently by request of Hussite priests in Kroměříž as a counter-attack against Capistrano's mission into Bohemia to preach against heretics.²⁷³ In a Czech Bible published in Venice in 1506, the obdurate enemy of the Hussites, the Pope, provides an illustration for the sixth chapter of the Apocalypse by appearing in the fires of hell.²⁷⁴

Theological propaganda is also starkly evident in the Jena Codex in another set of antithetical pictures. In one portrait is shown a Hussite celebration of the eucharist. In this setting children are being communed *sub utraque specie*. Infant communion had become a feature of Hussitism in the second decade of the fifteenth century despite strong Roman opposition.²⁷⁵ Its counterpart portrays a battle scene between

²⁷¹ Jena Codex, fol. 25^r. Cf. Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 p. 59.

²⁷² Latin graduale, Mladá Boleslav, Regional Museum MS 1/70a olim II A 1 fol. 115^v.

²⁷³ The term appears in the Hussite manifesto titled 'The open letter of Martin Lupáč to Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa', dated 14 July 1452. Published in Manifestos, p. 223. On the caricature see Noemi Rejchrtová, 'Czech Utraquism at the time of Václav Koranda the Younger and the visual arts', CV, 20 (Winter 1977), p. 239.

²⁷⁴ The Prague burghers Jan Hlavsa, Václav Sova and Burian Lazar helped to produce this Bible. Description in Ferdinand Hrejsa, *Dějiny křesťanství v Československu* [History of Christianity in Czechoslovakia] (6 vols, Prague, 1947–50), vol. IV, p. 171.

²⁷⁵ On this subject see David R. Holeton, *La Communion des tout-petits enfants. Étude du mouvement eucharistique en Bohême vers la fin du Moyen-Âge*, (Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae Subsidia, 50), (Rome, 1989), *idem*, 'The communion of infants and Hussitism', CV, 27 (1984), pp. 207–25, *idem*, 'The communion of infants: the Basel years', CV, 29 (Spring 1986), pp. 15–40, *idem*, 'Videtur quod, sicut baptismus, sic et communio sacramentalis infancium fundatur in Ewangelio quod consentire videtur' (MS Prague, NK VIII. D. 15ff. 130–36): A new text on the communion of infants', *Studie o rukopisech*, 30 (1993–94), pp. 23–8 and Thomas A. Fudge, 'Hussite infant communion', *Lutheran Quar-*

the Hussite armies and the Crusaders. The Hussites hold a large red banner with a gold chalice which says '*veritas vincit*'. The Crusaders obviously are intended to be seen as adherents of Rome as may be evidenced from the several tonsured heads amid their troops. The common theme, in what might otherwise appear to be an incongruent set of pictures, is children. One child is trampled under a Crusader's horse, another has been run through by a Crusader's spear, while a third has been decapitated with its head impaled on the spear of a Crusader and held aloft as if in triumph. The message is powerful in its propagandist orientation: the Hussites admit children to commune in the sacrament of the body and blood of God, the Romanists kill children.²⁷⁶ The wickedness of Rome functioned perennially as a commonplace in Hussite propaganda as well as in general Hussite sentiment. According to the charges against Jerome of Prague at Constance, this zealous disciple of Hus on numerous occasions confronted the evil-doers. In August 1412 Jerome burst into the cleric's residence in Jindřichův Hradec and accosted the priests Beneš of Opatovice and Jan of Vysoké Mýto. Denouncing both clerics and the Pope as 'liars, heretics and usurers' Jerome, together with armed accomplices, drove the beleaguered priests out of the house and out of the town altogether.²⁷⁷

According to the pictorial representations in the Jena Codex the chalice had been given to the Hussites directly from heaven. One particular picture, showing a hand holding a chalice appearing from heaven to a group of people, is the visual representation of Jakoubek's answer to Ondřej of Brod that Utraquism came as *revelatio*. At the birth of Christ a chalice is present.²⁷⁸ If the Roman Church would not accept this *revelatio* of truth but insisted upon opposing the law of God, the Hussites were prepared to take action against them. The caricature of a monk bound in fetters and shrieking in pain in a manuscript illumination²⁷⁹ indicates in theory what the Hussites pledged to do in practice.

terly, 10 (1996), pp. 179–94. Jakoubek of Stříbro was an ardent defender of infant communion. His defence of this tenet appears in Prague, National and University Library MS VIII E 7 fols 104^v–116^v. Jan of Jesenice presented the first, and the most important, argument against the practice. See his rebuttal in Prague, National and University Library MS VIII E 7 fols 37^v–48^r. See the splendid study by Jiří Kejř, "Auctoritates contra communionem parvulorum" M. Jana z Jesenice', *Studie o rukopisech*, 19 (1980), pp. 5–19. Undoubtedly, Václav Koranda was the first to implement the practice. Kejř, *ibid.*, p. 5 and Holeyton, *La Communion des tout-petits enfants*, pp. 113–18.

²⁷⁶ Jena Codex, fols 55^v–56^r.

²⁷⁷ Hardt, vol. IV, col. 671.

²⁷⁸ Jena Codex, fols 93^r, 28^v.

²⁷⁹ Latin graduale, Mladá Boleslav, Regional Museum MS 1/70a olim II A 1 fol. 109^v. See also The Opatovice Breviary, Kraków, Wawel Metropolitan Chapter Archive codex fol. 132^v.

The illumination of Jan Žižka at the head of the Hussite warriors of God, following a priest carrying a monstrance containing the body of Christ, demonstrates the historical significance of the radical Hussite movement. According to the text, the Hussites were forced to defend the law of God. 'In the year of the Lord 1419 the people arose against the clergy in the Kingdom of Bohemia on account of their evil deeds ...'. Led by '*Žižka, bratr náš věrný*' (Žižka, our faithful brother) the Hussites broke away from the stalemated wagon of fools and began a magnificent ride through the 'night of antichrist' to defend the law of God.²⁸⁰

Hussite symbolism on banners, armour, Bibles and churches include the chalice, a goose, and Jan Žižka. The Jena Codex does not fail to bring together the most powerful of these Hussite symbols in an exceptional propagandist statement. The heavenly court has assembled. Saints and angels alike join the divine presence. On the right hand of Christ, St Peter has disappeared and in his place appears none other than the blind Jan Žižka. In Žižka's left hand is a red Hussite banner displaying a gold chalice and in his right are the keys of the kingdom. Standing next to Žižka is John Baptist and beside the Baptist is a figure holding a chalice who iconographically could either be St John the Evangelist or St Jan Hus. At the doorway stands Christ accompanied by the words of the Gospel, 'I am the door ...'.²⁸¹ The Hussite community of Christ as God's chosen people, who rescue the righteous and destroy the sinners, are both the defenders of the law of God and the porters of the heavenly gate. This illumination is a significant example of the Hussite myth expressed in visual propaganda. As an antithetical alternative to Žižka as St Peter the porter, one could find Sigismund portrayed as King David in the Cloister of St Margaret in Mainz.²⁸² The remaining examples of direct Hussite materials show Jan Hus preaching in the Bethlehem Chapel, suffering at the stake in Constance in a number of representations and one final small portrait of Jerome of Prague being martyred.²⁸³

The visual propaganda of the Hussite movement both aimed to show that the Roman Church was depraved and that the Hussites were on God's side. 'The Mirror of all Christians' represents this conviction.²⁸⁴ The sin of the Church requires Christ to drive the proverbial money-changers from the temple – in the Hussite context these money-changers

²⁸⁰ Jena Codex, fol. 76^r. A similar drawing appears in Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 p. 75.

²⁸¹ Jena Codex, fol. 5^v.

²⁸² František Šmahel and Jarmila Vacková, 'Odezva husitských česků v evropském malířství 15 století' [The reflection of Hussite Bohemia in European paintings of the fifteenth century], *Umění*, 30: 4 (1980), p. 309.

²⁸³ Jena Codex, fols 37^v–38^v, 41^v, 48^r.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 9^v.

