Spreading Faith and Vengeance: Human Agency and the "Offensive Shift" in the Hussite Discourses on Warfare

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I. Introduction

In 1415, Jan Hus was burned as an unrepentant heretic at the Council of Constance, setting events into motion which soon turned Bohemia into a battleground for religious warfare. By the end of 1419, Hus's followers in Prague controlled the country's intellectual seat of Prague University, the city government, and included many towns and nobles. In 1420 the heir to the Bohemian throne, Sigismund of Hungary, launched a papally-supported crusade against the "Hussites" to crush their heresy and claim his throne. For over a decade the Hussites successfully defended themselves from five such crusades, under the military leadership of Jan Žižka and his successor Prokop Holý.

Starting in 1426 and building thereafter, the Hussite armies began to engage in "glorious rides" (*spanilé jízdy*), attacking their enemies abroad and spreading their faith outside Bohemia.[2] Though the period of the Hussite wars has been well-researched by scholars, what has been largely ignored or taken for granted is this shift in Hussite military strategy – from exclusively internal and domestic to external warfare – which roughly coincided with the military leadership of Žižka and Holý, respectively. For instance, Francis Lützow long ago remarked that "the feeling in favour of an invasion of the neighbouring countries *naturally* became stronger after a course of almost

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[2] Thus named in the Old Czech Chroniclers, see František Palacký, ed., *Staří letopisowé česssti, od roku 1378 do 1527*, In *Scriptorum Rerum Bohemicarum*, vol. 3 [hereafter SRB 3] (Prague, 1829) 79. The term is variously translated into English as "magnificent", "noble", or "graceful rides".

uninterrupted victories", incited by the "rich booty" to be won abroad.[3] Frederick G. Heymann later agreed with this appraisal, adding only that offensive wars played an ideological role in spreading Hussite ideas and weakening enemy morale.[4] Josef Macek added to this the role of Hussite raids in defending the poor and peasant populations in the surrounding kingdoms,[5] and both František M. Bartoš and Jiří Kejř emphasised their goal of unifying a splintered movement.[6] For František Šmahel the foreign offensives were meant to spread the Hussite articles of faith, gain material support for the war effort, and demonstrate the strength of the Hussite armies.[7] Most, including Thomas A. Fudge, have implicitly assumed the coherence and continuity between the internal and external campaigns, as he put it simply: "From 1426 on, the Hussites did not hesitate to cross the frontier, sword in hand to defend and propagate the Hussite gospel".[8]

Of course, the variety of causes for this expansive "offensive shift" that has been given by historians were important, and will not be discounted here; the material benefits to be won abroad, both in the form of ransoms and plunder, the strategic benefits of capturing important enemy rallying positions, and the desire for vengeance and spreading propaganda were certainly important motivations. Nevertheless, these explanations still fail to account for the specific timing of the offensive shift, which only followed the successful defence against three crusades, the death of Jan Žižka, and the ascension of several priests – including Prokop Holý – to prominent military positions.

Below it will be argued that Prokop Holý's military command, under which the offensive shift began, represented a distinct break from the religious and ideational motivations and goals which drove and were sought by Jan Žižka's previous, domestic campaigns. Žižka, along with the masters of the Prague University – the intellectual and theological seat of the Hussite movement – constructed a highly moralised theory of armed resistance which emphasised the restrictive use of force, free of anger and hate, for the defence of God's law and the consolidation of their movement. Proper behaviour in battle was expected in order to win the favour of God, which was highly contingent but necessary for military success. Conversely, human agency was generally perceived as negative and corrupted, and thus dangerous for the war effort. By the time of Prokop Holý's ascendance to command, however, the countless Hussite military victories allowed them to take God's favour for

[3] Francis Lützow, *The Hussite Wars* (London, 1914) 195 f. Italics mine.
[4] Frederick G. Heymann, "The Crusades against the Hussites," in *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 3, ed. Harry W. Hazard (Madison, 1975) 619 f.
[5] Josef Macek, *The Hussite Movement in Bohemia*, trans. Vilem Fried and Ian Miller (London, 1965) 59–62.
[6] František Bartoš, *Husitská Revoluce* (Prague, 1965) I: 215; Jiří Kejř, *Husité* (Prague, 1984) 158.
[7] František Šmahel, *Dějiny Tábora: 1422–1452* (České Budějovice, 1990) I.2: 405.
[8] Thomas A. Fudge, *The Magnificent Ride: The First Reformation in Hussite Bohemia* (Aldershot, 1998) 108.

granted. Moreover, human agency came to assume some responsibility for spreading God's true faith, as well as his punishment and vengeance, abroad. Morality and righteousness were no longer perceived as external actions to be performed, but were now inherent in the Hussite identity itself, which was buoyed by the confidence of virtual invincibility in battle. The crucial precondition for the shift toward an external and offensive strategy, overlooked in earlier historiography, was this cooperation of human and divine agency.

Among the most important sources to trace this shift in Hussite self--perception and religious discourse are the manifestoes which their military leaders drafted and sent to both allies and enemies, at home and abroad. Though the propagandistic role of these documents may be taken for granted, this does not detract from their importance in framing and expressing the Hussite perception of themselves and of their enemies. Self-referential terminology for the Hussites has also been examined by historians (e. g. Urbánek, Seibt, Kaminsky, Rychterová and Soukup) regarding parallels and terminology from the Bible. Much more than simple footnotes or stylistic choices, Biblical parallels shaped, explained, and expressed the realities and motivations of contemporaries and were certainly crucial for the priestly leaders of this explicitly scriptural religious movement. As Eric Voegelin observed, "man does not wait for [political] science to have his life explained to him, and when the theorist approaches social reality he finds the field pre-empted by what may be called the self-interpretation of society".[9] Indeed, the authors of these manifestoes used "pre-existing linguistic resources" to build their meaning, and discounting the central importance of these resources to the discourse which was carefully constructed around them is a result of the modern religious-political distinction, which must be set aside to understand properly the Hussite message.[10]

A note on terminology may be necessary here. In order to distinguish between two "periods" of the Hussite wars, I will often characterise one (Žižka's) as essentially "internal" or "domestic", and the other (Prokop's) as essentially "external" or "offensive". Like any terminology, these necessarily obscure as well as explain, and overlaps existed: Žižka was not fighting a civil war coterminous with the borders of Bohemia-Moravia, but rather envisioned the Hussite struggle as a potentially universal religious one. Nor would he, or even the university masters, have thought of this military mission exclusively in reactionary terms. Clearly, the Hussites fought many proactive battles and offensive campaigns against Catholics and Sigismund's loyalists within the kingdom.[11]

[9] Eric Voegelin, *The Collected works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 5: Modernity Without Restraint*, trans. Virginia Ann Schildhauer (Columbia, 2000) 109.

[10] Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, "Unfolding Discourse Analysis," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, eds. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates (London, 2001) 199.

[11] Many good overviews exist. See for instance *Husitská revoluce* III: 34 ff. and other relevant sections; relevant chapters in Bartoš, *Husitská Revoluce* I, and F. G. Heymann, *John Žižka and the Hussite Revolution* (Princeton, 1955).

On the other hand, Prokop was never free from the challenges of domestic resistance. Nevertheless, these terms are useful in that they highlight the ideational, strategic, and discursive transformations from an identity concerned with preservation, internal consolidation, and morality, to one which largely took these for granted and, taking confidence from this, actively sought the universal fulfilment of God's will, which included vengeance and "missionary" violence abroad.

II. Gaining God's Favour: The Domestic War Under Jan Žižka

1. The Prague masters

Even before the formal launch of the crusades against the Hussites in March 1420, they had reason to expect violent persecution from the Hungarian King Sigismund. Following the executions of Hus and Jerome of Prague at Constance, both the council and the emperor made clear – in the form of threats and ultimata – their intentions to eradicate the Bohemian heresy.[12] Such threats became manifest in 1419 when Hussite pilgrims on their way to Prague were ambushed and slaughtered near Živohošť,[13] while hundreds more who practised utraquism were thrown down mine shafts to their deaths in the Bohemian mining-town of Kutná Hora.[14]

The anxiety caused by such events led to a debate concerning the legitimacy of armed defence to protect the law of God. Yet at this stage armed defence was still a highly-contentious proposition for many Hussites, as the moderates and some radicals among them still hoped to reconcile their faith with their royalist commitments. Following a coup in the New Town of Prague in July, the new civic leaders offered their loyalty to King Vaclav and then Sigismund (after the former's death), in return for the king's recognition of the new Hussite magistrates. Legitimation of religious reform was still sought from above by many, especially the university masters and burghers of Prague, while officials and nobles remained anxious of their own positions which relied on royal authority.[15]

For other groups, especially those with eschatological expectations, recourse to armed resistance against Sigismund was a decision which relied less

[12] For instance, in 1417 Sigismund wrote to the current Bohemian King Vaclav: "I can scarcely wait for the day to come when I shall drown every Wycliffite and Hussite". See Konstantine von Höfler, ed., "Geschichtschreiber der Husitischen Bewegung in Böhmen," in *Fontes Rerum Austriacarum,* (Vienna, 1865) II: 252–4; *CAHB*, 50. Soon thereafter, news came from the council indicating their support for the execution of unrepentant heretics by the emperor. See *Documenta*, 676–7.

