
Petr Chelčický's Defense of Sacramental Communion: *Response to Mikuláš Biskupec of Tábor*

Pavel Kolář

(Prague)

When considering the disputes around the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the Bohemian Reformation, the importance of Petr Chelčický does not rest in the incisiveness of his theological and philosophical arguments. Of greater significance is his peculiar stand within the Bohemian Reformation and several of his fundamental presuppositions. The latter determined Petr's characteristic viewpoint that he maintained in his eucharistic disputes vis-à-vis both the Taborite and the Prague parties.

Petr was a theologically educated layman, who nevertheless lacked the benefit of university training. His knowledge of the theological and philosophical issues connected with the Eucharist, derived above all from domestic treatises and the tradition they conveyed,¹ as well as from oral discussions by university masters and advocates of the various theological approaches.² The starting point of his speculation, therefore, is "the state of art," which the Bohemian Reformation had hitherto attained, particularly in the question of frequent sacramental communion.

Petr's eucharistic treatises are thoroughly polemical. This trait has been lost in the extant literature that has sought to present Petr's views systematically and thus has obscured the inner motifs and the structuring of Petr's arguments.³

Petr himself states that his critique of the Taborites, on which my interest centres, was complicated by the fact that his knowledge of their teaching came in large part from oral discussions. He, therefore, asked Mikuláš for Taborite eucharistic treatises, from which he cites copiously, although he likewise refers to oral information.⁴

¹ Amedeo Molnár „Zprávy o svátostech,” [Reports on the sacraments] in Petr Chelčický, *Zprávy o svátostech, O rotách českých, O nejvyšším biskupu Pánu Kristu*, [ARBI 2] (Prague, 1980) 13n.

² For instance, in the treatise, "O božím těle," [On the body of the Lord] he argues against a vulgar form of the teaching about transubstantiation that he heard, among others, from one of the Prague masters, rather than against its erudite "university form."

³ Thus, for example, Antonín Lenz, *Petra Chelčického učení o sedmeře svátosti* [Petr Chelčický's teaching on the seven sacraments] (Prague, 1889); Alois Míka, *Petr Chelčický* (Prague, 1963).

⁴ Míka, *Chelčický* 68-70; to fathom the tenor of these discussions that were carried on at a dike of a pond near Vodňany, we can cite Petr's comment, by which he concludes a critique of the morals of some of the Taborites: "And when such improprieties had reached the holy place, it was then evident that hell had poured out the last drop of its liquor to make the whole world drunk." [A když sú takové nepravosti prišli na miesto sväté, již tehdy zjevno jest, že peklo vylilo jest poslední chmel svůj, aby jím svět ochmelilo.]

The main objective of this study is to show on the basis of Chelčický's *Replika proti Mikuláši Biskupci Táborskému* that (1) the original aim of Petr's polemic with the Taborites is a defence of sacramental communion, and that, therefore (2) Petr's defence of the real presence of the body of Christ in the sacrament against the Taborites – the focus of the extant studies of Chelčický – is motivated exactly by a desire to stress the importance of sacramental communion.⁵

Dispute About the Body Of Christ

Extant literature has understood Petr's polemic with the Taborites, concerning the real, substantial presence of the body and blood of Christ, entirely according to the paradigms of the traditional theological and philosophical discourse that reached in its origins to the teaching of Paschasius and Berengarius.⁶ That was correct in principle, but this approach ignored a trait of Petr's polemic, which is even today relevant. Petr is coming to grips with the fact that he does not understand the manner, in which the Taborites use the words "the body of Christ" in relation to the sacramental signs of bread and wine. This aspect of Petr's polemic reacts to the problematic fact that the Taborites often preserved in their eucharistic polemics the traditional conceptual apparatus,⁷ and also retained certain of its traditional forms in their liturgy.⁸

First of all, Petr defines the basic paradigms of the conceptual space within which the Taborite view of the Eucharist was moving.⁹ After the Ascension, Christ was not anywhere on earth present substantially, personally, existentially, or physically, and hence with none of the qualities of the body, in which he was resurrected and ascended into heaven. Petr noted that Biskupec rejected gross, material concepts of Christ's presence in Eucharist ("there are holy items with bones, hair, veins"), as well as the views in which Christ's body loses the characteristics of real, material corporeality and acquires a disproportionate character of spirituality ("however, Christ's body, although it is spiritual, it is not a