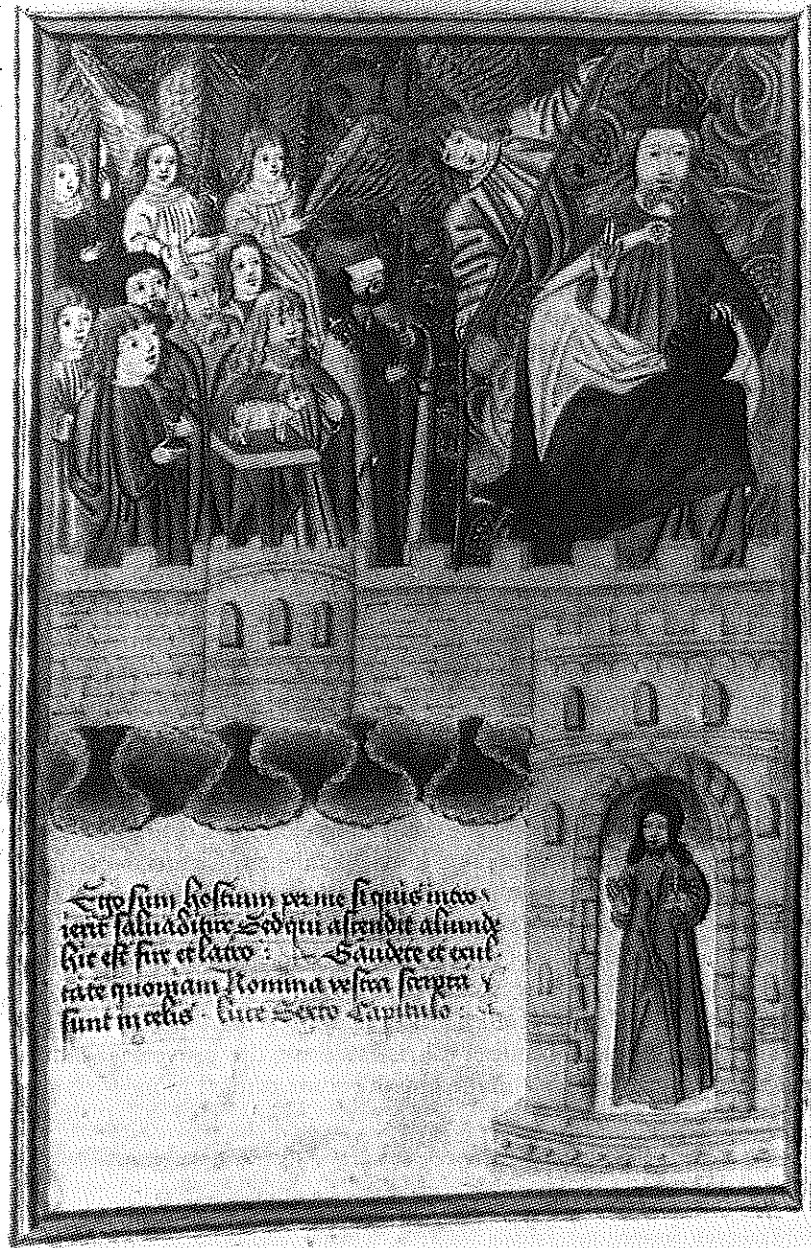


Plate 4.7 Hussite vision of heaven

are the simoniacs illustrated here by the presence of a cardinal – an act which only leads Christ to the pillory for a sound thrashing by two men, one carrying a large club, the other a whip and small club.²⁸⁵ Throughout the Jena Codex the propagandist use of colour is to be noted especially in the antithetical portraits. To use the terminology of Nicholas of Dresden in his *Tabulae*, the old colour of the true church is modest and subdued while, on the other hand, the new colour of the church of Antichrist is bold and glistening. In this way the ‘*antithesis Christi & Antichristi*’ is further underscored.²⁸⁶

In the visual propaganda of the Hussite movement contemporary themes abound, and no less so in the Jena Codex. Even the elements of popular belief and superstition are present though the overall thrust of the Jena Codex is the suggestion that superstitions are an instrument of Antichrist.²⁸⁷ Despite a general aversion to art in the radical sectors of the Hussite movement it is erroneous to cling to the oft-repeated assertion that the Hussite period was not a fertile cultural era.²⁸⁸ It is true that during the revolutionary period the development of art in Bohemia was largely curtailed. However, the Bohemian style of art was developed in other neighbouring areas such as Moravia, Silesia, Austria, Tyrol, Salzburg, Franconia and Bavaria. In this sense the revolution had some good cultural results.²⁸⁹ It is now possible to both establish the influence of Bohemian art abroad and to document the exporting of Czech art.²⁹⁰ A lesser known form of art in the Hussite age, but no less important for bearing the Hussite message, was the widespread use of stove-tiles. These tiles were designed with portraits of Hus, chalices, Hussite priests holding chalices, Hussite warriors going into battle, and the warriors of God displaying banners and weapons.²⁹¹ Czech panel

²⁸⁵ Ibid., fols 27^r, 18^v. The portrait of Christ clearing the temple is duplicated in the drawing in Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182 pp. 60, 46. In this latter manuscript, Simon Magus holds up his bag of money to St Peter, p. 70.

²⁸⁶ Illustrated further in the Göttingen manuscript where three apostles – Matthew, Paul and Luke – stand opposite the Pope, a cleric and a clown. Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek MS Theol. 182, pp. 56–7.

²⁸⁷ Šmahel, ‘Silnější než víra: magie, pověry a kouzla husitského věku’, p. 31.

²⁸⁸ See for example Ferdinand Seibt, ‘Die Hussitenzeit als Kulturepoche’, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 195 (August 1962), pp. 21–62 for an excellent rebuttal and rejection of the long-standing *communis opinio*. See also Antonin Novak, ‘The master of the Třeboň altar and the Czech Reformation’, *CV*, 25 (1982), pp. 235–46.

²⁸⁹ Otto Pächt, ‘A Bohemian martyrology’, *Burlington Magazine*, 73 (November 1938), p. 204.

²⁹⁰ Mojmir S. Frinta, ‘The master of the Gerona martyrology and Bohemian illumination’, *Art Bulletin*, 46 (September 1964), p. 288.

²⁹¹ At least nine representative tiles are reproduced in Jiří Kejř, *The Hussite Revolution*, trans. Till Gottheinerová, (Prague, 1988), pp. 7, 18, 28, 74, 78, 82, 84, 98 and 102.



Plate 4.8 Children as defenders of the Hussite faith

painting is very similar, in the sense of genre, to the propagandist orientation of literary satires, pamphlets, manifestos and the antitheses which pervaded the Hussite movement.²⁹² The influence of these stove-tiles may be considered analogous to the broadsheet of the sixteenth century though they would not have been as widely distributed.

While the overall question of the use of images continued to rage in Hussite Bohemia²⁹³ the propaganda campaign continued well into the sixteenth century. In December 1538 when Nicolas Specht, the schoolmaster at Bautzen, got married, Martin Luther sent as a wedding gift a picture of the 'saintly Jan Hus'.²⁹⁴ The stalled horse-cart referred to a number of times served as an illustration for the oldest independently published map of Bohemia which appeared in 1518 and was the work of the Hussite Mikuláš Klaudián of Mladá Boleslav (see Plate 2.1, p. 61).²⁹⁵ Even children, whose position in society was somewhat revolutionized in the Hussite movement, figured in Hussite visual propaganda. An illumination on a music sheet shows two Hussite children holding battle flails.²⁹⁶

With the warriors of God roaming around Bohemia and this barrage of Hussite propaganda trailing in their wake, it is no wonder the conciliar fathers at Basel regarded the Hussite movement as a wild horse prancing dangerously at will. 'That base fellow' Žižka was in heaven holding the keys of the kingdom, pictures in Hus's Bethlehem Chapel caricatured and denounced Rome, monks were punished for their wickedness, clamped in chains and left to scream, the forbidden chalice had appeared from the heavens and then had triumphed over the tiara, even little children were rebelling boldly. These pictures, strengthened by the authority of the eternal yesterday, both conveyed powerfully the Hussite myth and provoked an irrepressible reaction.²⁹⁷ It all added up to the propaganda of heretical art – 'art in the service of an idea'.²⁹⁸

²⁹² Rejchrtová, 'Czech Utraquism at the time of Václav Koranda the Younger and the visual arts', p. 241.

²⁹³ Among other treatments see William R. Cook, 'The question of images and the Hussite Movement in Prague', *Cristianesimo nella storia*, 3 (October 1982), pp. 329–42.

²⁹⁴ WA, *Briefwechsel*, vol. VIII, p. 335 (no. 3281).

²⁹⁵ See Karel Kuchař (ed.), *Early Maps of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia*, trans. Zdeněk Šafařík, (Prague, 1961), pp. 11–15.

²⁹⁶ Latin graduale, Mladá Boleslav, Regional Museum MS 1/70a olim II A 1 fol. 200^v. On children in the Hussite movement see Noemi Rejchrtová, 'Dětská otázka v husitství' [The question of children in Hussitism], *ČSČH*, 28: 1 (1980), pp. 53–77 and her shorter 'Hussitism and children', *CV*, 22 (1979), pp. 201–4.

²⁹⁷ Thomas A. Fudge, 'Visual heresy and the communication of ideas in the Hussite Reformation', *Kosmas: Czechoslovak and Central European Journal*, 12: 1 (1996), pp. 120–51.

²⁹⁸ Zoroslava Drobná, *Gothic Drawing*, trans. Jean Layton, (Prague, n.d.), p. 57.

Protests, processions and public demonstrations

This aspect of visual propaganda may be more accurately called dramaturgy. However, since the visual impact in certain instances is quite significant it appears in this place. Again, the so-called propaganda connected to these protests, processions and public gatherings and demonstrations should be understood in terms of promoting the Hussite myth and heresy as well as transmitting particular values.

After Jan Hus went into exile the situation in Prague began to take on even more of a revolutionary character. Unrest spread and the turmoil resulted in demonstrations which poured out on to the streets.²⁹⁹ During the demonstrations the followers of Hus carried the contrasting pictures of the *Tabulae* on placards through the streets of Prague³⁰⁰ provoking great agitation and inflaming the burgeoning revolutionary spirit. Hus's disciple, Jerome of Prague, much more openly rambunctious than his master, soon emerged as one of the ringleaders and chief agitators of the radical movement. For his activities during these crucial years one must rely primarily upon later trial proceedings against him.³⁰¹ However, most of the charges seem consistent with his character. On one occasion Jerome supposedly displayed a defamatory poster about Archbishop Zbyněk in a number of places in Prague.³⁰² Unfortunately, we do not know the specific nature of the poster. On other occasions Master Jerome physically thrashed Beneš of Boleslav, a Franciscan preacher, in the street and some averred that Jerome meant to kill the friar.³⁰³ On another day Jerome allegedly persuaded a monk to go out on the river with him whereupon Jerome tied a rope around the man and heaved him into the water. The zealous reformer then threatened to drown the unfortunate monk unless he confess that Wyclif was not a heretic.³⁰⁴ Three separate incidents in 1414 which involved the smearing of crucifixes with excrement in monastery churches were all traced to the incitement of Jerome, though he had personally performed none of the offensive deeds.³⁰⁵ That these

²⁹⁹ See the *Anonymi invectiva contra husitas*, in Höfler, vol. I, p. 624.

³⁰⁰ František Kavka, 'The Hussite Movement and the Czech Reformation', *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale*, 5 (1960), p. 844.

³⁰¹ Hardt, vol. IV, cols 630–91, and Ladislav Klicman (ed.), *Processus iudicarius contra Jeronimum de Praga habitus Viennae a. 1410–1412*, (Prague, 1898).