[13] *SRB* 3: 29–33

[14] The Hussite chronicler Vavřinec of Březová estimated that over 1,600 Hussites suffered this fate in 1419 alone. See FRB 5 (1893) 352.

[15] HHR, 296–304.

on political loyalty than on cosmic and spiritual anticipations. One Táborite prophet complained that "many are now aggrieved against Christ's commands, supposing that it is not necessary to carry on a regular fight with a physical sword against evils and abominations, against errors and heresy".[16] In September 1419, the radical preacher Vaclav Koranda urged martyrdom to a congregation in defence of the "word of God" and the "freedom of the law of God", citing 1 Maccabees 2: 50–64: "now my sons, be zealous for the law and give your lives for the covenant made by your fathers …, all who have hoped in the Lord have never died",[17] and before the battle of Živohošť he urged pilgrims, perhaps as a reversal of Isaiah's vision, "do not go with staffs, but with arms".[18] Soon thereafter, other priests referred to the present time as the "time of vengeance" wherein all people must "sanctify their hand in the blood of the wicked".[19] For such groups, there was little hope or desire to maintain royal loyalties.

These contradictory allegiances and anxieties in late 1419 and early 1420 resulted in an extended debate on the legitimacy of armed defence. On several occasions in early 1420 the Prague masters were asked to exercise their authority by resolving certain questions which now divided the movement.[20] In one, for instance, Jakoubek of Stříbro and Christian of Prachatice, mediated a dispute between two priests regarding the legitimacy of the defence of the "evangelical Truth" by secular lords or by "faithful subject communities" in their absence. They agreed on a heavily qualified verdict, where physical violence was allowed "to defend Gospel truth (*ewangelica veritas*) … provided they keep order and do so according to Christ's law (*lex Cristi*). And what moves them must be divine inspiration (*divinus instinctus*) or a certain revelation (*certa revelacio*), or at least evidence which is quite unmistakable".[21] Only weeks later, Lord Břeněk Švihovský requested from the masters a ruling on the lawfulness and conditions for the use of

[16] AČ 6 (1872) 41; HHR, 320.

[17] AČ 3 (1844) 205 f.; *CAHB*, 25 f.; For a more thorough discussion on the role of Maccabees in the Hussite movement, see Pavel Soukup and Pavlína Rychterová, "The Reception of the Books of the Maccabees in the Hussite Reformation," in Gabriela Signori (ed.), *Dying for the Faith, Killing for the Faith* (Leiden, 2012) 195–207, esp. 202 f. for this congregation at Bzí Hora.

[18] *SRB* 3: 30. Isaiah 2: 4 reads "and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation".

[19] AČ 3: 219. A full list of these so-called "chiliast" articles is provided by Pavel Soukup, "The Masters and the End of the World: Exegesis in the Polemics with Chiliasm," BRRP 7 (2006) 93 n. 9; cf. HHR, 344 n. 88.

[20] This is not to say that the masters represented the ultimate authority for all, nor that their decisions were always patiently awaited. See HR 3, 24 f.

[21] "The Treatises of MS O 13 on Adventism, Chiliasm, and Warfare: The Latin Texts," [hereafter "Treatises"] in HHR, 545–6. Translated in part and discussed in Kaminsky, HHR, 323–7, and Norman Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe: 1400–1536* (Oxford, 2002) 46–51 passim.

force by priests and the laity.[22] In their response to the letter, the masters again emphasised that any degree of legitimate violence must be carried out by the authorised secular authority, and is strictly qualified by appeals to New Testament quotations.[23]

Thus, what we can see in development here is a compromise between pacifistic and a more traditional, hierarchical conception of the legitimacy of violence based on the necessities of reality. Even though the *arma spiritualia* of Christ were preferred as "safer and better and less dangerous", as repeated scriptural citations attested, the use of the *gladius materialis* was necessary if the persecutions of the enemy were to be survived.[24] Yet contrary to the exhortations of Koranda and other radical priests, the masters were anxious of the corruptible force of human agency, and so used scripture as a highly-*-restrictive* discourse rather than a facilitating one in articulating a qualified theory of violence. They found an exception in the New Testament's reliance on *arma spiritualia* in John 2: 15, referencing Christ's forceful expulsion of buyers and sellers from the temple, and used Romans 13: 1–5 to legitimate necessary violence and to restrict it to the command of a recognised authority. To limit its abuse by unauthorised human agents – such as the radical priests and violent chiliasts of Tábor – and thus to distinguish just war from illegitimate rebellion, the masters emphasised the dual conditionality of its legitimacy: "whoever serves God does not carry the sword … only from necessity but also by command".[25]

The masters continued, enumerating additional conditions for the legitimate practice of violence, firstly that:

> It is for the cause of God (*causa dei*), truth or justice. Second with the right intent (*intencio recta*) and that there is love for one's opponents. Third that the impulse comes from God (*quod instinctu divino provocetur*), and fourth that it is essential to go to war [i.e. given the exhaustion of non-violent means].[26]

[22] The text appears in František M. Bartoš, "Do čtyř pražských artykulů: Z myšlenkových a ústavních zápasů let 1415–1420 [On the Four Prague Articles: From the intellectual and institutional struggles from the years 1415–1420]," *Sborník Příspěvků k Dějinám Hlavního Města Prahy*, 5.2 (1932) 577–80. Fudge adds Jan Žižka as an author of the request, see *CAHB*, 33. To my knowledge this is unwarranted, and Bartoš lists the recipient of the masters' response as simply an "unknown lord". Šmahel (*Husitská revoluce*, III: 24) supposes it was Břeněk, though he is not completely convinced. Kaminsky supposes that the lord's request was not sincere, and that he rather intended to provoke a more resolute statement from the masters with regards to material warfare. See HHR, 327 f. The exact authorship is not crucial for the discussion below.

[23] For instance, John 3: 17; Matt. 5: 38–40; 1 Peter 3: 17. See the discussion in Housley, 45 ff.; Soukup, "The Masters", 100 ff.

[24] Bartoš, "Do čtyř", 577 f.

[25] Ibid., 578; *CAHB*, 35.

[26] Bartoš, "Do čtyř", 579; *CAHB*, 35. Alterations mine.

Those things to be avoided, using Augustine as an authority, were "the desire to harm, the cruelty of vengeance, the insatiable rage of rebellion, [and] the lust for domination".[27] As Norman Housley has recognised, such conditions paralleled Erasmus's later exhortations to "kill the Turk and not the man".[28]

What these responses of the Prague masters exemplify is a deep distrust of certain motivations which may arise from free human agency and an anxiety about people's ability to adhere to the moralistic demands of just war, which drew legitimacy from the New Testament and was explicitly a defensive resistance theory. In creating this discourse the masters maintained that the Old Testament was only valid insofar as it adhered to the New, but they found opposition among the Táborite priests, who insisted on drawing parallels with the former. The Prague master Jakoubek of Stříbro tried to warn the Táborites against such conclusions with regards to the *carnalia bella* of the Maccabees, which he argued would lead to "anger, sedition, and violent acts".[29] Indeed, he called those priests that used the Maccabees for encouragement "men of violence" (*percussores*),[30] and emphasised that those wars of the Old Testament were fought only by "certain revelation (*certa revelacio*), which nowadays is not accustomed to happen".[31]

2. Jan Žižka: the Morality of Violence

As a military leader, morality for Jan Žižka was not a goal in itself, but a means to achieving victory through God's favour. Thus legitimate violence was that which strove for the latter, even if it periodically went beyond the strict restraints of the masters. Žižka saw himself not only as the leader of a moral war, but as the "severe avenger",[32] the agent of the elimination of sins throughout Bohemia, in Hussites and Catholics alike.