⁵ Petr Chelčický, *Repliky proti Mikuláši Biskupci Táborskému*. [Reply to Mikuláš of Tábor] ed. Josef Straka (Tábor, 1930). (According to MS, Vědecké knihovna, Olomouc, VUKOL MI 161 ff. 1r-88r; G 18, čís. 1232). Concerning the dating of *Replika*, see Jan Sedlák, *Táborské traktáty eucharistické* [Taborite eucharistic tracts] (Brno, 1918) 47n; Míka, *Chelčický* 65-70.

⁶ For instance, Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period. A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the Theologians c. 1080 - c.1220* (Oxford, 1984) 18-43.

⁷ Petr mentions especially the use of the terms: efficaciously (*efficaciter*), spiritually (*spiritualiter*), really (*realiter*), truly (*vere*), presently (*sacramentaliter*), by which the Taborites designate Christ's sacramental presence in the Eucharist; see Chelčický, *Replika* 38; Petr likewise refers to the nature of his discussions with the Taborites. He is convinced that it was no easy matter to understand the real meaning of their teaching. An ambiguity of their public statements is a defense mechanism against involvement in theological disputes. Their real views are communicated only in private and, as a rule, just orally. If we accept this interpretation, it would indicate a diplomatic reticence in the matters of faith, and possibly a measure of sectarian secretiveness, on the part of the Taborites; see Chelčický, *Replika* 75.

⁸ See Chelčický, *Replika* 75.

⁹ Sedlák, *Táborské traktáty* (část 1) 41-44, cites the sources used by Petr for information about the Taborite teaching.

spirit"). On that basis, Petr characterised Biskupec's concept of Christ's glorified corporeality in the following manner: "you lend to Christ's body a certain spirituality, but one with which persists the real physical body, having bones that can be touched, as well as having flesh, as earlier, but now already immortal and glorified."¹⁰

In Chelčický's polemical reference, the Taborites teach that Christ is present substantially and corporeally only in heaven on the right side of God the Father, and that this glorified corporeality preserves the basic traits of human corporeality (his bones can be touched, he possesses flesh, a certain definite size, etc.). Christ cannot be present on earth in this corporeality earlier than the end of ages, when he comes to judge the living and the dead.¹¹ The Taborites did not admit any other way of thinking about Christ's glorified body, and this prevented them from a consideration of a form of Christ's substantial corporeal presence in the Lord's Supper. Such was, at least Petr's understanding, when he stressed to the Taborites that Wyclif refused to understand the real body of Christ (in the sacrament) exclusively in the categories of space and matter.¹² For reasons of their own, the Taborites, however, rejected unambiguously the substantial corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament as impossible without upsetting the order of the history of salvation that was defined by the sacrifice, death, resurrection, ascension and the second coming in glory of Jesus Christ. For them, the only manner (or mode) of Christ's eucharistic presence (that is, on earth) adequately harmonising with the

¹⁰ Chelčický, *Replika* 23n.

¹¹ About the further role of this idea in the tradition of the Bohemian Reformation, see F.M. Dobiáš, *Učení jednoty bratrské o večeři Páně. Z teologie doby Lukášovy a doby po Blahoslavovi* [The teaching of the Unity of Brethren on the Lord's Supper. From the theology of the time of Lukaš (of Prague) and the time after (Jan) Blahoslav] (Prague, 1940).