³⁰² Hardt, vol. IV, col. 640.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, cols 641–2.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, col. 667. Jerome was also charged with drowning a Dominican in the Vltava River. *Ibid.*, col. 642.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, cols 674–5. In a similar scatological context Rubín, the merchant's assistant in the *Mastičkář* play, says in the Schlägel fragment, 'This is an ointment from Náchod, it has a fragrance as from a monks' latrine'. Veltruský, *A Sacred Farce from Medieval Bohemia*, p. 375.

stunts were motivated by a desire to communicate a message and provoke a response is not to be doubted. In large measure, such actions were the expression of spoken and written words within a more sedate context. St Jan Hus may not have approved but men like Želivský and Koranda must be seen as gleeful promoters and enthusiastic supporters.

One of the most effective and best known examples of dramaturgy was the popular procession and demonstration which took place in Prague during this same period. Processions of this genre sometimes were completely new. On the other hand the older medieval feasts and processions often provided an opportunity for new ideas in the appearance of the old. The Feast of the Ass, the Feast of Fools, and other similar occasions were very popular with the common people and even with some of the clergy. We know for example that the Feast of the Ass was observed in Bohemia and that even the young Jan Hus took part in one celebration in Prague.

What an obvious outrage they commit in the church, putting on masks. I, too, in my youth, was once to my sorrow a masquerader! Who could depict all that took place in Prague? Having dubbed a monstrously-dressed cleric a bishop, they set him upon an ass with his face turned toward the tail and lead him into the church to Mass. And they carry a plate of broth before him, and a jug or bowl of beer; and he eats in the church. And I saw how (the ass) incenses the altars and, raising one leg, pronounced in a loud voice: *Bů!* and the clerics brought before him big torches in place of candles. And he rides from altar to altar, incensing as he goes. Then I saw how the clerics turned their fur-lined vestments inside out and danced in the church. And people look and laugh, supposing that all of this is sacred or right, since they have it in their rubric, it is in their statutes. Nice statutes indeed! ... While I was young in years and in reason I also subscribed to this foolish rubric. But when the Lord gave me understanding of the Scriptures I erased this rubric, the statutes of delusion, from my weak intellect.³⁰⁶

These feasts, with all of their interesting detail, should be analysed in terms of their potential for propaganda.

A variation of the Feast of the Ass along with some trappings of the Feast of Fools appeared in Prague during the height of the indulgence controversy during 1411–12. The popular opposition to the sale of indulgences took on a ridiculing and violent form. A Czech, Voksa of Valdštejn, in possible collusion with Jerome of Prague, already seen as

³⁰⁶ 'Výklad na páteř' [Exposition of the Lord's Prayer], ch. 82. In *Magistri Iohannis Hus Opera Omnia*, ed. Amedeo Molnár (Prague, 1975), vol. I, p. 342. The translation is from Roman Jakobson, 'Medieval mock mystery', in *Studia philologica et litteraria in Honorem L. Spitzer*, eds A.G. Hatcher and K.L. Selig, (Bern, 1958), p. 246.

an agitator of the establishment, organized a procession in which a person rode on a beast dressed as a whore with bared breasts bedecked with bogus papal bulls. She was covered with little silver bells which rang with her every move, like the church bells during Mass. Imitating the enticing sales talk of perhaps both the indulgence vendors and the ladies of the night, the indulgences were proffered to the raucous crowd who roared their approval and delight. With wicked leers and lewd gestures the whore blessed the people as if she were pope. As the procession passed the palaces of the archbishop and the king the mob, in one accord, shouted that the bulls and indulgences belonged to renegades and heretics. The mock parade wound its way through Prague to the New Town Square where the bulls were burnt.³⁰⁷ Such festivals and processions as visual and dramatic propaganda tended toward blasphemy, obscenity and a temporal subversion of the social order. For a time, the world was turned upside down. The lecherous whore played the virgin or pope, the fool became bishop, the criminal donned the king's crown, the ass brayed at the altar, while everyone ran leaping through the cathedral singing uproariously the drunken liturgy. Such performances satirized and parodied those aspects which both Church and State claimed to take most serious. It is especially interesting that against the backdrop of so-called hierarchical and conservative medieval society the glorification of foolishness in the carnival and satirical parodies could be tolerated to the extent that it was.³⁰⁸ Even in the midst of this glorification of foolishness it is still possible and necessary to see that Hussite propaganda had as its focus the subverting of the medieval ecclesiastical order.³⁰⁹

As noted earlier, Hussite priests were installed forcibly in Roman parish churches sometimes after the former cleric had been slain. During the years 1415 to 1419, right on the heels of Hus's martyrdom, this practice was stepped up across Bohemia and even in certain areas of Moravia. There are many instances of this activity but all seem much the same. In Moravia a number of barons Lacek of Moravia, Petr of Strážnice, Heral of Skalska and Jan of Tovačov installed Hussite priests despite the protests of the Moravian episcopacy, for the purpose of celebrating Utraquism, that *revelatio* of divine truth.³¹⁰ During the sum-

³⁰⁷ Description in 'The articles against Jerome of Prague', in Hardt, vol. IV, cols 672-3. See also Charles Zika, 'Hosts, processions and pilgrimages: controlling the sacred in fifteenth-century Germany', *Past and Present*, 118 (February 1988), pp. 25-64 for an excellent discussion of processions in the later Middle Ages.

³⁰⁸ Hodgart, *Satire*, pp. 23-4.

³⁰⁹ Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 3rd edn, (New York, 1970), p. 236.

³¹⁰ Report in *Počátkové husitství v Čechách* [The beginning of Hussitism in Bohemia], in *Starší letopisové čeští*, in SRB, vol. III, p. 474.

mer of 1419 mass processions and demonstrations in Prague were forbidden.³¹¹ Within the same month Priest Želivský led his followers to the New Town Hall where they defenestrated the town councillors. All of this activity had a profound effect upon the populace and even the Consistory, fearing full scale revolution, fled the capital to Žitava just inside the northern border of the archdiocese of Prague. To the disgust and dismay of the orthodox, Hussite women began to take part in preaching and iconoclastic activities.³¹² At least for a time it appeared that the Hussites intended to practice Christian egalitarianism in a thoroughgoing manner. According to Ondřej of Brod, the Hussites made radical changes in the liturgy to promote further their radical agenda. Ondřej alleged that the Hussites refused the introit, the gradual and other heavenly songs and in their place introduced songs sung by women and children in Czech.³¹³ Here we see a double or complete inversion of tradition. Not only are the songs sung in Czech, but the usual priestly singers have been replaced by women and children.

With priests like Želivský unafraid to denounce publicly the infidels, traitors and criminals, who 'killed our beloved preacher' Hus,³¹⁴ others began to congregate in Prague taverns to hear scripture expounded and Hussite preaching. Vavřinec of Březová informs us that some of the leaders of the early radical movement – namely Martiněk Húska, Václav Koranda of Plzeň and some Táborite priests – received expert biblical instruction from Václav a biblically literate Prague bartender in his tavern.³¹⁵ When conservative Hussite priests from Prague clad in liturgical vestments, attempted to celebrate the eucharist in Řičany on 24 November 1420 they were confronted with Táborites who accosted them belligerently demanding to know why they were wearing sheets. The Praguers were then ordered to remove the superfluous garments so as to be in conformity with Christ and his apostles when saying mass. Otherwise the Táborites threatened to say a proper mass themselves.³¹⁶ In this dialectic of events the question might legitimately be raised: what has all this to do with propaganda? Quite simply, all of these events were connected in some sense to the Hussite preoccupation with promoting their agenda, provoking a reaction, and gaining converts. None

³¹¹ *Chronicon universitatis pragensis*, in FRB, vol. V, p. 580.

³¹² See Anna Kolářová-Císařová, *Žena v hnutí husitském* [Women in the Hussite Movement], (Prague, 1915), pp. 113-28.

³¹³ *Tractatus de origine Hussitarum*, in Höfler, vol. II, p. 339. The accuracy of this statement is disputed easily.

³¹⁴ This is Želivský's sermon for 30 July 1419. The text appears in Božena Kopiczková, *Jan Želivský*, (Prague, 1990), p. 268.

³¹⁵ *Historia Hussitica*, p. 413.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 449.

of these occurrences are incidental to the movement nor are they merely aberrations undertaken by a few malcontents. Indeed, the full import of Hussite dramaturgy came to a climax in three rather large and important public gatherings in the year 1419.

The first such gathering occurred on 22 July on Mount Tábor near Bechyně. The main organizer of the gathering was Mikuláš of Hus. People came from the Tábor area, Plzeň, Domažlice, Prague, from Hradec Králové in eastern Bohemia and from as far away as Moravia. Sources report that the total number who went to Tábor was somewhere between 40 000 and 50 000,³¹⁷ though that figure is probably exaggerated. Ostensibly many were followers of Master Jan Hus and adherents of the communion in both kinds since Vavřinec tells us they were called Hussites. Gathering at Mount Tábor the priests carried the eucharist before the crowd. 'More than 40 000 people received the sacrament of the body and blood of the lord under both kinds, both in bread and wine, with great devotion, according to the tradition of Christ and practised and observed by the early church.'³¹⁸ Eight days later the Hussites stormed the New Town Hall in Prague and overthrew the existing government.

On 17 September the crowd again congregated on Bzí Hora near Plzeň. Mikuláš of Hus in collaboration with Václav Koranda were the leading persons there present. This hilltop gathering manifested all the signs of galvanizing action, the promotion of Hussite truth and the beginning of political action. A manifesto, which we shall consider in more detail below, was issued which lauded the law of God, free preaching, and Utraquism. Denouncing the perils of Antichrist and the great 'abomination of desolation', the manifesto called for a third meeting.