One early indication of Žižka's self-righteous morality was the key role he played in the process determining the wording of the Four Articles of Prague – the expression of the core of the Hussite faith – particularly the fourth, which dealt directly with the elimination of sins. In April of 1420 an early version of the Four Articles appeared in a document authored by the burgrave Čeněk of Vartenberk and Oldřich of Rožmberk on behalf of the Bohemian nobility, expressing solidarity with the Hussite cause. It did not differ substantially from previous versions dating back to 1417,[33] and the

[27] Ibid.
[28] Housley, 165.
[29] "Treatises", 529.
[30] Ibid., 527.
[31] Ibid., 522. For a recent study of the masters' position against violent exegesis, see Soukup, "The Masters", 91–114; Idem., "Bible a násilí za válek s husity [The Bible, violence and warfare against the Hussites]," in *Křížové výpravy v pozdním středověku*, eds. Pavel Soukup, Jaroslav Svátek (Prague, 2010) 78–82.
[32] A title coined by Heymann, *Žižka*, 155.
[33] Ibid., 148 f. On the Four Articles see for instance Bartoš, *Do čtyř pražských artikulů* (Prague, 1940); Petr Čornej, *Velké Dějiny zemí Koruny České* (Prague, 2000) 5: 250–4

Fourth Article was here primarily concerned with cleansing "our kingdom and the language of Bohemia" from "all harmful rumours and slander".[34] By late June, however, the final wording of the Fourth Article reflected the efforts and attitudes of Žižka and his fellow Táborite representatives. It was now directed against the extirpation and punishment of mortal sins, and typical of Žižka's later discourse, did not rely on explicit scriptural support as the other Articles did. These sins and other "disorders offending against the Law of God" were to be "prohibited and punished in each estate by those who have the authority to do so (*jenž úřad k tomu mají*)". Such sins included criminality and moral errors for the laity and an even stricter list for the clergy, and all found guilty or approving of them deserved death. The Article is summarised: "All these, each true servant of Christ and true son of the Church should prohibit in himself and in others, and should hate and despise such sins as the devil".[35]

It has been suggested by one of Žižka's modern biographers that the final wording of the Fourth Article – qualification of the prohibition and punishment of sins "in each estate *by those who have the authority*" – reflected the anxiety of some of the university masters as to the repercussions of its general and unqualified implementation.[36] Yet Žižka's own articulation of the Fourth Article elsewhere was at least ambiguous, indicating that he did not take as seriously as the masters the restriction of the means by which sins were punished. When writing to enemies in Bohemia, the agents of this punishment were clearly meant to be the nobility, yet in other cases these agents are left unspecified, and the letter simply states that "sins shall be stopped" in all ranks.[37] Moreover, in his military rule of 1423 Žižka indicated that he either disagreed with the masters' qualification, or did not see himself bound by it; he explicitly placed himself among those legitimate judges and executioners of sin: "that we suppress, put an end to, and exterminate all sins, both mortal and venial, first in ourselves (*napřed v sobě*), after this in kings, princes, barons … and all other people".[38]

Žižka took the extirpation of all sins, "first in ourselves", as a doctrine which guided his personal morality and his vision for victory over the Antichrist, who sent forth armies and agents to destroy the Law of God. At this early stage in the revolution, this morality was deeply linked to violence,

[34] AČ 3: 212; *CAHB*, 63.

[35] AČ 3: 215 f. Translated in Heymann, *Žižka*, 154 f.

[36] Heymann, *Žižka*, 156.

[37] Examples of letters to enemies are to Oldřich Rožmberk and the Plzeň alliance; to others are letters to Tábor's neighbours in Prachatice. The documents are in František M. Bartoš, ed., *Listy Bratra Jana a Kronika velmi pěkná o Janu Žižkovi* [Letters of Brother Jan and the 'Very Pretty Chronicle' of Jan Žižka] (Prague, 1949) 7–11.

[38] Josef Macek, ed., *Ktož jsú Boží Bojovníci: Čtení o Táboře v Husitském Revolučním Hnutí* [Ye who are warriors of God: Readings about Tábor and the Hussite revolutionary movement], (Prague, 1951) 149; *CAHB*, 168. Alterations mine.

which he conceived not only in the defensive terms of the masters (against the crusaders), but also as playing a consolidating role and internally purgative.[39] Examples of this violence, which went well beyond military necessity, are numerous; after besieging and taking the town of Prachatice, held by Sigismund's allies, Žižka's soldiers punished the populace with slaughter, ordering the men to be locked in a church which he then had torched.[40] Elsewhere Žižka violently expressed his infamous hatred of the Catholic clergy; in April 1420 he sacked Rábí Castle and burned seven monks who dwelled within; in 1423 he personally crushed a captured priest's head with a battle club,[41] and it was rumoured that he offered a bounty for any captured Catholic authorities, whom he had burned alive unless they changed their spiritual allegiance.[42]

Yet perhaps most crucial for understanding the close connection between internal warfare, morality, and violence, as well as Žižka's own disdain for radicals (such as "Pikarts", "Adamites") and priests, and his anxiety for the role of human agency, was the eradication of the sectarians at Tábor. One such group, the so-called "Pikarts", were represented there by Martin Húska, a radical priest who denied the divine presence in the eucharist. Though he influentially defended Tábor from accusations of heresy by Hussite moderates in December of 1420, his teachings soon landed him in prison where he was tortured and urged to recant. Failing this, Žižka ordered the execution of Húska and several followers as dangerous heretics in August 1421.

Another Táborite sect, the so-called "Adamites", emerged shortly after the prophesied date of the apocalypse came and went in February of 1420.[43] In response to the "failure" of this prophecy, some in Tábor asserted that Christ's "real" advent would require the destruction of his enemies.[44] Some followers of this violent eschatology were forced out of Tábor into the countryside, where they pillaged for their survival and engaged in nudism and

[39] For a parallel discussion of non-Hussite cases of "purification", see Phillipe Buc, "Some Thoughts on the Christian Theology of Violence, Medieval and Modern, from the Middle Ages to the French Revolution," *Rivista di storia del cristianesimo* 1 (2008): 9–28, esp. 20 ff.

[40] FRB 5: 443 f., cited in *CAHB*, 95 f.

[41] FRB 5: 364; Konstantine von Höfler (ed.), *Geschichtschreiber der husitischen Bewegung in Böhmen*, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1856), 87; cited in Thomas A. Fudge, "Žižka's Drum: The Political Uses of Popular Religion," *Central European History* Vol. 36, No. 4 (2003): 554; on the spring violence of 1420, see Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce* III: 34 f.

[42] Ludolf of Żagan, "Tractatus de longevo schismate," in AÖG 60 (1880) 494 f., cited in *CAHB*, 127.

[43] For good overviews of the Pikarts and Adamites, and their overlaps, see Heymann, *Žižka*, 258–64 and Kaminsky, HHR, 418–33; see also Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce* 3, 64–77. For more specialised literature, see Theodora Büttner and Ernst Werner, *Circumcellionen und Adamiten* (Berlin, 1959) 73–141; more recently see Petr Čornej, "Potíže s Adamity [The problem with the Adamites]," *Marginalia historica* 2 (1997): 33–63, and idem, "Ráj je na Ostrově aneb Prostor pro Adamity [Paradise is on an island *or* a place for Adamites], " *Táborský archive* 13 (2007): 37–46.

[44] FRB 5: 454–5.

orgiastic behaviour, supposedly inspired by the belief that they had returned to the sinless state of Eden.[45] After several failed attempts to destroy them, Žižka himself took personal command of the matter and massacred the sect some two months after his execution of Húska in 1421.[46]

In these cases of Žižka's purges – from Sigismund's allies and Catholic priests to the Pikart and Adamite sects – we observe an important transition from the exclusively defensive violence of the Prague masters to an internal, purgative violence which was in accord with a morality centered upon the extermination of sin. Because Žižka saw the success of the war effort as contingent on God's favour, which required proper behaviour and correct faith, deviants of any kind, whether Catholics or heretics, needed to be purged. Yet such violence was only legitimate insofar as it destroyed those who jeopardised the favourable status of the Hussites; un-mitigated violence (as discussed below) was itself dangerous, as the masters emphasised, and so the moral discipline of the Hussite armies was also required to maintain God's favour.