¹² Chelčický, *Replika* 63; Petr develops his interpretation of Wyclif especially in the concluding part of the *Replika*, when he tries to bolster his own interpretation of the concept *manducatio sacramentalis* "...to the pagan argument that a dog, a mouse, or a pig can eat the Christians' God or the body of Christ; he retorts: 'But we answer them according to our existing faith that they argue falsely, because such beasts can eat the consecrated sacrifice that is only a sacrament, but not the body of Christ or his blood.'" Petr understood Wyclif to believe in the substantial presence of Christ's body in the sacrament, but he viewed the presence as a peculiarly spiritual one, destined for the benefit of the faithful communicants; for a concise sketch of the context of this question see Gary Macy, "Reception of the Eucharist According to the Theologians: A Case of Diversity in the 13th and 14th Centuries," in idem, *Treasures from the Storeroom. Medieval Religion and the Eucharist* [Collegeville, Minn., 1999] 36-58). Petr then stresses that Wyclif was refusing to understand the real body of Christ in the sacrament in spatial terms, whereby he delimits himself vis-à-vis the Taborites, who to the contrary refused to speak of the body of Christ outside the spatial category. Petr likewise interprets Wyclif's term *figurative* as a polemical one in relation to a certain concept of transubstantiation that, however, Petr considered as the original teaching on transubstantiation. The latter fact is attested by his treatise *O Božím těle* (MS., Vědecká knihovna, Olomouc, VUKOL M I 164 ff. 204v-207v), according to which the body of Christ is present in the sacrament in such a way that it can be seen by the eyes, touched by the hands, and chewed by the teeth. It was an extreme formulation, based on the explanation of the dispute concerning the teaching of Berengarius in the eleventh century. The standard theology of the universities, which defended transubstantiation, was, of course, vehemently opposed to such an interpretation. As for Wyclif, he could not, from his own standpoint, accept this defense as philosophically relevant. See Chelčický, *Replika* 62-65.

character of salvation history was a presence that was spiritual by the means of the word, truth, power, wisdom, light, faith, love of grace, through the Holy Spirit.¹³

The third paradigm, according to Petr, is the Taborites' definition of the words of the institution that are to be understood so that "that Christ calls bread his sacramental body in the sense that Elijah calls Christ and John the rock from which the sons of Israel drank, namely, that the bread signified the body of Christ that was given for us,"¹⁴ and that was to be so understood on the basis of a general semantic principle that "the thing that signifies something else, is called by the name of the thing, that it signifies."¹⁵ According to this principle, while simultaneously rejecting a substantial presence of Christ's body in the sacrament, the Taborites justified the legitimacy of calling bread and wine "the Body and Blood" of Christ sacrificed.

In order to understand the Taborite usage of the words "Body and Blood" in relation to the sacramental signs of bread and wine, Petr turns his attention to the expression "signify," in which he discerns the Wyclifite figurative. He tries to ascertain what meaning or sense the Taborites ascribe to this term. He finds an opportunity to approach the issue through the Taborite distinction between the sign of the old covenant (the rock in the desert, the Paschal Lamb), and the new (bread and wine). The basis for the differentiation is their relation to the historical event of the sacrifice on the cross, to which the Old Testament sign refers as an event of the future, and the New Testament sign as an event of the past. The difference is underscored by the fact that Christ himself replaced the Paschal Lamb by the sacrament of bread and wine. From the Taborites' discussion of the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament signs, Petr, however, deduces that for them there is no substantial, qualitative distinction, because their sole "truth," that is, "the thing [res] signified" was one and the same reality – the grace of God merited by Christ's sacrifice on the cross: "after all, the bronze serpent and the Lamb also signified Christ's passion, and those, who faithfully used those signs, are also participants in Christ's passion and his deeds and are justified through him, as also the faithful are now... And therefore their figures signified Christ from afar, but the faithful actually attained that good which Christ brought about through his death."¹⁶

Petr comes to a conclusion that the Taborites use the words "body and blood" in relation to the sacramental signs in the meaning of "graces, springing from the body of Christ," and he backs up this interpretation by a quotation from the treatise, *Cum spiritus veritatis*, of Jan Němec of Žatec.¹⁷ Petr considers this interpretation as the only possible explanation of the statement, which he received orally from Mikuláš Biskupec that Christ was present in the sacrament in his real body, but that, at the same time, Christ was present in his real body exclusively in heaven. It is, therefore, obvious that "one is not talking about the body of Christ, but

¹³ Ibid. 22n and 30n. The Taborites naturally looked also for philosophical reasons to support their views. However, I emphasize the historico-salvific unity of Christ's corporeality (as the Taborites understood it), in order to focus the obvious target of Petr's polemic, that I wish to explicate in this study.

¹⁴ Ibid. 25.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid. 46.