This third mass rally took place on 30 September at *Na Křížkách* (At the Crosses) near Benešov not far from Prague. Mikuláš of Hus and Václav Koranda were joined by none other than Jan Žižka. The upshot of this gathering was a stirring speech by Koranda summarized by this extract: 'Brethren, the time has come to lay down the staff of the pilgrim and to take up the sword. God's vineyard is flourishing but goats are threatening to destroy it.'³¹⁹ The mob thus inflamed marched to Prague arriving there after dark. With Jan Želivský on hand the Hussites tramped through the city by torchlight to the clanging sounds of church bells. The next day a number of acts of iconoclasm were carried out 'in order to end offenses and open scandals'. A fourth meeting, scheduled for 10 Novem-

³¹⁷ Ibid., p. 345. See also the *Anonymus de origine Taboritarum*, in Höfler, vol. I, p. 528.

³¹⁸ *Historia Hussitica*, pp. 344-5.

³¹⁹ *Starí letopisové čeští*, in SRB, vol. III, p. 30.

ber in Prague was curtailed by Queen Žofie and the Lord High Burgrave, Čeněk of Vartenberk for fear of riot and violence.³²⁰

The popular effect of these public protests, processions and demonstrations caused even more power to shift over to the radicals. True, their proposed fourth rally was cancelled but the days were not far off when the Hussites would rule and act at will in a propagandist agenda which was quickly being perceived as subversive. Already the Roman Church was defamed in the streets, religious houses looted and defiled in a most obnoxious manner, scandalous posters appeared in public places and even the Bible was being taught by laypeople in taverns. Hussite propaganda increased and with it an abundant harvest.

By April 1427 Jakoubek of Stříbro succeeded in having a number of new guidelines published in Prague including a prohibition against all propaganda promoting a return to the Roman Church.³²¹ The Hussites obviously did not want unnecessary competition in their own towns. After the warriors of God had soundly thrashed the fifth Crusade in the Battle of Domažlice, on 15 August 1431, a huge festival of celebration was held in Prague. Displaying the captured banners of their opponents the soldiers, together with a large crowd, marched in celebratory procession from the Týn Church in the Old Town to the top of Hradčany.³²² This was a different form of visual propaganda but no less forceful. Fearing an adverse effect, Cardinal Cesarini later requested the Hussites at the Council of Basel not to preach in German.³²³ Ecclesiastical authorities did not allow the Hussites to go unmolested in their galloping propaganda tirade. Many Hussites were martyred for their faith and activities. Friedrich Reiser of Donauwörth, a German Hussite ordained by Mikuláš Biskupec, called 'the bishop of the faithful who oppose the Donation of Constantine', had for years organized Hussite activities both in and out of Bohemia. After finally being captured Reiser, together with Anna Weiler, who had helped to organize German Hussites in Würzburg, was burnt at the stake in Strasbourg on 6 March 1458. Their ashes were thrown into the Rhine not far downstream from where Hus and Jerome had been carried to the sea.³²⁴

³²⁰ Ibid., pp. 46-7.

³²¹ AČ, vol. III, pp. 261-4.

³²² See the account in Bartoš, *The Hussite Revolution 1424-1437*, p. 73.

³²³ Cited in A.I. Ozolin, 'Ohlas husitství v některých zemích střední a západní evropy', p. 292.

³²⁴ Josef Macek, 'Život německého husity Fridricha Reiserera' [The life of the German Hussite Friedrich Reiser], *Věda a život*, 4: 5 (1957), pp. 244-8. More recently Valdo Vinay, 'Friedrich Reiser und die Waldensische Diaspora deutscher sprache im XV. Jahrhundert', in *Waldenser: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Wolfgang Erk, (Frankfurt, 1971), pp. 25-47.

It is impossible to say for certain whether or not Hussite propaganda substantially influenced traditional religious processions and festivals in Bohemia. 'The Corpus Christi play of fifteenth-century Eger (Cheb) included seventy-four scenes which were played on three days ...'.³²⁵ It would seem difficult to imagine that Hussite influence could not be detected in such events. Be that as it may, the harvest of heresy reaped after the long sustained magnificent ride was more than sufficient to assess the success of Hussite propaganda.

Manifestos as Hussite literary propaganda

The oral, visual and dramatic propaganda of the radical first reformation in Bohemia was supplemented by various types of written propaganda namely in the form of theological treatises, polemical tracts and pamphlets. The best known literary propaganda from the Bohemian reformation were the Hussite manifestos.³²⁶ From the early years of the Hussite revolt the manifestos began appearing all over Europe: in Germany, Austria, Hungary, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and England. Written in the native language of the country to which they were sent these manifestos sought to justify the Hussite cause, win support, and vilify their enemies. **The practice of letter-writing to appeal for support, or to call to action, can be evidenced from different perspectives in the movement.** Prisoners in 1420 confessed that they had been incited by letters from the Táborite bishop, Mikuláš Biskupec, to act violently against the lord of Rožmberk and his property.³²⁷ On 28 August 1420 the burghers of Vodňany wrote to Oldřich Rožmberk asking for help against Jan Žižka who already was in Písek and threatening to advance. The plea is most plaintive especially in the remark that some of the soldiers were already fleeing in fear of Žižka.³²⁸ A letter from Joan of

³²⁵ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*, (Cambridge, 1991), p. 286. For a discussion of the contemporary view of entertainment in Bohemia see František Svejkský, 'Avis critiques sur le théâtre et les acteurs dans les pays de Bohême au 15^e siècle', *Acta universitatis carolinae-philosophica et historica*, 5 (1969), pp. 31–50.

³²⁶ A number of the manifestos have recently been published in a critical edition. Amedeo Molnár (ed.), *Husitské manifesty* [Hussite Manifestos]. See also František M. Bartoš, 'Manifesty města Prahy z doby husitské' [Manifestos of the city of Prague from the Hussite age], *Sborník příspěvků k dějinám hlavního města Prahy*, 7 (1933), pp. 253–309 where others are published. There are about 30 extant manifestos.

³²⁷ Mareš (ed.), *Popravčí kniha pánův z Rožmberka* [The executioners's book of the lords of Rožmberk], p. 26.

³²⁸ Blažena Rynešová (ed.), *Listář a Listinář Oldřicha z Rožmberka* [Correspondence and documents of Oldřich of Rožmberk], (4 vols, Prague, 1929–54), vol. I, p. 20, n. 35.

Arc, in response to the Hussite threat, announced that she would come to Bohemia herself and defeat the heretics if they refused to stop rampaging about.³²⁹ Obviously, the menace of the 'maiden' had little impact and the Hussites remained defiant.

From the very beginnings the Hussites defended Jan Hus against the decision of the Council of Constance. 'The Letter of complaint of the Czech and Moravian lords to Constance' in 1415 absolutely denied that Hus was a heretic. Rather than submitting to the council, the barons confessed their allegiance to Hus by declaring boldly, 'we are his followers'.³³⁰ Fidelity to the law of God motif and the forbidden chalice likewise figures prominently in the propaganda of the Hussite manifestos. Though many people had been persecuted on account of the chalice,³³¹ the Hussites adjudicated it to be a holy truth and stated their determination to defend the forbidden chalice.³³² Appealing to the custom of *utraquism* as practised by the Byzantine Church³³³ the Hussites declared the chalice the flagship of their struggle against Rome. According to 'The pilgrims's declaration of Bzí Hora' the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ was worthy and necessary.³³⁴

When the former Prague Augustinian, Oswald Reinlein, began an anti-Hussite campaign in Vienna the king of Portugal wrote a pamphlet 'for the salvation of all the fighters against the faithless Hussite heretics'.³³⁵ The Hussites were incensed. Not so much at the attack, that could hardly be unexpected, but at the continuing label, 'faithless Hussite heretics'. Earlier in a manifesto, the Hussites had complained of this label and later they compared themselves to the Maccabees and claimed the title '*věrných božích bojovníků*' (faithful fighters of God).³³⁶ Despite anti-Hussite efforts in Vienna and Nürnberg Hussite propaganda had already become 'a disturbing factor in the rather unstable political and social structure ... of southern Germany'.³³⁷ Even within Bohemia extant propaganda sources make it quite clear that anti-German and anti-

³²⁹ Dated 23 March 1430. The letter appears in *UB*, vol. II, p. 132. The authenticity of the letter is not beyond dispute.

³³⁰ Manifestos, pp. 48–9.

³³¹ 'The manifesto of Hussite Prague to Venice', 10 July 1420 in Manifestos, p. 87.

³³² 'The declaration to fight to defend the truth', 1469 in Manifestos, p. 230.

³³³ 'The manifesto of Hussite Prague to Venice', in Manifestos, pp. 84–93, also published in *UB*, vol. I, pp. 39–43.

³³⁴ Dated 17 September 1419 in Manifestos, p. 61.

³³⁵ See the discussion in Bartoš, *The Hussite Revolution 1424–1437*, pp. 13–14 with references to the published and manuscript sources.

³³⁶ 'The pilgrims's declaration of Bzí Hora', 17 September 1419 in Manifestos, p. 67 and 'The Hussite manifesto to the world', 1430 in Manifestos, p. 122.

³³⁷ G.A. Holmes, 'Cardinal Beaufort and the crusade against the Hussites', *The English Historical Review*, 88 (October 1973), p. 721.

Habsburg sentiment was prevalent.³³⁸ Satirizing their opponents and denying that they were heretics was not the sole focus of the manifestos. From beginning to end the Hussites promoted the law of God. In open defiance to the conciliar fathers at Constance the Bohemian and Moravian barons asserted, 'we will follow the law of God'. Even as late as 1468 the Hussites were adamant.³³⁹ More than that, the radicals called all faithful Christians to defend God's law as well as the Czech nation.³⁴⁰ The call did not fall on deaf ears. In far off Picardy people began responding to the radical option of the Hussite movement.

During 1420, a citizen of Tournai, Gilles Mersault was in Prague and heard the Hussite gospel. In 1423 Hussite manifestos arrived in Tournai and it was Mersault who organized the Hussite propaganda campaign in the region. Mersault wrote a manifesto in which he exhibited a number of the radical Taborite-Orebite motifs. Denouncing apostate Rome as Antichrist, Mersault called for faithful Christians to abandon the church of Antichrist and to take up arms against the enemies of God.³⁴¹ The truth of God – in reality the Four Articles of Prague – were proclaimed publicly in Tournai. Only the intervention of the town officials curtailed open demonstrations and further preaching of the Hussite heresy. Mersault was arrested as a seditious agitator but later released when a popular riot broke out in the town. His freedom was short-lived and on 22 July 1423 he paid the price for his open heresy with his life.