3. The Morality of Discipline

God's favour for the virtuous violence of Jan Žižka was repeatedly confirmed by his victories over three crusading armies between 1420 and 1422, and the man was invincible even after suffering complete blindness in the summer of 1421. Yet the flipside of the coin was also confirmed: improper behaviour in warfare was punished by God. As the massacre of Hussite forces led by the priest Jan Želivský in August 1421 was understood, "the Lord in his anger has permitted us to be afflicted" because "our brethren have embraced wicked ways", fighting "not for the truth but for spoils…and killing their fellow--humans more cruelly than the heathens".[47]

Events such as these confirmed the contingency of God's favour and the necessity of disciplining the "Warriors of God" to act accordingly. This was notably expressed in Žižka's call for the Hussite army's penance in April, 1423, following a breach of discipline at the battle of Německý Brod the previous year. Contemporary chroniclers, both Czech and foreign, were deeply shocked by the massacre perpetrated there by the Hussites, estimating hundreds of deaths including "many men, women and children, both young and old", and reporting that the city remained desolate for years afterwards.[48] Žižka himself recalled of the event that "we engaged in pillage and greed and undisciplined arrogance as well as betrayal".[49]

[45] SRB 3: 477; For the "Adamite articles", see FRB 5: 517–20.
[46] Heymann, *Žižka*, 261–4.
[47] FRB 5: 508. Translated in Housley, 162.
[48] Wilhelm Altmann (ed.), Eberhart Windecke, *Denkwürdigkeiten zur Geschichte des Zeitalters Kaiser Sigmunds* (Berlin, 1893) 120; Jan Długosz, "Historia Polonicae," in *Opera Omnia*, ed. Alexander Przeździecki (Krakow, 1877) III: 279–81; *SRB* 3: 48–50; cited and translated in *CAHB*, 142, 144 f., and 147 respectively.
[49] Bartoš, *Listy*, 17; *CAHB*, 165.

In his call for penance Žižka emphasised the determinative role of God's will in Hussite military affairs and the importance of proper behaviour in maintaining his favour. As a "beneficial favour", God "assisted and liberated us (*nám osvobozoval*) from strong enemies, for example at Německý Brod where God overpowered those enemies". This was a "great and wonderful gift" from God, but the Hussites' sinful actions "angered our God considerably". Since then, "we have accomplished very little of note. Hence, our Lord God justly punishes us". Human agency is of no import in military affairs, only in properly honouring God, thus "[at] the precise place where we sinned, we shall undertake repentance and penance".[50]

Even more revealing was Žižka's famous "military rule" of 1423, in which he mandated twelve strict disciplinary protocols for the Hussite armies.[51] Its goals were explicitly defensive, "to keep, defend and preserve" its articles, and as in April, Žižka associated all recent failures to reliance on human agency: "through disobedience and improper disorders we have sustained great losses both in terms of the life of our brothers and also in goods".[52] Any lapse in God's protection was a result of human carelessness which must be punished: "if God does not protect us so that we suffer harm through the carelessness or negligence of the military captains whether in the field, at the guard points, or watch towers…those responsible shall be punished by beheading" regardless of rank.[53] Similar punishments accompanied breaches in discipline among the troops, including fighting and thievery, and no tolerance was allowed for an immoral person including the "faithless" (*nevěrný*) or disobedient.[54]

Particularly offensive to God were deserters and plunderers. Desertion was punishable by decapitation "on the grounds that he [the deserter] is worse than an unfaithful robber", abandoning the "Lord's battle" and his "faithful brethren". Similarly, any plunderer of loot, which was to be distributed justly among rich and poor, will "have vengeance taken out upon him" by death, for "he has robbed God and the community". Notably, the document's sole scriptural reference appears here, equating these criminals to Achan in Joshua 7: 19–26.[55]

[50] Bartoš, *Listy*, 17; *CAHB*, 165. Alterations mine.

[51] Though historians disagree on the precise dating of the document, Heymann argues convincingly for July of 1423 based on its signatories. If true, this would have removed Žižka from the campaigns in Moravia, further emphasising its perceived importance and the urgency of the matters which it addresses. See Heymann, *Žižka*, 374 f. n. 2. Contrarily, Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce* 3, 141 dates it to before the Moravia campaign, and Čornej, *Velké Dějiny* 5, 329 sees this as likely also. A precise dating is not crucial for our purposes.

[52] Macek, *Ktož*, 150; *CAHB*, 168. Alterations mine.

[53] Macek, *Ktož*, 151 f.; *CAHB*, 169. Alterations mine.

[54] Macek, *Ktož*, 152; *CAHB*, 170.

[55] Macek, *Ktož*, 152; *CAHB*, 169 f.; Bartoš, *Listy*, 22. Alterations mine. A similar sentiment is expressed in the contemporaneous popular Hussite song "Ye Warriors of God", meant to inspire soldiers while warning of improper behaviour: "Remember your souls / That you do not forfeit life / Through greed or theft /Never be tempted by plunder". See *CAHB*, 67. For a study of near-contemporary military rules, which shows some commonalities in

The clear message of the military rule was that God only gave victory to the righteous, and thus harsh punishments for disciplinary and moral infractions were intended not only to ensure military order, but also to deflect God's anger. The scriptural reference to Achan, who took plunder for himself, is meant to illustrate this. Achan's sin caused a terrible defeat for Joshua's army, as the Lord told the latter:

> Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant…That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction. (Joshua 7: 11–12)

When Achan admits his sin to Joshua, the latter replies "'Why have you brought this trouble on us? The Lord will bring trouble on you today.' Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them… Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger" (Joshua 7: 25–6).

Just as the Israelites, Žižka was convinced that the Hussites were powerless without the aid of God. Before moving into "some aspect of war", the soldiers were to "pray to the Lord God kneeling and dropping before the body of the Lord and the face of God". As this was "God's fight" (*boj božĺ*), it was "fitting that we behave … in this way" so that he "shall be with us in grace and aid".[56] In addition, the strict punishment of the sinful fit into Žižka's general strategy of sanctified violence, which sought to purge improper behaviour wherever it was encountered, among Catholic enemies, radical sectarians, and within the Hussite ranks alike, as all angered God and threatened the removal of his favour.

4. Conclusion

The fact that Žižka made no foreign expedition after four years of war and three crusades is telling, revealing his ideological commitment to the decisions of the university masters, the perceived incompatibility of foreign warfare with his brand of restrictive violence, and the priority of internal warfare.[57] This is not to say that Žižka conceived of internal purification as a merely physical act; as we have seen, he was in agreement with the masters that sin could not be simply purged by the sword, as some Táborite sectarians suggested, but required an internal *spiritual* combat and self-discipline of the faithful. The sword *was* necessary, however, against those who refused

punishments but highlights the severity and explicitly religious discourse in Žižka's, see Anne Curry, "Disciplinary ordinances for English and Franco-Scottish armies in 1385: An international code?" *Journal of Medieval History* 37 (2011) 269–94, especially 286–94.

[56] Macek, *Ktož*, 151, 153; *CAHB*, 169 f. Alterations mine.

[57] Heymann rightly argues that Žižka's adherence to a defensive strategy reveals his shared opinion with the university masters, especially Jakoubek of Stříbro, regarding the requirements for just warfare. See Heymann, *Žižka*, 242 and n. 3.

to reform themselves, and whose existence among the faithful endangered the latter's status in the eyes of God.[58] Nor can we know whether he had any future plans for an extra-Bohemian-Moravian offensive; some of his universalist rhetoric – for instance regarding the extermination of sins "in all kings, princes, barons…and all other people"[59] – may suggest the affirmative.

Nevertheless, at least temporarily, the struggle maintained the discourse of an internal conflict. Yet this territorial confinement is not explicable merely as reflecting the perceived battle-lines between good and evil, since these – as not coterminous with the boundaries of Bohemia – not only criss-crossed the religious landscape of the kingdom, but also extended beyond it to include all of Christendom. Thus the "faithful", as well as "heretics", were present in Bohemia but also "throughout Christendom", and a "Hussite" king could be accepted from abroad, as the Polish Sigismund Korybut was in 1422.[60] In other words, the struggle was "contained" by more than just the divisions within Bohemia: it was also localised by the moral limits discussed above, which consented to war only as a necessity and which demanded moral purity in the Hussite warriors – "in ourselves" – as a priority. As such, the struggle *as a priority* was internal, a fact expressed repeatedly, for instance in the military rule, where the call for assistance was "from all ranks [of people]… but particularly first [*zvláště napřed*] faithful Czechs" to aid "the faithful" everywhere "and particularly [those of] the Czech and Slavic language".[61] Moreover, Žižka's support for King Korybut may have indicated that he envisioned a political normalization of Bohemia's foreign relations in the future, a prospect which was conducive to gaining military supremacy in the kingdom, but perhaps less-conducive to the invasion of neighbouring kingdoms.