¹⁷ Sedlák, ed. *Táborské traktáty* (part 3) 1-20.

only about the spiritual power, which depends on grace and is merited by the faithful through the sacrifice of his body so that eating those visible signs they might attain those graces... thus saying that the real body of Christ is in the sacrament, you mean only the spiritual power that comes to people through the body of Christ.”¹⁸ According to Chelčický, the manner in which the Taborites use the word “body” for the “grace”, merited through the death of Christ’s body, could lead to odd conclusions. It could lead to calling the “truth” [res] of all the sacraments as “the body”, because, for instance, also through baptism, graces merited through the death of Christ are received. Hence, water could also be called a sacramental sign of Christ’s body. By using the term “body of Christ” in relation to sacramental signs, the Taborites sin against the fundamental sense of the individual sacraments, established by Christ: “...There are different commandments of Christ, that one thing should be preserved in one way, another thing in another way; some deeds should be done one way, other deeds in another way; and the same spirit should distribute its bounties, as it pleased...”¹⁹

This is one of the key moments of Petr’s polemic with the Taborites. His argumentation leads the Taborite approach to an extreme conclusion that is – according to his opinion – a denial of the meaning of Christ’s institution of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, and of the very words of that institution. He himself posits entirely different paradigms within which Christ’s words at the last Lord’s Supper should be understood. Within these paradigms, the Taborite use of the words “body and blood” appear entirely unjustified and nonsensical, opposing Jesus Christ’s intent: “...it will not do just casually to call a sign by the name of the thing signified, if the sign should have the truth and the power like the thing signified... if the thing signified is not really and existentially united with the sign, why would the sign bear the name of the thing signified, if the truth of the thing did not stand within it... therefore, if the power of the substantial body of Christ is not present in the sign, then it is false to maintain that the sign is the body of Christ...”²⁰ Petr unambiguously puts the Taborites on notice that only a conviction about substantial, corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament legitimises using the words “body and blood” in relation to the sacramental signs. Without this belief, such a way of speaking just makes no sense. Petr’s strictures were not merely a matter of theory; they also had a bearing on liturgical practice. The maintenance of certain liturgical practices by the Taborites – in view of their eucharistic teaching – violated the truthful relationship of the liturgical words and gestures to the reality of the sacrament.²¹ Such, in any case, were the views of Petr Chelčický.

Sacramental and Spiritual Communion

In terms of the traditional scholastic theology, it can be said – with a certain simplification – that Petr was reproaching the Taborites that, in their teaching, the *res et sacramentum* of the sacrament was devoured by its *res* (*tantum*), that is, the

¹⁸ Chelčický, *Replika* 41.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 42.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 48n.

²¹ *Ibid.* 75.

substantial body of Christ by the grace of union with Christ.²² I will attempt to show on the question of communion what consequences this subsuming could and did have for religious life in the given context.

The crux of the dispute between Petr and the Taborites concerning communion was the interpretation of the text, which Jana Nechutová calls “the common place” [místo společné] of the Bohemian Reformation – the text of John’s Gospel in chapter 6, “Nisi manducaveritis.”²³ The Taborites accepted this explication only in the spiritual sense as, among others, Petr’s following remarks attest: “...the mere sign, the fact of which you try to obfuscate by talking about the true, existential body of Christ, and going out among the people with the words of ‘the living bread’... But you yourselves refuse to apply to the sign those attributes, which belong to the living bread [that is, Christ], saying: Attributes, that belong only to the living bread, should not be uttered about the sacramental bread, because sacramental bread is not the living bread, neither does it have living bread within it...”²⁴ Thus, they referred the words of Jesus about eating (and drinking) the living bread – the body of Christ – to the *res* (*tantum*). Thereby, however, the process was interpreted unambiguously in the sense of *manducatio spiritualis*.²⁵ As I have already pointed out, Petr discerned the connection between this spiritual interpretation and the Taborite concept of the relationship of the sacramental sign to the truth of that sign. We can repeat his statement here: “after all, the copper snake and the Lamb also signified Christ’s passion, and those, who faithfully used those signs, are also participants in Christ’s passion and his deeds and are justified through him, as also the faithful are now... And therefore their figures signified Christ from afar, but the faithful actually attained that good which Christ brought about through his death.”²⁶

I have emphasised the word “faithfully,” because an identification of the sole “truth” [*res*] of the sacramental signs [*sacramentum*] with the grace of the spiritual