On 21 July 1431 the Hussites sent out a manifesto appealing to the German secular powers against the arrogant and wicked clerics who were conspiring to bring the movement to an end. Little sympathy could be expected from this quarter but the Hussites used the opportunity to again state the Hussite message in the terms of the Four Articles.³⁴² Denouncing the 'abomination of desolation which is now suppressing all truth' the Hussites declared they would oppose all enemies with the help of St Wenceslas.³⁴³ Condemning 'the heresy of Simon' as well as 'the cross of

³³⁸ František Šmahel, 'The idea of the "nation" in Hussite Bohemia', *Historica*, 17 (1969), p. 143.

³³⁹ 'The letter of complaint ... to Constance', in *Manifestos*, p. 52 and 'The declaration to fight to defend the truth,' in *Manifestos*, p. 231.

³⁴⁰ 'Manifesto about the victory at Vyšehrad', 5 November 1420 in *Manifestos*, p. 106.

³⁴¹ Mersault's manifesto has been published by Bartoš in 'Manifesty města Prahy z doby husitské', pp. 290–302. See also František M. Bartoš, 'Puer Bohemus Dva projevy husitské propagandy' [Two expressions of Hussite propaganda], *VKČSN*, 2 (1923), pp. 1–57.

³⁴² See the manifesto in *UB*, vol. I, pp. 228–31.

³⁴³ Provides evidence that the cult of *Svatý Václave* flourished in the Hussite revolution. St Jan Hus had not supplanted all saints. 'The manifesto of the Praguers to the Bohemian regions', in *Manifestos*, pp. 64–6.

antichrist' the Hussites denounced the Pope as the enemy of the truth of God who, together with 'the priests of Pharaoh' are 'followers of Satan'.³⁴⁴ The pervasive anti-Roman sentiment we have observed in all forms of Hussite propaganda thus far is again evident in classic form in the manifestos. 'The manifesto of the Taborite commanders' declared that since 'hypocritical and simoniacal heretics' have stolen money from the faithful the Hussites were fully justified in destroying monasteries and putting the monastic communities to flight. Such institutions are 'fortifications of the devil', the Taborites declared, 'we will destroy them'. The radicals inveighed against the Council of Basel as an 'assembly of Satan' and warned the Baslers not to become as the citizens of Constance.³⁴⁵ Such pronouncements were not empty threats. After King Václav died in 1419 those of the reform party attacked non-Utraquist churches and the houses of their priests. Incited by Hussite leaders the mob destroyed numerous churches and cloisters and captured priests and monks.³⁴⁶ 'The letter of all the Czech land' begins with the declaration, '*Kristus vládne, Antikrist bude zničen!*' (Christ rules, Antichrist will be destroyed!). The Pope is then denounced as a 'heretic, hypocrite and the greatest antichrist'. The manifesto goes on to complain about false pilgrims of this Antichrist who travel about the world with indulgences, confirming the papal Antichrist and showing contempt for the truth of the gospel.³⁴⁷ In a direct allusion to the Inquisition the Hussites declared that the so-called 'master of heretics' should properly be called 'the producer of heretics' since he is the true heretic who forces many people to apostatize from the true faith.³⁴⁸

From Cheb in 1432 the Hussites issued a German manifesto signed by five priests including Prokop Holý. The radicals accused their opponents of being afraid to debate and challenged the Romanists to fight it out in a colloquy with the Hussites using only the word of God. According to the challenge, the loser should acquiesce in the doctrines and practices of the victor. No challenger stepped forward. The Hussites railed on the priests of Rome for bribing others to do their dirty work for them which should be understood as offering indulgences to mercenaries to fight the Hussites

³⁴⁴ These motifs appear respectively in 'The army of the Margrave of Meissen', 1 June 1420 in *Manifestos*, pp. 82, 85; 'The Hussite manifesto to the world', 1430 in *Manifestos*, p. 121; 'The German manifesto of the citizens of the Czech Kingdom', 25 May 1430 in *Manifestos*, p. 131; and 'The manifesto of the Czech nation to all Christians', 21 July 1431 in *Manifestos*, p. 175.

³⁴⁵ Dated 1430 in *Manifestos*, pp. 162–70.

³⁴⁶ Kopiczková, *Jan Želivský*, pp. 59–60.

³⁴⁷ Similar sentiment expressed by Hus. *Responsio ad Scripta Magistri Stanislai de Znoyma*, in *Historia et monumenta*, vol. I, p. 348.

³⁴⁸ Dated 1431 in *Manifestos*, pp. 177–207.

in their place. The Hussites suggested that the soldiers should throw the false indulgences aside and stay home. 'Rather, let the pope, together with his bishops, cardinals and priests, come to fight us and let them receive their own indulgences in person. With the help of almighty God [when they show up] we will stuff them full of indulgences!'³⁴⁹ This manifesto contains overtones of another manifesto published in 1420 in response to the papal bull which declared a crusade against Bohemia. In the earlier manifesto the Hussites called on 'faithful Czechs' everywhere to defend the faith against the 'snake' – the papal bull – which had been let loose by the malevolent 'stepmother' of the Bohemian land, the Church of Rome. This manifesto, on the eve of the first invasion of Bohemia by the crusading armies, accused the Germans of intending to exterminate the Czechs in Bohemia.³⁵⁰

As surely as the Hussites directed their propaganda against Rome, so likewise they assailed the man whom they perceived as the pope's chief lieutenant, Sigismund; the 'great red dragon'. Their manifesto propaganda insisted that 'all true Christians are resisting Sigismund' and his 'heretical faith'.³⁵¹ This 'greatest enemy of the Czech kingdom' has taken up 'the cross of antichrist' against the cross of Christ and opposes God. Here the familiar theme of the Hussite myth equating the cause of the Hussites with the cause of God is reiterated. Those persecuted for the faith, Hus, Jerome and Jan Krása, are named. Referring to the recent slaughter of Hussites in Kutná Hora, 'on account of the chalice', the manifesto denounced Sigismund as the perpetrator of despicable crimes: 'children, pregnant women and men are murdered ... their bodies lie in the fields ... about 200 killed in Malín' their murders incited by Sigismund. The manifesto asserted that Sigismund wished to exterminate all truth.³⁵² 'The complaint of the Czech kingdom about Sigismund' continues the rhetoric of the evil of the 'great red dragon' and his atrocities against the faithful: 'How many excellent priests have been killed? How many have been tortured? How many have died in dreary cells? How many have been killed by the sword? How many have been buried in the mine shafts of Kutná Hora? How many virgins have been raped?' (see Plate 2.2, p. 97)³⁵³ Denouncing 'the cross of

³⁴⁹ Discussion in F.M. Bartoš, *Husitství a cizina* [Hussitism and foreign countries] (Prague, 1931), pp. 222–5.

³⁵⁰ AČ, vol. III, pp. 212–13.

³⁵¹ 'The army of the margrave of Meissen', 1 June 1420, in Manifestos, p. 78 and the 'Manifesto about the victory at Vyšehrad', 5 November 1420, in Manifestos, p. 106.

³⁵² 'The manifesto of Hussite Prague to Venice', 10 July 1420 in Manifestos, pp. 84–9.

³⁵³ Dated 20 July 1420 in Manifestos, p. 96. This is particularly reminiscent of the *Antiphonia ad Magnificat* for the feast of St Jan Hus. David R. Holeton, 'The Office of Jan Hus: An unrecorded antiphony in the metropolitan library of Estergom', p. 145.

antichrist' erected against them the Hussites pronounce woes against 'the priests of Belial' who allied themselves with Sigismund.³⁵⁴ A manifesto, 'To all Bohemians and Moravians' makes the plea for none to submit to Sigismund – that 'Roman and Hungarian king' – 'he has neither been elected ... nor crowned, but he is the great and cruel enemy of the Bohemian nation'. The manifesto warned that anyone who followed or obeyed Sigismund would, as a consequence, be executed as traitors guilty of treason.³⁵⁵ Since the manifesto was signed by Čeněk of Vartenberk, it 'struck home with the force of a thunderbolt ... the manifesto was a clarion call to active resistance'.³⁵⁶

Two of the most entertaining, biting satirical, and effective of the corpus of manifestos come from the year 1419. The first is the 'Satirical letter of King Sigismund' and the second is the Hussite response. Sigismund's letter is a splendid piece of polemic and should be considered one of the finest examples of anti-Hussite satirical propaganda.³⁵⁷ Sigismund begins by making fun of the Hussites by encouraging them not to become discouraged from celebrating '*viklefské svatosti*' (the Wyclifite sacrament). He remarks, with obvious chagrin, that the 'rascal Husses and Heretics' have closed monasteries and convents forcing nuns and monks to flee. Reference is made also to the defenestration in the New Town, an event which occurred only five weeks prior. Sigismund accuses the Hussites of chasing many priests from Prague and of contravening normal ecclesiastical functions. 'You put Jan Hus and Jerome on the list of saints and you celebrate their holy day and neglect the other saints.' Sigismund laughs at the wisdom of Hus and Jerome whom he accuses the Hussites of revering as 'teachers of wisdom'. Following the death of King Václav IV, who had died less than three weeks before the writing of the manifesto, Sigismund says that the Hussites sang famous litanies in churches and monasteries. What he means is that the Hussites desecrated many religious houses. In order to comfort Václav's mourning widow, Queen Žofie, the Hussites have put on swords, hammers, flails and other weapons. Sigismund then goes on to say that he is weak in the faith and knows nothing about the law of God. However, he expresses his willingness to enrol in a Hussite school in order to be instructed in the faith so that he can rule effectively the Czech kingdom.