Regardless, it is not necessary to speculate that Žižka had no plan to extend the military struggle into the foreign arena at some point in the future, since this would not have outright *contradicted* his previous discourse. It is worth emphasising, however, that such a plan was not *necessarily* implied by the domestic war of resistance; as will be argued below, when such foreign military offensives were launched several years later, it was not only under the command of a new military authority which was responding to changing political realities, but thanks to the construction of a new identity which carried with it different motivations and goals. Yet even if Žižka did have such plans for the future, it was clear that whatever conditions he considered necessary for their enactment – among which we have found the priority of "internal" purification – were not yet fulfilled by the time of his death. In other words, even though internal and external warfare may not have been

[58] Čornej, *Velké Dějiny* 5, 321 f.
[59] See note 38 above.
[60] Macek, *Ktož*, 153. For Žižka's support for Korybut, see Bartoš, *Listy*, 12 f. On Korybut, see *Husitská Revoluce* I: 140 f.; *Husitská revoluce* III: 111–31.
[61] Macek, *Ktož*, 153.

principally opposed, the shift from one to the other, as we shall see, was no simple one but required several innovations. Either way, the domestic war fulfilled the masters' requirements of divine motivation and necessity, as it was in defence of God's truth, and was restrained by discourses against indiscriminate violence, as the call for penance and the military rule illustrate. Although Žižka's position was not shared by all Hussites, he was able to suppress or outright eliminate dissidents given his stature, as well as through intimidation and violence. Only after his death would some reinvented radical positions surge back into importance, changing the idea and goals defining the Hussites' approach to warfare.

III.

1. New Beginnings

In October 1424, Jan Žižka died of plague while besieging the castle of Přibyslav. His death shook the Hussite movement, though it did not immediately change the strategy of domestic and moralized warfare, the legacy of which remained influential for years to come. It took two years before a new permanent military leader was found in the person of Prokop Holý, a Táborite priest who ascended to authority after his role as captain in the momentous battle of Ústi in 1426.[62] Though more a territorial conflict than an anti-Hussite crusade, the battle was the bloodiest between the Czechs and Germans to date and ended in a resounding Hussite victory.[63] Beginning that winter and the following spring, the Hussites participated in several invasions into neighbouring Silesia and Austria. In April of 1427 this offensive effort was further aided when the regent King Korybut and several influential conservative Hussites were arrested and exiled for their role in a Catholic conspiracy, an event which had a "liberating effect upon the whole foreign and military policy of the standard-bearers of the revolution" from the restrictions of the conservatives in Prague.[64]

Needless to say, the beginning of this offensive military strategy may be variously explained, as it has been in historiography, by motivations including: the economic lure of foreign booty at a time of material devastation, the strategic importance of destroying enemy rallying-points, and the spread of propaganda and the Hussite faith to win allies abroad. Yet these explanations are only partial at best and fail to address the matter of timing; why

[62] Prokop remains an under-researched figure. To my knowledge, only two (somewhat dated) monograph-length studies exist, Josef Macek's *Prokop Veliký* (Prague, 1953) and František Bartoš, *Prokop Veliký* (Brno, 1934).

[63] Both Heymann and Fudge are sceptical about the contemporary German chroniclers who cite their losses from 10,000 to 15,000, but the crushing nature of their defeat at Ústi remains. See Heymann, "The Crusades", 612, and *CAHB*, 200 f.

[64] Heymann, "The Crusades", 619.

did the shift happen now, and not under Žižka? As we have seen, Žižka and the Prague university masters were concerned with leading a righteous and moral war that would gain the Hussites the favour of God, which was a highly contingent and fickle matter. By the time of Prokop's ascendancy to military command, however, and especially with the resounding Hussite victory at Ústi, self-confidence finally prevailed over anxiety, and God's favour began to be taken for granted by the Hussite leadership, retrospectively proven by countless victories. Self-confidence in divine election also elevated the role of human agency to an unprecedented status; not only had Žižka's moral warfare achieved its goal of securing God's favour, but in doing so it had raised the Hussites to an elect status, and they were now expected to fulfil God's will in the world, both in faith and vengeance.

2. Communicating the Hussite mission at Bratislava, 1429

In the winter of 1426–27 the Hussite armies launched several invasions into Silesia and Austria, and later that year they successfully repulsed yet another crusade against Bohemia. Such events fed into the fully-fledged self-confidence of the Hussite leadership, which was expressed dramatically at the diplomatic summit at Bratislava in April of 1429, where Sigismund met with Prokop Holý and the English Hussite theologian Peter Payne.[65] Though the summit ended in a deadlock, what is more important for our purposes is the discourse of the debates themselves, which survive in the records of the events kept by Sigismund's secretaries.

Some measure of Hussite self-confidence and righteousness, buoyed again by the recent victory over the crusaders, came through in their answer to Sigismund's request that they consent to a truce until the Council of Basel, set for the near future. The truce would protect Catholics from forced conversion, which was not an uncommon fate for the Hussites' enemies at home and abroad. In response, the Hussites answered "that they wished to have peace with no one except those who were of like faith since they had the true faith (*den rechten gelauben*). They would answer to God with their conscience if they did nothing against such impious matters".[66] As such, the task of the elimination of sin beyond Bohemia, which Žižka had set to an indeterminate future in his plan of 1423 – "first in ourselves, *after this* in…all other people" – was now indisputably a task for the present according to the delegates at Bratislava.

[65] On the Bratislava meeting, see František M. Bartoš, "Z bratislavské schůzky krále Zikmunda s husitsými vůdci r. 1429, [From the meeting in Bratislava of King Sigismund with Hussite leaders in the year 1429]," *Časopis Matice Moravské* 49 (1925): 171–95; Josef Macek, "Zur Preβburger Versammlung im Jahre 1429," in *Sigismund von Luxemburg: Kaiser und König in Mitteleuropa 1387–1437*, eds. Josef Macek, Ernő Marosi, Ferdinand Seibt (Warendorf, 1994) 109–15; William R. Cook, "Negotiations between the Hussites, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the Roman Church, 1427–36," *East Central Europe* 5, pt. 1 (1978) 92 f.

[66] UB 2, 24; *CAHB*, 257 f.

Still more revealing of the scale of the Hussite mission and self-confidence was their positive reply to the invitation to Basel, where they hoped to show the truth of their cause:

> When all ecclesiastical and secular princes and all other people were reformed (*gereformiret*), they [the Hussites] will also be reformed. In the meantime they will remain in their faith. They can do this only for a short time since there is no one who can rest *until the whole world* is reformed (*bis all dy werlt gereformiret werde*).[67]

Nor was the militant medium of reform to be lost on the audience, as the Hussites repeatedly emphasised the decision to fight the impious; they "have already drawn their swords in defence of the faith and they will not put them back *until all have been brought to the faith*".[68] In contradiction to Žižka's gradual self-reform, the Hussite delegation emphasised the immediacy of, and personal identification with, the task of international reform, either by peaceful debate or by violence if necessary.

Yet the highlight of the Bratislava summit was the speech given by Peter Payne, themed upon the Hussite motto "Truth prevails over all" (1 Esdras 3: 12), which most clearly demonstrated the Hussites' profound self-confidence of their election by God. He began by identifying Christ himself as a Hussite warrior: "Our Lord Jesus Christ is a most invincible soldier and Prague warrior". Therefore, continuing on his theme: "It is not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from Heaven" (1 Maccabees 3: 19).[69] Following this, he proceeded to frame the Hussite wars in an Old Testament context: that same divine and invincible truth (*triumphatrix serenissima*) which had aided Jonathan against the Philistines (1 Sam. 14: 13–16), Gideon against the Midianites (Judges 7: 21–4), David against Goliath (1 Sam. 17), and Judith against Holofernes, was now on the side of the Hussites, and their full international scope was aided by it: "victrix felicissima in eiusque beatis apostolis *contra universum mundum* pugnacissima".[70]

Norman Housley has recently argued that "[j]ust as the success of the First Crusade in capturing Jerusalem in 1099 confirmed the crusading message, so the series of Hussite victories confirmed their religious war: this was their *Deus vult*".[71] Payne's direct addresses to Sigismund are certainly characteristic of this new confidence in their divine invincibility: "your armies, ten times more numerous and much better equipped have been on numerous

[67] UB 2: 24; *CAHB*, 257. Italics mine.

[68] "… bis daz sye yedenman vnder Iren gelauben pringen"; "sy haben daz swert über vnsern gelauben erzogen daz wellen sye nit einstecken, sy haben vns dann all vnder Iren gelauben pracht." UB 2: 24 f.; *CAHB*, 258. Italics mine.

[69] "Řeč husitského mluvčího v Bratislavě", in Bartoš, "Z bratislavské schůzky", 179; *CAHB*, 259.

[70] "Řeč husitského mluvčího", 179–85. Italics mine.