²² “And because it is wrong, according to the word of God, that his existential body is in the bread, and Christ’s correct meaning is to say that he called bread a sign of his body, how then this body, which is not in the sacrament, is the matter of this sacrament? And when this body sits in heaven on the right side of God, and the sacrament is here on earth, a long distance separates the sacrament from the thing signified.” [A poněvadž jest bludné kromě slova božieho řeči, že v chlebu jest bytné jeho tělo, a pravý rozom Kristův jest řeči, že nazýval chléb k znamení tělem svým, kterak to tělo, ješto ho nenie v té svátosti, jest věc té svátosti? A když to tělo sedí v nebi na pravici boží, a svátost zde na zemi, dalekoť jest miestem rozdělěna svátost od věci znamenáné.] Ibid. 26. For an overall context, see Macy, *The Theologies*; Ludwig von Hödl, “Sacramentum et res – Zeichen und Bezeichnetes,” *Scholastik* 38/2 (1963) 161-182; Macy: “Reception of the Eucharist According to the Theologians,” 36-58.

²³ Jana Nechutová: “K charakteru eucharistie v české reformaci.” [Towards the character of the Eucharist in the Bohemian Reformation] in SPFFBU B19 (1971) 31-44.

²⁴ “...to znamenie nahé, chrániece nahoty jeho řečmi těmi, kteréž se mluvie o pravém, bytném tělu Kristovu, a jdúce k lidu s ním pod slovy živého chleba (...) Avšak sami to potupujete, vnášeti na to znamenie ty řeči, kteréž slušejí k živému chlebu (tj. Kristu), řkúce: Písma, kterážto toliko příležie k chlebu živému, nemají mluvena býti o chlebu posvátném, poněvadž chléb posvátný nenie chléb živý, ani má v sobě chleba živého...” Chelčický, *Replika* 33.

²⁵ Macy, “Reception,” 36-58; Ondřej M. Petruš, *Matěj z Janova o častém přijímání* [Mathias of Janov on frequent communion] (Olomouc, 1946) 75-79.

²⁶ See n. 16 above.

communing with Christ led in the context of the medieval view on the issue of communion²⁷ with a certain inevitability to the opinion that the proper essence of the sacrament was exclusively *manducatio spiritualis*, which was proper to all the faithful [digni]. In order to capture the Taborite view of the inner essence of *manducatio spiritualis*, Petr does not hesitate to refer to their teaching, according to which the words of the Gospel “Nisi manducaveritis” mean that “the spiritual eating of Christ’s body and drinking of his blood, ... is so necessary that no-one can be saved without it, and it belongs only to the pure. It depends solely on the real and true union of the soul with the Lord Jesus, and a transformation in him”²⁸

Up to this point the Taborite teaching would still remain within the bounds of the traditional concept of the spiritual reception of the Eucharist. Chelčický, however, places this statement into the wider context of the Taborite teaching about Christ’s spiritual habitation with the saints and within the saints through the Holy Spirit in love, grace and faith,²⁹ in order to show what was in his view the critical moment of their concept of *manducatio spiritualis*: “You say, therefore, that Christ is more fully and more perfectly present in a faithful person... he illumines [such a person] with wisdom, counsel and faith, and ignites him with religion... This way of talking shows that Christ is so perfectly present in the faithful person through many gifts that he does not need anything more; he has no need to seek Christ, because Christ himself dwells within him, and works everything well in him.”³⁰

The concept of the spiritual indwelling of Christ in the “faithful” shapes the explication of *manducatio spiritualis* in such a way that it makes possible a dissociation of the spiritual communion entirely from its relationship to the sacrament.³¹ Petr calls the Taborites’ attention to this consequence, because the sacramental signs: “precede the thing signified and lead the corporeal man to it, inasmuch as for his grossness he cannot lift himself by himself to the spiritual and invisible matters. It is like assuming that the reception of Christ’s body is a true and real union with Christ, and further presuming that the acts that he did (being in his body)... are his body, and claiming that the sacrament signifies that union and these deeds! Who already has this union and those deeds in himself, he no longer needs the sign, because he possesses the signified truth, and he has no need to be led to the truth.”³²

²⁷ Petrů, *Matěj z Janova 75-79*.