³⁵⁴ 'Manifesto of the Old and New Towns of Prague', 8 February 1421, in Manifestos, p. 111.

³⁵⁵ AČ, vol. III, pp. 210–12. Part of the manifesto is translated in Heymann, *John Žižka and the Hussite Revolution*, pp. 114–15.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

³⁵⁷ Dated 5 September 1419 in Manifestos, pp. 71–3. The New Testament quotations are Luke 19:14 and Matthew 21:38.

Quoting the words of the gospels, Sigismund begs the Hussites not to say 'we do not want this man to reign over us' and 'this is the heir, come, let us kill him and have his inheritance'. Sigismund then concludes his letter, tongue in cheek, by promising to live according to the advice of the Hussites: 'I will reign as your wisdom teaches me.'

This cleverly formulated and written manifesto could not be ignored by the Hussites. So they set out immediately to compose an anti-satirical response to the 'great red dragon' who now wished to become the next protégé in the Hussite school of learning.³⁵⁸ The manifesto opens in similar fashion to the king's. 'We wish that you, King Sigismund, would not be discouraged from the sacrament of antichrist and the hypocritical simoniacal heresy of the Roman Church.' Addressing their old foe with false humility and the facetious title 'imperial highness', the Hussites accuse Sigismund of both oppressing the truth of the Bible and the Four Articles. Mention is made in this connection of the torture and murder of Jan Krása and the numerous victims in Kutná Hora. The manifesto declares the innocence of the Hussites apropos to the disobedience, war, destruction and evil in the land and instead points the guilty finger toward Sigismund. All of this has befallen the kingdom on account of the wicked deeds of the Hungarian king. The king is compared graphically to Herod – the monarch guilty of the massacre of the holy innocents in Bethlehem – who killed in order to possess power.³⁵⁹ However, just as God delivered Jesus from Herod so likewise the Hussites declare their assurance of imminent deliverance from Sigismund.

The manifesto campaign continued long after the defeat of the Táborite and Orebite field armies. Several months after the Battle of Lipany 'The Táborite manifesto of Jan Roháč of Dubá' was issued.³⁶⁰ Sigismund, always a favourite target of Hussite propaganda, together with his henchmen, were denounced as betrayers and enemies of the law of God. The manifesto stated that the radical remnant of Hussites had met at Tábor and pledged renewed allegiance to the Four Articles and opposition to Sigismund and the *ancien régime* of the institutional church. The manifesto denied indignantly that the Hussites eventually would submit to their enemies and repair all damages. 'God will help us in the truth' as we are faithful to one another, declared Roháč and his colleagues. The message that the Hussites would not surrender was quite clear. Earlier, the Hussites had declared that they took up weapons against

³⁵⁸ Dated in late 1419 in Manifestos, pp. 74–7.

³⁵⁹ On the motif of Sigismund as Herod the Second see Noemi Rejchrtová's treatment where the cruelty of Sigismund and his mercenaries against women and children is considered, in 'Dětská otázka v husitství' [The question of children in Hussitism], p. 71.

³⁶⁰ Dated 21 December 1434 in Manifestos, pp. 214–17.

the enemies of the law of God and chased them out of the country demonstrating effectively the meaning of the law, 'oko za oko a zub za zub' (an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth).³⁶¹ In 1468 the Hussites could yet look back to the time when the enemy of the truth of God (Sigismund) attacked Bohemia but was beaten back by a few faithful Czechs who, led by 'bratrem Žižkou slavné paměti' (Brother Žižka of glorious memory), were able to defeat the enemy through the strengthening power of the blood of Christ.³⁶²

A manifesto of 1431 reflected the Hussite desire for peace.³⁶³ Even though the Hussites utilized all available means to promote their agenda the desire for peace was never very far away. Despite the conciliatory tone of certain manifestos the response to this wave of Hussite propaganda from enemy quarters was not long in coming. From Kraków, Paris, Leipzig and Vienna came a resounding wave of anti-Hussite propaganda. In England the chancellor of the University of Cambridge led the charge against the Hussite manifestos. In Vienna several Táborite manifestos were translated into the vernacular. These translations were done by Hussite sympathizers and the religious authorities,³⁶⁴ thus giving firm witness to the effectiveness of the manifestos as propaganda. Most of the anti-Hussite literature focused on the chalice and, after 1422, the Four Articles of Prague.³⁶⁵ It all had little effect except to spur the Hussites on even more. Táborite manifestos appeared in Basel during the council and the holy fathers sought in vain for the pernicious culprit who nailed one shamelessly to a church door. Even in Bohemia, Hussite propaganda was reaping a bountiful harvest mainly because it included the plight of the peasants in its programme, because it employed the vernacular language, and also on account of the fact that it was *ipso facto* legalized throughout the country.³⁶⁶

Abroad, Hussite manifestos could be found in Vienna, Rome, Venice, Barcelona, Basel, Paris, Picardy, Cologne, Cambridge, Erfurt and Leipzig. All but Venice and Barcelona were university towns. Venice, of course, represented a centre of political power. Quite clearly the Hussites aimed for a hearing in the academic and political circles of Europe. Even though manifestos turned up in scholarly venues they were also

³⁶¹ 'The Hussite manifesto to the world' 1430 in Manifestos, p. 123.

³⁶² 'The declaration to fight to defend the truth', in Manifestos, p. 236.

³⁶³ Translated excerpt of the 1431 manifesto appears in Macek, *The Hussite Movement in Bohemia*, p. 89.

³⁶⁴ Paul P. Bernard, 'Jerome of Prague, Austria and the Hussites', *CH*, 27 (March 1958), pp. 17, 22.

³⁶⁵ Bartoš, 'Manifesty města Prahy z doby husitské', p. 268.

³⁶⁶ Polívka, 'Popular movement as an agent of the Hussite Revolution in late mediaeval Bohemia', p. 270.

directed toward a popular audience. Most of them were written in a style very close to informal speech while the contents contained radical and revolutionary ideas.³⁶⁷ The most successful period of the manifestos was between 1428 and 1431³⁶⁸ which also was the peak of radical Hussite expansion and military success. It is not too ambitious to state that successful Hussite propaganda abroad belongs to an important and dramatic chapter of European history.³⁶⁹

The witness of 'women' in high places

The final forms of propaganda are also examples of literary propaganda. They differ from the manifestos in that they were not produced for mass dissemination abroad. This genre was composed almost exclusively for a learned Czech audience. The propagandist influence was no less significant. The first example, 'Václav, Havel and Tábor or a discourse concerning Bohemia', is an anonymous work patterned in the genre of the popular medieval literary disputes and dialogues.³⁷⁰

This dispute has three participants, Václav, an adherent of Rome and convinced enemy of the Hussites, Tábor, a Táborite-Hussite, and Havel, an undecided individual who stands in the valley of decision between the official church and Hussitism. Václav accuses Tábor of ruining Prague. According to Václav, the Táborites are madmen who elected Žižka as their leader, but 'Žižka will do much evil'.³⁷¹ Václav declares that already Pikharts, Táborites and Wyclifites have formed a many-headed beast and are stalking the land.³⁷² The hesitant Havel objects to Tábor that the Hussites are destroying the entire country. Many villages have been plundered and are now deserted. Havel's great fear is that

³⁶⁷ Manifestos, p. 40. Jaroslav Pečirková, 'Husitské manifesty jako umělecká díla' [Hussite manifestos as works of art], *AUC-PH*, 5 (1966), pp. 83-92.

³⁶⁸ Pavel Spunar, 'K obrazu a problémům písemnictví na přelomu 30. let 15. století v Čechách' [On the image and problem of literature at the thirty year turning point of the fifteenth century in Bohemia], in *Soudce Smluvený v Chebu* [The agreement of the judge at Cheb], ed. Jindřich Jirka, (Cheb, 1982), p. 177.

³⁶⁹ Amedeo Molnár, 'Husovo místo v evropské reformaci' [The place of Hus in the European Reformation], *ČSČH*, 14 (1966), p. 7.

³⁷⁰ *Václav, Havel a Tábor čili Rozmlouvání o Čechách*. Prologue dates the composition to 1424. Original manuscript in Mnichovo Hradiště, State Archives MS 1266 fols 194^r-213^v. An abbreviated text in *Výbor z české literatury husitské doby*, vol. I, pp. 391-5, complete text in Svejtkovský, *Veršované skladby doby husitské*, pp. 116-50. References to the text shall be from this latter edition.

³⁷¹ Svejtkovský, *Veršované skladby doby husitské*, p. 116.

³⁷² 'viz, co jest v malé rotě roztržení, pikhartuov, táboruov, pražan, viklefův ...', *ibid.*, p. 135.

once the Hussites have finished their campaign foreigners – and especially Germans – will arise against the Czechs and annihilate them.³⁷³ Here in classic form the nationalistic issues existing at the centre of the context of Hussite Bohemia is apparent. According to Václav, the 'error of Wyclif' can be determined by asking 'Wyclif's son'. Both the English Wyclif and the Bohemian Hus are in league with Mohammed.³⁷⁴ This is beyond what Tábor can stand and he lashes out at Václav: 'All of you are the bloody heretics ... you put the entire land of Bohemia to shame and you incite great political powers against us.'³⁷⁵ But Václav cannot be so quickly defeated. The Hussites, he claims 'use the scriptures to stir the people up to murder and thievery ... and villainy'. Because of these deeds God has sent invading armies against the Hussites.³⁷⁶ Tábor insists that in tribulation Bohemia is blessed and the Hussites will prevail and improve greatly the conditions in the country. However, in order to accomplish this 'we must deprive the rich and burn sin, in this manner we destroy the enemies of God for this is the will of God'.³⁷⁷ 'How do you want to obtain peace?' According to Tábor, peace can only come 'when Brother Žižka will give a military drill and our enemies, who do not belong in Bohemia and Moravia, are no longer here'.³⁷⁸ The supposed magnificent ride of the Hussites, 'according to the will of God', is a worrisome proposition for Václav and even Havel. Utilizing the story of the Israelite exodus from Egypt, as told in the Hebrew Bible, the anti-Hussites express their concern:

When your Moses – Žižka the executioner talks to God ... [then the Hussites] will strike their clubs against the rock ... water will come forth from the rock. And when you cross the Danube on dry ground like the Israelites at Jordan ... when this happens all the land beyond the Danube will belong to you.³⁷⁹

As noted earlier, the author of 'Václav, Havel and Tábor' was strictly opposed to the Hussites. That bias is never lost in the work. The ongoing dialogue, while a tool of propaganda for both the Romanists and the Hussites, is concerned primarily with convincing those caught in the crossfire, personified by Havel, to take sides. In this context the right side is with Rome.