[71] Housley, 51.

occasions…put to flight by a bunch of peasants". Referring to Sigismund's victories over the Turks, Payne continued: "behold, when you were with God, you triumphed over pagans, but when God leaves you, you are defeated by villagers. An unheard-of miracle, O king".[72]

It is of no small significance that the pre-Davidic Old Testament books formed such an important core of Payne's speech, and then of the later manifestoes sent throughout Bohemia and abroad. The Hussites had always had fragile, if not outright violent, relationships with their kings, and since the treachery of King Korybut two years earlier most had given up on the possibility of a Hussite king; rather than kings and nobles, or Žižka's desired army of saints, the new political and military leadership would be made up of charismatic priest-warriors like Prokop, Koranda, and the Orebite priest Prokůpek. Thus, again noted by Housley, "the Hussites [were] the new Israelites, their champions the new Gideons";[73] indeed, it was not kings but those who slew the enemies of Israel, charismatic military leaders such as Gideon and Joshua, who were the important Biblical parallels for the Hussites now. Payne made this explicit, explaining:

> I am not like Jether, the eldest of Gideon, who did not yet have the strength of a man (*robur hominis*), not daring to unsheathe the sword against Zebah and Zalmunna, but [rather] like Jonathan, who in the faith and virtue of God merited legions *to invade* (*invadere*) and alone with only another man *to fill acres and fields with the dead*.[74]

Thus Payne's speech not only emphasized the self-confidence of the Hussites, but their self-perception which facilitated the shift from internal to external warfare. The parallel with Jonathan – before Israel's permanent kingship and unification, yet while it was still under threat from surrounding enemies – is relevant as it closely resembled the Hussites' own circumstances. "Manly strength" was now dependent on the willingness to slay one's enemy, but it was man's cooperation with God which gave power, not just to defend but to attack and exterminate the enemy abroad. This orientation of the contemporary Hussite conflict within specific Old Testament frames of reference not only explained the past – the Hussite victories – but, strengthened by Biblical parallels, also mandated the future responsibility of the Hussites: attack.

3. Spreading Faith and Vengeance in the "Glorious Campaign"

Soon after the Bratislava summit, the Hussites were again on the offensive, though on a scale which dwarfed the previous expeditions abroad. The so-called "Glorious Campaign", which united all Hussite forces – including the

[72] "Řeč husitského mluvčího", 187; *CAHB*, 260 f.
[73] Housley, 52–3.
[74] "Řeč husitského mluvčího", 179 f. Translation and italics mine.

Táborite and Orebite brotherhoods, the Bohemian and Moravian nobles, and the armies of Prague and its allies – launched into Lower Lusatia and Silesia in the early fall of 1429, but the main target would be Saxony in mid-December. The slogan for these attacks was supposedly "retaliation for 1426", referring to the invasion which had climaxed at Ústi several years earlier.[75]

Though the motivations for the "Glorious Campaign" were undoubtedly complex, a close look at the Hussite sources illustrate the driving importance of not only vengeance, but also the spreading of the faith. As the Hussite forces devastated the vicinity, the towns of Bamberg, Scheßlitz, and Hollfeld offered to pay a ransom to be spared. In response, Prokop offered to waive the ransom completely, provided they returned "to the truth of the gospel" (*veritas evangelica*) for which his armies "have been leading a daily struggle up until the present time". If they consented, then the Hussites "would rather defend you from those who would assault you than plunder you".[76] Similarly, the Hussites hoped to spread the faith in their peace negotiations with Frederick of Hohenzollern. At Beheimstein castle on 11 February 1430, the field armies agreed to a temporary peace if Frederick agreed to a public disputation on the Four Articles in Nuremberg. Moreover, the Hussites were prepared to waive the ransom of the towns they had captured, provided the latter adopted the Four Articles.[77] By May 1430, however, it had become clear that the promised Nuremberg debates were not to be, given the opposition from Sigismund and the Church.[78] This deprived the Hussites of what some historians have considered the principal gain of the Glorious Campaign.[79] Consequently, the Hussite leaders drafted and distributed several new manifestoes which were representative of their offensive and aggressive intent.

The first of these, written by the captains of Tábor, expounded points of contention with the Roman Church and warned against the treachery of the upcoming Council at Basel.[80] Despite the recent failure of the Nuremberg

[75] Bartoš, *Husitská Revoluce* (Prague, 1966) II: 63–5. Bartoš notes that even the Saxon incursion to Prague in 1401 was cited as a grievance to be avenged.

[76] František M. Bartoš, "Nový list Prokopa Holého," JSH VII (1934): 10; *CAHB*, 282.

[77] Bartoš, *Husitská Revoluce* II, 65–8.

[78] See Cook, "Negotiations", 90–104.

[79] Bartoš, *Husitská Revoluce* II, 69; Jaroslav Prokeš, "Táborské manifesty z r. 1430 a 1431. Příspěvek k politice Prokopa Velikého, [The Taborite manifestos from the years 1430 and 1441. A contribution of the politics of Procop the Great.]" *Časopis Matice Moravské* 52 (1928) 18; Rudolf Urbánek, *Lipany a Konec Polních Vojsk* [Lipany and the end of the field army.] (Prague, 1934) 105.

[80] German and Latin variants of the text are available in Alexander Reifferscheid, *Neun Texte zur Geschichte der Religiösen Aufklärung in Deutschland während des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts* (Greifswald, 1905) 12–23 and 1–11 respectively. For details, see ibid., 50 ff. The German is addressed especially to Nuremberg, the Latin more generally to "venerabiles, providentes, honesti domini totaque communitas, divites et pauperes". Most scholarship is undecided on the dating of the document, though May 1430 seems likely. See Bartoš, *Husitská Revoluce* II: 70 n. 77; Šmahel, *Dějiny Tábora* I.2, 417; Prokeš, "Táborské manifesty", 1–38; Amadeo Molnár (ed.), *Husitské Manifesty* (Prague, 1986), 259.

disputation, hope was still extended for future debates, after which the authors maintained that Catholics "will repent and unite with us and remain with us".[81] Yet a warning was also issued, that if debate was rejected in favour of war, "then we wish to protect and defend the truth with the help of God until death. We do not fear the threats or excommunications of the pope, his cardinals and bishops…God has not failed to help us".[82] Though attempts at negotiations had never gone far under Žižka, the Hussites' self-confidence in their military ability had now convinced them that they could enforce consensus on their own terms, a sentiment which had begun at Bratislava.

Another manifesto from May, however, dispensed with this inclusive language, and instead referred to the Roman clergy not as rational enemies with whom debate was possible, but rather as a globally infectious heresy.[83] Explaining the sinfulness of the priests, Jerome's interpretation of Jeremiah 23: 11 is cited: "one sinner defiles all people, just as a mangy sheep infects the entire herd".[84] This was then connected to the failures of the crusaders: "kings of the earth and all the inhabitants of the regions of the world have not believed that the enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem on account of the sins of the prophets and the iniquity of the priests" (Lamentations 4: 12–13). These priests who corrupted the earth were promised punishment: "Therefore the Lord is telling the prophets, look, I will feed them wormwood and make them drink gall, because the pollution comes from Jerusalem into the whole earth" (Jeremiah 23: 15).[85]

Worthy of note here and elsewhere in this series of manifestoes, which were heavily influenced by the priestly leadership, was the effort which went into citing Biblical, specifically Old Testament, parallels to the Hussite struggle.[86] As has already been noted, Žižka's own literature virtually lacked any such attention, and terms of self-reference were typically "the faithful" (*věrný*) or "good Christians" (*dobří křesťané*), while parallels from his period were typically historical or national in nature, such as "our fathers the old Czechs, fervent lovers of their country".[87]

[81] Reifferscheid, 15; *CAHB*, 287.

[82] Reifferscheid, 16; *CAHB*, 288.

[83] This was likely written in German, and as I was unable to access the 1524 German reproduction of the original, all quotations are from the Czech translation in Molnár, *Husitské Manifesty*, 128–46, unless otherwise noted.

[84] Molnár, *Husitské Manifesty*, 140.

[85] Ibid., 128; *CAHB*, 294–5. Alterations mine. On initiating the purge with the priesthood, in the contexts of the crusades to the East and the Fifth Monarchy Men, see Philippe Buc, "Martyrdom in the West: Vengeance, Purge, Salvation, and History," in *Resonances: Historical Essays on Continuity and Change*, eds. Nils Holger Petersen, Eyolf Østrem, and Andreas Bücker (Turnhout, 2011) 51–2, and note 108 therein for additional references.

[86] This tendency is also observable elsewhere among the Hussites. See Soukup, "Bible a násilí", 78–82.

[87] Karel Hruza, "Die hussitischen Manifeste vom April 1420," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 53 (1997) 162–6; *CAHB*, 58–60. Alterations mine. See also Bartoš, *Listy*, 14.