²⁸ “... jedenie těla Kristova a o pitie jeho krve duchovní, ...kteréžto jedenie záleží v skutečném a pravém spojení duše s pánem Kristem, a v něho proměnění jestiť tak potřebné, že nižádnému bez něho spasenu nelze býti, a dobrym toliko příležití.” Chelčický, *Replika* 51.

²⁹ Ibid. 30n.

³⁰ Ibid. 32.

³¹ It is true that Petr does not deny that the Taborites relate the sacramental signs of bread and wine to this *manducatio spiritualis*. According to him, they do say that “the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ is a sign of the various receptions [i.e. spiritual ones] of the body of Christ, and you explain that those signs are established in order to lead the communicants through them to invisible and spiritual things, because they are the forms of the invisible truth or grace, and that those spiritual matters are currently connected with the sign.” In the total context of their teaching, however, this relationship loses its meaning. See Chelčický, *Replika* 51.

³² “...poněvadž předcházejí (tj. svátostná znamení, PK) věc znamenánú a vedú k nie člověka tělestného, ješto pro svú hrubost sám od sebe pozdvihnutí se nemóž k duchovním a nevidomým věcem, kterak jest to nepodobné k tomu, položiti duchovní jedenie těla Kristova u pravém a skutečném spojení s Kristem, činiece ty skutky, které on v těle jsa činil, a že ti skutkové sú tělo jeho, a svátost položiti, že znamená ta spojení a ty skutky! Ktož je na sobě má, již tehdy nenie potřebie

I do not think it difficult to grasp the crux of Petr's critique. The Taborite teaching about the Eucharist, that is, the concept and interpretation of the "body of Christ" and *manducatio spiritualis*, as I have hitherto discussed them, lead as their consequence to an emptying of the sacramental character (in the sense of an efficacious sign of grace) of the Eucharist. This is because – despite preserving the formal traits of the traditional theological discourse – they, in fact, deprive within its context the sacramental signs of bread and wine (*sacramentum*) of their soteriological meaning (and even of their ability to lead, as signs, the corporeal man to matters invisible and spiritual).³³ According to Chelčický, the Taborite interpretation leads, in the final analysis, to a dismissal of the sacramental signs in the Christians' life because of their truly empty character, further to an abandonment of sacramental communion as useless (dispensable) in the order of salvation and, finally, to a rejection of the meaning of Christ's institution, as it was understood by the Bohemian Reformation. Petr documents these lurid consequences by the practice of many Taborite radicals, who stomped on the sacramental sign of bread, and poured the wine from the chalices onto the ground.³⁴

Nevertheless, Chelčický plunges even to a greater depth to uncover the root of the Taborite standpoint. He suspects it of abolishing the eschatological boundary between the present time and the life eternal, a boundary that the Taborites sought to maintain with their teaching about the substantial, corporeal presence of Christ solely in heaven, and their rejection of such a presence in the sacrament. This destabilization of the eschatological boundary, and hence of the order in the history of salvation, sprang from the vitiated soil of their concept of *manducatio spritualis*: "... you say that the reception of the spiritual body of Christ depends on a true and real union of the soul with Christ and on the transfiguration of the recipient. In that case, such a union cannot be signified by the sacrament or by anything else; moreover this union is so farfetched that it exceeds any human potential. After all, who could be found that has truly and really united with Christ and has transfigured into Christ?"³⁵ It is my opinion that Petr did not consider a full and consummated *manducatio spritualis* as a secular reality, but an eschatological one (as did the

toho znamenie, poněvadž pravda znamená u člověka jest, nebo se nepotřebuje vésti ku pravdě." Chelčický, *Replika* 51.

³³ As it is, among others, reflected in Petr's distinction of the sacramental and the spiritual communion in the case of the Taborites: (1) sacramental communion is the reception of the body of Christ in a sign that is to be done in his memory; (2) spiritual communion is the reception of the body of Christ in the truth, and it is understood thereby, as a constant communion, that is a dwelling through faith within Christ, and this reception is always with man without the sign – hence only such a communion is mandatory and necessary for salvation; see Chelčický, *Replika* 34.