The last example of propaganda to be examined is the so-called Budyšínský manuscript which uniquely takes sides with the Hussites.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-6.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

Again the document is anonymous³⁸⁰ but as propaganda is powerful in satire exercising decisive impact and remains an important monument to the influence of the Hussite movement.³⁸¹

The Budyšínský manuscript contains two compositions which concern us here: 'Veršovaná žaloba koruny české' (The verse accusation of the Czech Crown) and 'Porok koruny české ku pánóm českým o korunování krále Uherského' (The prophet of the Czech crown to the Czech lords on the coronation of the Hungarian king).³⁸² Once again, as we have already seen both in Hussite manifestos and liturgical texts, the complaint is made about Czechs (Hussites) being killed by fire, sword and water. In reference to Kutná Hora it is stated that 'laymen, students, women and priests [were thrown] into the shafts'.³⁸³ All of this has come about because 'at Constance the law of God was put on trial, sentenced and killed'.³⁸⁴ The Church of Rome is full of 'pride, adultery and grudges' and these evil things are being spread. On the basis of this wickedness the Hussites insist that they operate under a divine mandate: 'God has ordered us not to obey this magician who insists that his power is from God. God has ordered us to kill false prophets and to burn their towns. ... God has ordered us to kill these murderers and to confiscate their vineyards'.³⁸⁵

A main portion of these compositions is taken up with denouncing the *Králi zlěnu* (evil king) Sigismund and his collaborators. Condemning those Czech barons who have 'betrayed the Czech language and nation' by putting the Crown of St Wenceslas upon Sigismund, the author affirms stoutly that even in this terrible conundrum 'the truth of God will not die'.³⁸⁶ 'O Czech lords, you are deluded, having covered yourselves with shame ... this evil man you have selected is cursed by God, he will both destroy and slander you and the truth of God ... you have commit-

³⁸⁰ Most scholars have dated the Budyšínský manuscript to the second half of the 1420s. The best edition is Jiří Daňhelka (ed.), *Husitské skladby budyšínského rukopisu* [Hussite compositions of the Budyšínský Manuscript], (Prague, 1952).

³⁸¹ See his introduction to Daňhelka's edition, p. 20. John M. Klassen, 'Images of anti-majesty in Hussite literature', *Bohemia*, 33 (1992), pp. 267-81 puts the Budyšínský manuscript into the context of the divine right of kings, 'majesty' of monarchs and the Bohemian tradition stretching back to the end of the high Middle Ages.

³⁸² The Daňhelka edition contains both Czech and Latin texts. The Czech text is dated 20 June 1420, the Latin text, July, 1420. Since the Czech texts include items absent in the Latin, references primarily will be made to the former. Related texts in this edition shall also be cited for occasional corroboration or comparison.

³⁸³ *Porok koruny české*, p. 78.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³⁸⁵ *Hádání Prahy s Kutnou Horou* [The dispute between Prague and Kutná Hora], in *Husitské skladby budyšínského rukopisu*, ed. Jiří Daňhelka, (Prague, 1952), p. 120.

³⁸⁶ *Veršovaná žaloba koruny české*, p. 50.

ted an evil deed against the land of Bohemia.³⁸⁷ As far as the Hussites were concerned Sigismund was no more king than an ass. 'Coronation does not make one king. If that were so even an ass could be king, since it is possible for an ass to be crowned'.³⁸⁸ Such was the Hussite response to the news of Sigismund's coronation. They called upon those who perpetrated the 'illegal' deed to repent in fear of the law of God.³⁸⁹

All of the virulent hatred of Sigismund, expressed elsewhere can also be found here. He is a 'shameful man' this 'unjust, blasphemer', who has become 'the cruel king'. He is an 'incendiary, robber, murderer, rapist, illegal executioner and destroyer of the Czech land'. He gives 'castles and towns to Hungarians, Germans, murderers and destroyers and enemies of the Czechs'. The message is clear: 'another king should be chosen other than this foreigner'. This 'evil king' wants only to replace Czechs with Germans since 'Czechs are a putrid odor to him'. Sigismund is 'evil, blasphemous and proud' and opposed to the truth of God. Both Hus and Jerome suffered on account of Sigismund and even now he continues to 'imprison and kill people because of the truth'. 'He obtained the bloody cross from the pope, it was not the cross of Christ but rather the cross of antichrist. With this bloody cross they kill true Christians and in so doing renew the death of Christ.' All of this polemical diatribe added up to a firm and final rejection of Sigismund as king. The royal attributes of medieval sovereigns were enumerated and one by one stripped from him so that he is left only as the 'murdering, robbing, cruel, stupid, violator of virgins and women, persecutor of the faithful, evil monster and destroyer of the truth of God'. This particular propaganda insists that a king should be the father of his people but Sigismund only burns and destroys. A proper king should lead his subjects to the just order of God but since Sigismund does not the call goes out for another king to be elected.³⁹⁰ For

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.* and *Porok koruny české*, p. 66.

³⁸⁸ *Porok koruny české*, p. 69. Sigismund's comparison to an ass is interesting in light of the fact Sigismund later claimed he could not care less if the Hussites elected an ass for archbishop.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76. The Hussites held to the letter of the law as contained in the *Ordo coronationis* of Charles IV and refused to recognize Sigismund. The text of the *Ordo coronationis* has been published by Johann Loserth, 'Die Krönungsordnung der Könige von Böhmen', *AÖG*, 54 (1876), pp. 9-36. In a technical sense Sigismund's coronation was legal. The fact that no re-coronation occurred in 1436 is sufficient grounds for the assumption. I am grateful to Jiří Kejí for pointing this out to me.

³⁹⁰ Various candidates were advanced; the most serious was the Polish candidate Sigismund Korybut who came to Prague on two separate occasions for extended periods of time. See most recently Bohdan Zilynskyj and Jerzy Grygiel, 'Kníže Zikmund Korybutovič a Praha' [Prince Sigismund Korybut and Prague], *Pražský sborník historický*, 23 (1990), pp. 7-27. The Budyšínský manuscript compares Sigismund to King Saul the first king of Israel who, refusing to obey God, was deprived. *Porok koruny české*, p. 70.

those steeped in the mythic, almost God-like character of the medieval kings, these satirical compositions must have had a great impact upon the minds of the readers. According to the propagandist, Sigismund has used cleverly the slanderous accusation of heresy to subvert the Czechs and conquer Bohemia. By succeeding in having both Hus and the Hussites declared heretical, Sigismund has managed to get both the empire and the Church to help him achieve his own evil ambitions.³⁹¹ The fact that this assumption is unsupportable historically does not detract at all from the propagandist thrust. For the Hussites, Sigismund prefers to fight the Czechs more than the Turks.³⁹² 'It is a shame to have such an evil king.' Therefore the Hussites call for this resolve by all faithful Czechs: 'Arise all good Czechs against this despotic German ... and drive him out of this land.'³⁹³ The king is mocked as a weakling who can no longer properly fight. Through much cavorting with lewd women the satire affirms that Sigismund has become 'effeminate' (zžeňal).³⁹⁴ It is for these reasons that the Hussites denied Sigismund's right to the throne and not simply on the grounds that he was a 'rigid and intolerant Catholic'.³⁹⁵

As noted earlier, one of the bastions of support for Sigismund in Bohemia was Kutná Hora. 'The dispute between Prague and Kutná Hora', written in 1420, personifies Prague – the capital of Hussitism – and Kutná Hora – the capital of Bohemian support for Sigismund and Rome, as women, the former beautiful and the other ugly, in a dispute before Christ who will ultimately pass judgement. Kutná Hora rails on Prague apropos to the destruction of ecclesiastical property, iconoclasm and essentially the entire dossier of radical reform. This conflated response by Prague illuminates the debate:³⁹⁶

Lord Jesus, judge of our disputations
Served mass without these preparations,
Nor enjoined them he indeed;
and this the faithful all should heed.

Churches and altars that I need
Destroy I not, no indeed,
Nor by me are they even damaged;
Only the superfluous are ravaged.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 65.

³⁹² Ibid., p. 62.

³⁹³ Ibid., p. 74.

³⁹⁴ *Veršovaná žaloba koruny české*, p. 38.

³⁹⁵ Jean Sedlar, *East Central Europe in the Middle Ages 1000-1500* (Seattle and London, 1994), p. 33.

³⁹⁶ *Hádání Prahy s Kutnou Horou*, pp. 108-9, 116, 129, 163. Translation in Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution*, p. 439.

He who doesn't have a fish,
let him eat another dish.

If counterfeiters may be killed,
and brigands, men with murders filled,
Then how much more is killing valid
For men who preach faith that's squalid.

Predictably, the final judgement by Christ goes against Kutná Hora and approves the beautiful lady of Prague, *Matka měst* (the mother of cities).