This contrast is again emphasized with reference to the Hussites' inspired mission to spread the faith, which guaranteed their own salvation. They found parallel in Ezekiel 3: 17–18, where the Lord says:

> I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, warn them from me. When I say to the godless, 'You, the godless, will surely die,' and you do not speak out to redirect him from his wicked way, that godless man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will find on your hand.[88]

Implied here is the next passage: "Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself". A passage from Gregory the Great reiterates this message, and the manifesto's authors emphasise in their own words that "[by] fulfilling this preaching mission, which is clearly according to Christ's teaching, people were lead to repentance". Nor were the implications of ignoring such a mission to be lost on the audience. The Lord was sending a message "through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people", (2 Chronicles 36: 15) but the authors noted that "they mocked God's messengers and despised their words, until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy" (16). Moreover, Matthew 10: 14–15 warned "Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgement than for that town" which ignored God's message.[89]

Here, the discourse shifted from divine punishment in the future to the role of human punishment in the present. Thus the manifesto cited Jeremiah 6: 10–11: "Lo, they joke about the words of the Lord and have no affection for them. For this reason I am full of the Lord's anger and am sorely *getting even with them*"; Job 36: 12 "But if they do not listen, they will *perish by the sword* and die in tribulation"; and Numbers 25: 4, where man is ordered to take vengeance for the Lord: "Take all the princes of the people and hang them on the gallows against the sun, that my rage may be turned away from Israel". The authors summarise: "thus are all kings, judges or priests who allowed evil and did not guard against it according to their ability, forever punished in Holy Scripture".[90]

One point worth emphasising here, which is a recurring theme throughout these manifestos is that humans are expected to assume responsibility, both for attaining their own salvation and for punishing sins in others. Divine punishment had always been an important theme in Hussite discourse, but now it was accompanied by, and even enacted through, human action. The

[88] Molnár, *Husitské Manifesty*, 135.
[89] Ibid., 137 f.
[90] Ibid., 137–40. Emphases mine.

Hussites were the "watchmen" and "messengers" of God's word, but they also enacted his vengeance when that word was ignored. Žižka's priority of "inward" elimination of sin – "first in ourselves" – was no longer the exclusive goal, since this had already been achieved, as illustrated by God's favour in the Hussites' military invincibility. Instead, salvation now depended on more than this; as "watchmen", the Hussites were now required to "herald the entire will of God" to all, to ensure their own salvation.[91] Moreover, violence, or the threat of it, was a legitimate tool of spreading God's word abroad, as it made examples of the ignorant and satisfied the Lord's anger.

Even more interesting for our purposes is another manifesto written in Prague. Here, the Hussites explicitly expressed the partnership of divine will and human agency, promising "*to fulfil* his revealed will" (*voluntatem eius agnitam implere*) by spreading his message to "all of God's Church". Maccabees is again cited to legitimate violent means, lest the "Lord's law" be exterminated by "our stupid indifference" (*nostra insulsa paciencia*), and then the shift from defensive to external warfare is explained in the author's own words:

> Because of this [the example of the Maccabees] we realized that all laws and rights (*omnes leges et omnia iura*) allow force to counter force (*vim vi repellere*) …so with the help of the Lord…we have resisted the enemy of both God's law and of us, and expelled them…from our homeland. Moreover…we generously offered help against them…confiding in the help of the Almighty and armed with the zeal of the faithful Mattathias, [and] we confidently [applied] the *law of vengeance* against them on more than one occasion.[92]

The narrative continues, recalling the battle of Ústi where Frederick I's enemy forces "raided the Bohemian kingdom as robbers…infecting other provinces with the same crime [of blasphemy]". After several successful defences, "we [the Hussites] convened to punish them according to what they deserved (*conveximus castigantes condignum*), while always observing brotherly mildness". The manifesto's author then states the motivations for the Hussites' attacks abroad:

> We, with other faithful people are working and fighting for the *glorification* (*pro clarificatione*) of those four evangelical truths [ie. the Four Articles] and to avenge (*pro vindicata*) the hostilities raised against us and our kingdom.[93]

[91] Ibid., 136.

[92] This is a difficult passage, "verum etiam in eos magnanimiter iuvimus ipsis nounquam talionem legis animose". See František M. Bartoš, *Manifesty města Prahy z doby Husitské* (Prague, 1932) 303, and 305 n. 1. Emphasis mine. I thank Dr. Cristian-Nicolae Gaspar for his assistance here.

[93] Ibid., 302–4. Italics mine. The idea of proportionate punishment from God is one well-developed in medieval dogma, and even found in Wycliffe: "deus enim punit citra condignum et

This narrative is revealing in several aspects, firstly as an auto-biography of the Hussite wars to date. By this account, the offensive shift abroad was considered a natural step in the course of events; "fulfilling" the will of God was accomplished by the spread of his message, but also by protecting it with violence. Those same "laws and rights" which legitimised defensive violence, however – "force to counter force" – also legitimised the offensive shift, or the "law of vengeance". Some of this vocabulary may have been common to legalistic "just war", but it was used to support a much different kind of war, certainly distinct from that envisioned in Žižka's time. The heinous crimes of the enemy required divine punishment, which the Hussites brought to them "with the help of the Almighty". Yet even though this punishment was as naturally legitimate and proportionate as that against any crime, it was not legalistic, technical, or impersonal, but rather was the highly emotional and personalised punishment in which pleasure is taken: *vengeance*. It was not the measured resistance theory that the university masters debated in 1420, or comparable to Žižka's disciplined rules of war from 1423, but rather the conjoined expression of the human and divine wills.

Furthermore, the choice of Maccabees as a biblical parallel was significant, as it worked to normalise and naturalise the shift from defence to offence by ignoring Žižka's discourse on war and imposing the contemporary discourse onto the past. As we have seen, the university masters, reluctant to accept violence in any form, ultimately settled on its restrictive use while imposing significant qualifications; despite problems in their practical applicability they were largely accepted by Žižka, but their blatant and explicit transgression by the new discourse of war, which espoused to "avenge" enemy hostilities, was evidence of the discursive distance travelled since 1420. Though the masters' reliance on Romans 13 had been in direct opposition with that of the Táborite priests on Maccabees, this 1430 manifesto now established a continuity of self-identity by ignoring the past debates on violence, and exaggerating the recently embraced role of the Maccabees within the movement's historical discourse.

Also noteworthy is the fact that the distinction between illegitimate rebellion and just war, so important in 1420, was now made moot by identifying with the Maccabees; the Hussites now embraced a unique self-identity: a rebellious few of God's faithful who faced a corrupt and blasphemous majority. They were now highly-militarised, both defensively in protecting God's precious truth and offensively in destroying its enemies and spreading this truth.

Thus the "glorious rides" were both an end in themselves (for vengeance), but also the means to another end: the "glorification" of the law of God. Their inspiration for this was from "the zeal of the faithful Mattathias", and this

premiat ultra condignum quia ubilibet graciose". John Wyclif, *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, ed. Rudolf Buddensieg (London, 1905) I: 187. I thank Dr. Matthias Riedl for this observation.

choice was no accident, for he expressed the partnership of divine will and human agency perfectly. Mattathias had initiated the Maccabee uprising, refusing to perform the pagan sacrifices demanded by King Antiochus. When another Jew came to the altar to perform them, Mattathias was:

> Inflamed with zeal, and his reins trembled, neither could he forbear to show his anger according to judgment: wherefore he ran, and slew him upon the altar. Also the king's commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at the same time, and the altar he pulled down. Thus dealt he zealously for the law of God… And Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, "Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me." (1 Maccabees 2: 23–7)

Mattathias did not punish legalistically and impersonally, but rather with emotion and hostility. Moreover, just as his rage acted to protect the divine law, he also inspired other faithful to his cause. As such, he represented the cooperation between human and divine agency which the "glorious rides" of the Hussites paralleled: a balance between human retaliation and the glorification of the divine truth.[94]

In August 1431 a fifth and final crusade was launched against the Hussites and was summarily defeated in two short weeks, ending with the resounding Hussite victory at the battle of Domažlice. Though the crusading forces numbered 100,000 or more, they were routed virtually without battle.[95] Yet again, the Hussites were confirmed as God's chosen, as one chronicler commented: "The King above kings and Lord above lords defends his own (*swé zachowáwaje*), rescues them, saves them, fights for them and wins".[96] Shortly after Domažlice, a new manifesto – perhaps the longest to date – was written. Though this document was essentially a reissue of the previous May's manifesto by the captains of Tábor, it differed in several respects.[97] Most significantly this was in the language and biblical citations it used, which reveal a heightened and unapologetic radicalism that had been inspired by the last crusade.[98]

[94] The importance of Maccabees for the Táborites is also suggested by Soukup and Rychterová, "The Reception", 203 f., though the above example is not discussed by them.

[95] "Francouzská Hussitica", in *Studie a texty* 3 (1923) 122 f., cited in *CAHB*, 321; FRB 5: 604.