³⁴ The internal contradiction in the Taborite teaching, as Petr understands it, leads in practice ultimately to a contempt for the sacrament. Petr sees this result among certain Taborites, who consider sacramental bread and wine as inferior to ordinary bread and wine. Moreover, he sees it in a certain extreme interpretation of the Taborite teaching by some preachers, who have condemned as idolatry, sacramental bread and wine together with the liturgical adoration and liturgical language. Thus, Petr uncovered the reality that the Taborite teaching overtly stressed the character of the sacrament as a sign, but it deprived the sign of any genuine connection with its *res* and, within the context of their theological starting points, the Taborites were powerless to prevent such a denouement. Chelčický, *Replika* 36.

³⁵ "Nebo jakož pravíte o povýšení toho diela a jiedla duchovnieho těla Kristova, že záleží na pravém a skutečném spojení duše s Kristem a na proměnění jeho, tehdy takového jedenie netoliko svátost nebo co jiného nemóž předznamenati a s ním spojená býti, ale tak jesti vysoké to jedenie, že lidi přesahá. *Nebo koho naleznem, ješto by se skutečně a právě s Kristem spojil a v něho se proměnil?*" [emphasis mine] See Chelčický, *Replika* 52.

Franciscan, Alexander of Hales).³⁶ The implicit erasure of the boundary between history and eschatology was, for him, the real reason for the Taborite (in practice) negative standpoint vis-à-vis sacramental communion.³⁷

Against the Taborite interpretation of the Gospel statement *Nisi manducaveritis*, Petr posits the explication that formed the spiritual axis in the theology of the Bohemian Reformation. According to this authentic interpretation, Jesus intended his words *Nisi manducaveritis* to cover also the sacramental signs of bread and wine and, therefore, also *manducatio sacramentalis*.³⁸ A theological expression of the meaning of these words is consequently the teaching about the substantial corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament; the source of this teaching was generally seen in the words of the Gospel about the Lord's Last Supper.³⁹ In opposition to the Taborites, Chelčický states his own view, which has support in scholastic theology concerning the sacraments: "those who worthily and faithfully eat his body, derive great spiritual benefits thereby; but those benefits are not called his body, but are the product of eating, of the eating his body that was betrayed for us. But as for downplaying the eating and the body and, calling the spiritual benefits by themselves, his body and eating his body, there is not a single word in the Scripture to support this view..."⁴⁰ Petr here follows the traditional teaching about the inner structure of the sacrament, *sacramentum (tantum) – res et sacramentum – res (tantum)*, and holds that the ultimate *res* of the sacrament is received through a worthy reception of the truth of Christ's body (*res et sacramentum*). Both the worthy and the unworthy [*digni et indigni*] receive the true body of Christ, but only the worthy share in the *res (tantum)*, which is the spiritual communion with Christ in grace.⁴¹

³⁶ Macy, "Reception," 37n.

³⁷ It would be of interest to test Petr's idea against the ecclesiological speculation of his contemporaries. This speculation focused on the proposition that the sole real church was a community of those predestined by God for salvation. Is not this teaching in its extreme form also an effort to abolish in secular time the eschatological boundary? This was a tendency of which Hus was implicitly aware, and which he tried to ward off. See Zdeněk Kučera, "Eklesiologický výklad posledního soudu – pokus o porozumění Janu Husovi," [An eschatological exposition of the last judgement – an attempt at an understanding of Jan Hus] *Jan Hus mezi epochami, národy a konfesemi*. ed. Jan. B. Lášek (Prague, 1995) 147-153; Pavel Kolář, *The Ecclesiology of John Hus*. Unpublished M.T.S. thesis (Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Berkeley, CA, 2001).

³⁸ Chelčický, "Zpávy o svátostech," in Chelčický, *Zprávy o svátostech, O rotách českých, O nejvyšším biskupu Pánu Kristu* 38.

³⁹ *Ibid.* Petr reads both texts on the same semantic (hermeneutic) plane. His approach here parallels that of the Taborites, who also read both texts on the same semantic (hermeneutic) plane, albeit a different one from Petr's. Petr's view testifies to the interdependence of the two texts in one of the important currents of the Bohemian Reformation. The faith in the real, substantial presence of Christ in the eucharistic gifts and the requirement of frequent sacramental communion by the laity are confidently anchored in the authoritative word (*lex*) of Jesus Christ, from which they derive the inner soteriological and historical reciprocity.