The most interesting part of these satirical compositions is the section which entails the allegory of the Czech crown upon being wedded to Sigismund. Here the crown is personified as a woman – the unwilling wife of the king – and speaks in the first person.³⁹⁷ The crown laments that she has been forced into union with Sigismund for 'he wants to destroy me'. Speaking to the king the crown says, 'I am forced to be your wife'. The crown enumerates her complaint by asserting 'you have harmed me in my town of Wrocław [Breslau]'. Here the reference is to the torture and killing of the Hussite Jan Krása.³⁹⁸ 'You have robbed my sons and forced them to refuse the truth.' With the 'bloody cross' Sigismund wishes to 'persecute me and my children, to kill us with the sword'. This faithless husband 'burns faithful people, robs, and rapes virgins'. All who follow the truth of God – the teachings of the Hussites – are persecuted by this 'seven-headed dragon who is stained with blood'. The crown wails against her spouse: 'You poisoned some of the followers of the truth so that they abandoned the truth and now are robbing their own nation, killing their own people and strengthening their enemies.' The crown declares sadly that her children will be called heretics.

In an attempt to spark revolt among the servants of this '*zlý hospodář*' (evil master), and thus gain support for herself, the crown asks, 'where is the strength of the Czech nobility? It has vanished like snow'. The crown also appeals to God: 'Lord, look at me, the poor wife. Deliver me from the hands of this terrible dragon who seeks to devour me.' The crown begs God to prevent the reign of Sigismund in Bohemia and also calls for divine intervention against the wicked in order to '*vypud' kupce z svého chrámu*' (expel the money-mongers from the church).³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ *Veršovaná žaloba koruny české*, pp. 46-60.

³⁹⁸ An envoy from the university in Prague was also forced to denounce the chalice. MC, vol. I, p. 387.

³⁹⁹ The satirical letter from the Devil to Lev of Rožmítal, written by Oldřich of Kalenice, appearing in the Jena Codex, fol. 57r is worth mentioning here as an example of literary propaganda.

'Lord, defeat [Sigismund] and his companions who have trespassed your law and killed your servants. Let him know that you are almighty God and that no strength can oppose you.' This remarkable piece of polemical propaganda certainly contributed to popular public opinion against Sigismund and the strong support for the Hussites in various parts of Bohemia.⁴⁰⁰ Personified as the wife of Sigismund and the city of Prague, the witness of these Hussite 'women' in high places added a different dimension to the game of propaganda.

Two accounts of the personification of inanimate objects for the purposes of propaganda should be mentioned in this context. During the iconoclastic fervour in England during the sixteenth-century Reformation, statues of the blessed Virgin were confiscated from Ipswich, Walsingham and Caversham and put into prison. Thereafter they were tried and sentenced as real heretics and then executed publicly at Smithfield.⁴⁰¹ The other example is from Hussite Bohemia. On 29 July 1410 the university master Šimon of Tišnov defended publicly Wyclif's treatise *De probacionibus propositioinum*.⁴⁰² Part of his defence involved speaking to the treatise itself and then answering his own questions as if the treatise was actually speaking. For example, Šimon asks the treatise what its crime has been to deserve the sentence of fire and the treatise answers.⁴⁰³ In all three cases, the public trial of 'heretical' statues, the responses of a condemned book, and the lament of a prostituted crown, the effect on the thinking of the observers or readers must have been significant. These sorts of literary devices, together with oral and visual propaganda, enabled the radical Hussites to communicate their message in the wider social arena both in hopes of procuring support for their cause and demoralizing their opponents.

Since an evaluation of the success and impact of Hussite propaganda goes hand-in-hand with the same assessment of the movement as a whole, which is the subject of the concluding chapter, it remains here only to raise two brief but significant factors in terms of Hussite propaganda. One of the most important considerations in terms of assessing the promotion of ideas via propaganda modes has to do with context.

⁴⁰⁰ The sources on the dilemma of Sigismund as the Bohemian king are extensive. One not mentioned is the satirical song about the Hungarian king. Prague Castle Archive MS N 50 fols 205^r-206^v.

⁴⁰¹ Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art*, p. 224 and Ronald C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*, (London, 1977), pp. 204-5.

⁴⁰² Reported in *Chronicon universitatis pragensis*, in FRB, vol. V, p. 572. The defence is preserved in Prague, National and University Library MS X E 24 fols 133^r-135^v and Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS 4002 fols 38^r-41^r.

⁴⁰³ Prague, National and University Library MS X E 24 fol. 136^v.

The context for the function of propaganda should neither be minimized nor overlooked. It is the context which is often the most vital element for effective communication and the successful metamorphosis of information – oral, visual or literary – into a mode of propaganda, satire or parody. The following incident illustrates this point. In a small contemporary Swabian village in Germany an old widower had the family name Falke which, in German, means 'falcon'. The man unfortunately had a nose which accentuated his name and since he had a generally gawky appearance, he attracted unwanted attention to his person. Not surprisingly the children of the village, whenever they saw Herr Falke, would begin to sing *Es kommt ein Vögel geflogen*, a very famous and well-known children's song known virtually throughout the whole of Germany. In English the song could be translated 'A Little Bird Comes A-Winging'. By itself the song is not satirical in the least. When sung by the children in the context of the presence of Herr Falke, it took on an entirely different dimension. The man perceived the song as a bitter and cruel satire and of course he became enraged at its sound, a fact which only added to the delight of the little singers. Indeed, it was not even necessary to sing the words of the song, it was more than sufficient to invoke the fury of Herr Falke by merely humming or whistling the offensive tune.⁴⁰⁴ In terms of the Hussite context it would have been sufficient for a few mischievous Hussites to hang around outside the open windows of a Roman Church humming innocently the tune of 'Ye warriors of God' to invoke the wrath of Rome and send pious blood pressure sky rocketing. Not enough can be said of context when analysing propaganda and its effects.

The second issue, regarding propaganda in the Hussite milieu, which needs to be raised is the problem of distinguishing between propaganda itself and the evidence of propaganda. In terms of visual propaganda it has been argued that propaganda by itself does not provide a commentary on actual popular beliefs since it may well only be the imposition of the belief world of the propagandist. Moreover, it is impossible to ascertain how well the propaganda was understood or precisely how widespread an influence it exerted.⁴⁰⁵ The problem is certainly a real one in terms of visual propaganda. The situation is altered somewhat in the context of oral propaganda. First, in an oral culture, the song, saying, or slogan is the propaganda in a pure form. Hence, the evidence of propaganda and the actual propaganda are one and the same at least in the popular mentality, though this does not presuppose that the

⁴⁰⁴ Donald Ward, 'The satirical song: text versus context', *Western Folklore*, 36 (October 1977), p. 352.

⁴⁰⁵ Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, p. 8.

popular mind has understood the song or saying as propaganda. Second, it would seem that there is a far more emotional commitment to joining in a public singing of Hussite ditties than there is to purchasing a broadsheet to hang on a wall. The latter action may entail no more than securing a cheap decoration for the home. Learning the words of a popular song and publicly singing that song is a better indication of the person's beliefs. Regarding the issue of how well the propaganda was understood there does not seem to be any solution to actually determining an appropriate assessment. It is not necessarily helpful to suppose that a peasant in the fifteenth century understood the ramifications of the popular song he sang any better than the peasant in the sixteenth century who bought a broadsheet and hung it in his home. There remains a dialectic between the real world of popular culture and the world of the propagandist.

Propaganda in Hussite Bohemia achieved the purposes of proclaiming a particular message, satirizing the enemy, provoking a reaction and galvanizing a popular movement. The Hussite revolution and the resistance movement grew stronger as time went by. If 'all revolutionary movements, all popular wars have been nourished by such propaganda of agitation'⁴⁰⁶ then doubtless the era of the Hussite movement is the example *par excellence* of European medieval history. In the kaleidoscopic convergence of paint, poetry and pamphlets the politics of the Hussite Reformation continued to stimulate the ongoing confrontation between popes and heretics, a popular movement and a world no longer united. Strictly speaking, for the Hussites, their propaganda may well have rekindled their own enthusiasm for the cause as much as it served to attract new adherents or spread the Hussite gospel to new frontiers. Either way, the myth and heresy went along with the 'warriors of God' for the duration of their magnificent ride and its promotion was no whispering campaign.

⁴⁰⁶ Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Minds*, p. 71.

The ascent of dissent

On the eve of his martyrdom in 1458 the German-Hussite heretic Friedrich Reiser declared, 'the cause is going out like a fire'.¹ Two years earlier the obdurate enemy of the Hussites, John Capistrano warned that Hussitism could burst into renewed flames in many countries beyond Bohemia. Two radically different conceptions; one expressing demise, the other alarm. If understood correctly, both are paradoxically worthy of acceptance. For Reiser, it was the end of the revolutionary reformation. But myths, especially those as powerful as the Hussite myth, cannot be defused in an instant. Heresy, as pervasive as Hussite heresy, cannot be exterminated easily even when flung to the flaming faggots. Neither can the lingering consequences of successful propaganda be summarily dismissed nor ignored. Capistrano was aware of these facts and in the waning firelight feared the potential of the flickering embers.

Summing up the history of a popular revolution and reformation as complicated as the Hussite movement is never an easy task. At the outset it will be essential to qualify what may be regarded as a curious title, 'the ascent of dissent'. Quite simply it is inaccurate to associate the radical Hussites with dissent. Indeed, in terms of religion they were nonconformists who dissented all the way to outright heresy. More often than not medieval dissent and heresy has been regarded as negative, unproductive, self-defeating and ultimately a downward spiral of little or no consequence. The history of the radical groups within the first reformation in Bohemia does not conform to such a pattern. Instead, the Hussites represent a benchmark of progressive development apropos to the relation between heresy and *status quo* authorities. This progression, advancement or ascent of dissent within Hussite history introduced a new chapter into the history of heresy and, at least from a theoretical perspective, altered the fundamental relation between orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

There are six factors within Hussite history which represent a significant dimension within Czech dissent: concessions exacted from authority,

¹ Cited in Dietrich Kurze, 'Märkische Waldenser und Böhmisches Bruder. Zur brandenburgischen Ketzergeschichte und ihrer Nachwirkung im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert', in *Festschrift für Walter Schlesinger*, ed. Helmut Beumann, (Cologne and Vienna, 1974), vol. II, p. 471.