[96] AČ 6 (1872) 424.

[97] See note 80 above.

[98] The document was likely written in German originally, but only the Latin translation survives. For the text, see MC 1 (1857) 153–70. Jaroslav Prokeš and František Palacký argued that this manifesto was from the pen of Prokop Holý himself. While I find this convincing, I disagree with Prokeš's supposition that the manifesto's additions and alterations from the previous May version, which are meant to deter further crusades, necessarily express the influence of the Hussite moderate Jan Rokycana or others. See Prokeš, "Táborské manifesty", 15, 34.

In addition to its added vitriol, the document was assured of the divine election of the Hussites, proven once again at Domažlice.[99] As the author emphasises, their victory was again prophesied in scripture: "The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven" (Deuteronomy 28: 7). Not only was the Hussites' defensive victory foretold, but so were their foreign-offensive ones, as in God's promise to Israel in Exodus 14, and Leviticus 26: 7–8: "You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you". Consequently, the foreign enemy would shudder at the thought of them: "As for those of you who are left, I will make their hearts so fearful in the lands of their enemies that the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. They will run as though fleeing from the sword, and they will fall, even though no one is pursuing them" (Leviticus 26: 36). The author explains the relationship between unjust persecution and divine empowerment thus: "For this reason the servants of God could not be defeated because the more they are punished, the more they are enflamed and strengthened (*accenduntur et confortantur*)".[100]

In early 1433 the Hussite delegates arrived at the Council of Basel to defend the Four Articles, but they also used the opportunity to lay the blame of the crusades at the feet of the church delegates. Several highlights of Prokop's speeches suffice to express his own perception of the Hussite self-identity. On 19 January he warned the Council in biblical language not to scorn the invitations to God's feast which they received through the Hussites. This was a reference to Jesus' parable of a king preparing a wedding banquet for his son, which represented the kingdom of heaven: "He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come" (Matthew 22: 3), instead ignoring or seizing them, and "mistreated and killed them [i.e. the king's servants]. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city" (6–7). He then filled the banquet with all kinds of people from the streets, "bad as well as good", but noticed one man without proper wedding clothes. He ordered his servants: "Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are invited, but few are chosen" (9–14).[101]

Comparable was Prokop's later speech to the Council delegates in June. After decrying the cruelties of the recent wars, he admitted that "many

[99] Within it, the Pope was decried as "pope-crucifier" and "evident heretic, prince of hypocrisy and the highest Antichrist". See MC 1: 153 f.

[100] Ibid., 156.

[101] Urbánek, 100. The image of the wedding feast was also present in the early "chiliast" literature of Tábor, where Christ would allow only those with the "wedding garment". See Jan z Příbramě, *Život kněží táborských* [Jan Příbram, Life of the Priests of Tábor], ed. Jaroslav Boubín (Příbram, 2000) 95; FRB 5: 415.

spiritual benefits (*spirituales germinauere*) have arisen out of them and may we hope that by the will of God they will produce even more". Among these benefits was the forceful conversion of the Hussites' enemies to the Four Articles, who soon saw their benefit and "accepted them voluntarily and became ardent defenders [of them] until death". Those converts were consequently "protected from hostility and brutality", and thus "these storms of war and vice have been used by God to turn many to the truth". The conditions for the end of war were ambitious but part of the divine will, and would be enacted by the Hussite armies:

> Before these storms can come to an end, these holy truths must be accepted and followed faithfully by each member of the church…We only tolerate the burdens of war so that we can establish these truths in their rightful place within the church and thereby lay hold upon the blessed peace which, with the help of God, would cause the unity of the church.[102]

These two passages express several sentiments already observed in the Hussite manifestoes, but they are worth emphasising again. One is the religious narrative they present of the Hussite wars. With the wedding feast parable, the servants sent by God – perhaps Hus himself but also potentially many others – were ignored and killed by those who refused the invitation to the kingdom of heaven. "Enraged", God sent his army to enact punishment; as the manifestoes proposed, the "watchmen" became just agents of both divine and human retaliation, punishing those who refused God's invitation.

Yet in June, Prokop presented the other side of this divine vengeance, its instructive and disciplinary nature. God has used the wars "to turn many to the truth", returning them to the wedding feast. Forced converts had become "ardent defenders" of the Four Articles, legitimising the offensive strategy of spreading the faith abroad. Moreover, the narrative is a warning: God will not accept unbelievers in heaven or earth, where "storms of war" will continue until all turn to the "holy truths". Both of these passages thus echo the sentiments of the earlier manifestoes, in which religious historiography legitimised the offensive shift as both punitive and corrective, the Hussite confidence in their divine role, and their capability of fulfilling it on earth.

IV. Conclusions

As scholars have rightly argued, a variety of economic, strategic, political, and emotional motivations were certainly responsible for the decision to move from an exclusively domestic to a foreign-offensive military strategy. Yet such explanations are incomplete insofar as they do not address the question

[102] MC 1: 419 f.; *CAHB*, 351 f.

of why it had taken six years of warfare, three defeated crusades, countless battles and casualties, and a change in military leadership before this shift occurred. Their shortcoming, as I have tried to show, is that they largely ignore or take for granted the importance of the deeply religious discourse and motivations which enabled and shaped the use of both internal and external, "missionising" violence, and because they propose a false continuity between early defensive and purgative violence, and the later offensive kind.

As has been argued, the strict qualifications which the Prague masters attached to the use of legitimate violence were adapted by Žižka to serve as rules for victorious warfare, which depended on the favour of God and appropriate behaviour. Thus, the ideal "Warriors of God" not only defended the faith by fighting crusaders, but also by internally purging those who endangered God's favour. Even though we may speculate that Žižka did plan offensive wars abroad in the future, these were as yet restricted by contemporary realities, among which were concerns (in addition to obvious practical and material ones) over moral conduct and the priority of internal consolidation and purification. Despite some notable critiques, such offensive wars could be realised only after Žižka's death when these concerns and anxieties were considerably relieved under the new leadership of Prokop Holý.[103] Here, the countless Hussite victories of the past led to a reinterpretation of the possession of God's favour, which was no longer conditional on moral or righteous performance, but permanent and inherent in their identity as such, which was thus moral and righteous by definition. This meant that the former restrictions on the motivations and purposes of violence no longer determined victory on the battlefield, but rather the opposite: continuous victory expressed the righteousness of their motivations and their identity with God's will. This also facilitated an elevated role for human agency; since the Hussites could take the morality of their actions for granted, which were identical with God's will, it was only a small step to assume that they were also granted the power and authority to fulfil that will.[104] Thus they were in a cooperative and reciprocal relationship with

[103] For instance, from the moderate spiritual leader Jan Rokycana and the bishop of Tábor, Nicholas Pelhřimov. Rokycana criticised those who urged offensive attacks with the argument "Because the Germans invaded our kingdom, we in turn will repay them by invading their kingdom". See František Šmahel, *Idea Národa v Husitských Čechách* [The idea of nation in Hussite Bohemia.] (Prague, 2000) 169–70. For Pelhřimov see Howard Kaminsky, "Nicholas of Pelhřimov's Tábor: an Adventure into the Eschaton," in *Eschatologie und Hussitismus*, eds. Alexander Patschovsky and František Šmahel (Prague, 1996) 139–67, and František M. Bartoš, "Táborské Bratrstvo let 1425–1426 na Soudě Svého Biskupa Mikuláše z Pelhřimova [The brotherhood of Tábor during the years 1325–1326 and the trial of their bishop Mikuláš of Pelhřimov]," *Časopis Společnosti přátel starožitností českých v Praze* 29 (1921) 102–22.

[104] The logic of such religious violence cannot be discussed here at length. Instead I refer to the always-relevant Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York, 1946) 336–40.

God, as they not only spread the pure faith abroad to attain salvation, but also worked to bring vengeance and punishment, both human and divine, upon their enemies.

Over time, the repeated victories of the field armies abroad in the "glorious rides" worked to confirm the righteousness of their mission. The speeches of Peter Payne and Prokop Holý, and the tone of the Hussite manifestos all bear witness to this. Moreover, specific biblical references emphasized recurring themes in the reinvented Hussite identity: the role of the elect to spread the law of God in Ezekiel 3 and Matthew 22; the vengeance and punishment directed at those who reject the law of God in Job 36 and Jeremiah 6; the prophesied invincibility of the armies of the elect in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26; and the community definition and legitimation of divinely--inspired violence as carried out by charismatic military leaders such as Jonathan, Gideon, and in Maccabees. All these themes were in contradiction to those present in Žižka's discourse of domestic, consolidative warfare, and illustrate the size of the divide which distinguished the offensive shift from anything that came before.