⁴⁰ "ti, kteříž jedie právě a věrně tělo jeho, berú z toho jedině užitky veliké duchovnie: ale však těch užitkóv duchovních nepravie tělem jeho, ale kladú u prostředek jedenie, a jedenie těla jeho, kteréž jest za nás zrazeno. Ale zase odjíti jedenie a odjetí tělo jeho, i nazývati samotnie užitky duchovnie tělem i jedením toho těla, k tomu nemáte jediného slova ze čtenie...." Chelčický, *Replika* 41.

⁴¹ Petr objects to the Taborites who, according to him, maintain that "only the one who approaches Christ's sacraments with the prescribed virtues [i.e. worthily – author's note] is truly eating Christ, who offers himself in the sacraments...." Petr comments: "And thus you deny the body of Christ and the associated graces to the evil ones, and assign the graces only to the good ones through the eating of those signs." According to Petr, appealing to Paul's words in 1 Cor., only the one who would unworthily receive the truth of the body of Christ in the sacrament could be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Chelčický, *Replika* 43.

Petr repeatedly emphasizes that the participation in the ultimate truth of the sacrament occurs through a worthy sacramental communion of the substantial body of Christ in the sacrament: “Such a union and transfiguration cannot be separated from the eating of Christ, but this union is promised by Christ thus: Who eats me... dwells in me and I in him.”⁴² It is exactly the worthy sacramental reception of the substantial body of Christ in the sacrament that marks the boundary between the present time and the time of future glory, because: “the effect of right eating will be seen in him, who then remains by faith and love in Christ... And this is said to signify that the true benefit of the eating of his body is the subsequent final dwelling in him; but untrue is the teaching that extols the dwelling in Christ, while taking away the eating of his body.”⁴³ Petr does not cease to emphasise that in the order of Christ’s establishment (and hence also in the order of the history of salvation), both kinds of communion – the sacramental and the spiritual – are internally united in a mutual relation, which is not subject to alteration by human establishment (or teaching): *manducatio sacramentalis* is a *terminus a quo* for *manducatio spiritualis*, which is, in turn, the *terminus ad quem* for *manducatio sacramentalis*.

Eschatological Boundary

The inseparable union of the sacramental and the spiritual communion in the soteriological order of history became also for Chelčický a truth that he defended with passion, which was characteristic of him, as a mature product of the Bohemian Reformation. His concern for the fate and the dignity of sacramental communion among the Taborites only confirms that the emphasis on the sacramental chalice and its significance in Christians’ lives found its justification and meaning only against the background of practicing frequent sacramental communion. Petr does not defend the distribution from chalice as such (which the Taborites did not abandon), but the spiritual foundations of Christian existence. For this existence, the sacramental communion with Christ who, according to a binding promise, gives himself truly (and hence, according to Petr’s outlook, substantially) to man in the sacramental signs of bread and wine, opens the road to the fullness of eternal life, which is an eschatological reality beyond the bounds of history. In his eyes, the Taborites were abandoning this foundation of spiritual life due to their overall concepts of “the body of Christ,” his spiritual dwelling within the faithful, and of *manducatio spiritualis*. The principal contribution of my brief study is to recognise Chelčický’s conclusion that a hidden agenda of the Taborites’ eucharistic teaching was the attempt to abolish the eschatological boundary between the actual (present) historical existence of humanity and the fullness of the eternal life in the eschaton.

(Translated from the Czech by Zdeněk V. David)

⁴² “Ale v sobě takové spojenie a proměnění samotně není řečeno od Krista jenedie, ale pro spojenie řečeno jest: Ktož jje...ve mně přebývá a já v něm.” Chelčický, *Replika* 50.

⁴³ “...konec pravého jenedie bude ť poznán na tom, ktož potom v Kristu věrú a láskú *ostane*... A k tomu jest to pověděno, že jest to pravý užitek jenedie jeho těla – *potom konečné v něm přebývanie* [emphasis mine]; ale nevěrné jest učenie chváliti přebývanie v Kristu, odejmúce jenedie jeho těla.” Chelčický, *Replika* 55.