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Madmen and a Melancholic: Allusions to Health and the Anointing of the Sick in Polemics of the Hussite Period

Słowa kluczowe: namaszczenie chorych, husyci, polemiki religijne, Jan Kapistran, Jan z Borotina
Keywords: Anointing of the Sick, Hussites, religious polemics, John of Capistrano, John of Borotin

In medieval thinking, heresy was seen as a kind of disease which could affect a community of faithful Christians¹. An infected group carried a threat of infecting others who might be seduced by ideas going beyond orthodoxy. It was not merely a problem of a spiritual nature, and as a heterodox trend, it was a blow to the very foundations of the social order. Because of this, it attracted the attention of authorities, in whose interest was to make these foundations whole again. Such was also the image of Hussitism, although in its case, the matter is somehow more complicated. The reformers, who were accused of heresy, contributed to various trends, decried and opposed by the Holy See. At the same time, all those involved had the healing of kingdom and Church alike at heart; however, they differed in their views as to how to achieve the objective. In Hussite debates, there emerged allusions to health, which was sometimes also used as a tool in polemics, and sporadically in relation to other topics. It is worth focusing on some of them in order to grasp the specifics of alluding to health in the era discussed, based on the available sources.

The Hussite period is usually understood as the time between the execution of John Hus at the Council of Constance (1415) – or the First Defenestration of

¹ Robert Ian Moore, “Heresy as Disease”, in *The Concept of Heresy in the Middle Ages (11th–13th C.)*. *Proceedings of the International Conference, Louvain May 13–16, 1973*, eds. Willem Lourdaux, Daniël Verhelst (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1983), 1–12; Hans J.M.M.H. Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris, 1200–1400* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 1; Carol Lansing, *Power & Purity: Cathar Heresy in Medieval Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 149.

Prague (1419) – to the death of the Hussite king, George of Poděbrady (1471)². Sometimes, only the years of the Hussite revolution (1419–1436) are defined as “the Hussite period” (for instance: the core of the monumental work by F. Šmahel covers this period)³. At the same time, the decades following the signing of the agreement (*kompaktáta*) with the Council and Sigismund of Bohemia are called, approximately, the Poděbrad era⁴. This is an approximate concept, because, strictly speaking, George of Poděbrady had a direct influence on the political direction of the country from 1448, when he seized Prague. He played an even more important role from 1451 on, when he became the steward of the kingdom, and especially from 1458, when he was crowned as King of Bohemia in Hradčany⁵. On the other hand, František Šmahel proves that Poděbrad’s death did not result in any sudden change in the confessional state of the country⁶. Regardless of the periodization, religious discussions between various fractions of the Bohemian reform and representatives of the Catholic party lasted with varying intensity throughout the period.

The records of these disputes are usually theological treatises, speeches recorded during public, and commission confrontations, as well as letters and manifestos. Their essential content was, of course, theological discourse, communicating a certain vision of how the state should be organized based on the principles of theology. However, the point of the dispute also included eristic tools that went beyond the actual field of consideration. In the arguments addressed to opponents, references are made, which is perfectly understandable, to biblical examples. There are also military accents, especially during the Hussite revolution, which turned into a long-lasting struggle against external invasions in the form of crusades, as well as a civil war⁷. Due to the chiliastic themes in the early trends of the reform and the high level of religious excitement, apocalyptic and eschatological symbolism is a recurring motif. References to such characters from the Apocalypse as the Beast, the fiery dragon, or Gog and Magog, were frequent and appealed to the imagination⁸. An important role was

² Petr Čornej, “Vývoj názorů na husitství v díle Zdeňka Nejedlého v letech 1898–1920”, *Česká literatura* 26 (1978): 237; Jiří Kejř, *Husité* (Praha: Panorama, 1984), 186–194; Petr Čornej, Milena Bartlová, *Velké dějiny země Koruny České*, Vol. 6 (Paseka–Praha–Litomyšl: Paseka, 2007).

³ František Šmahel, *Husitská revoluce*, Vol. 1–4 (Praha: Univerzita Karlova, 1993–1995); Stanislav Bylina, *Revolucja husycka*, Vol. 1–3 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2011–2016).

⁴ Rudolf Urbánek, *České Dějiny 3: Věk poděbradský* (Praha: Jan Laichter, 1915); Rudolf Urbánek, *Husitský král* (Praha: Vesmír, 1926).

⁵ Otakar Odložilík, *The Hussite King. Bohemia in European Affairs 1440–1471* (New Brunswick–New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1965), *passim*.

⁶ František Šmahel, *Husitské Čechy. Struktury, procesy, ideje* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2001), 99–101.

⁷ Jerzy Grygiel, “Contra Bohemos – wokół problemu krucjat antyhusyckich w XV-wiecznej Europie”, *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Prace Historyczne* 126 (1999): 59–75.

⁸ Pavlína Cermanová, “Jakoubkův a Biskupcův Výklad na Apokalypsus. Porovnání s důrazem na interpretaci antikristovského mýtu”, in *Jakoubek Ze Stříbra. Texty a Jejich Působení*, eds. Ota Halama, Pavel Soukup (Praha: Centrum mediévistických studií), 209–227; Pavlína Cermanová, “Gog

played by the figure of the Antichrist, taken from the Letters of John by pre-Hussite thinkers, especially Matthias of Janov⁹. Historical references were less frequent but still visible. They occurred, especially, in those polemics which in some way concerned the rulers – Emperor Sigismund and George of Poděbrady.

The demand to reform the Church in the spirit of the principles established in early Christianity, on top of the organization of the state and social life in accordance with them, could suggest that among the vivid metaphors, symbols and rhetorical figures, references should often be made to diseases, health, or healing the body and spirit. Even before John Hus was burnt at the stake in Constance, one of the prominent participants in the Council – John Gerson – referred to Hus' thought as “pestis” (plague) and “cancer”¹⁰. Later, surprisingly enough, allusions of this type occur sporadically, to disappear almost completely in comparison with other motifs and must be extracted from the vastness of the source material. However, those that are found there, are interesting enough to deserve a little attention. Looking at the examples of references to health issues in Hussite polemics will show how they were seen in the leading religious discourse of the period.

In the search for health references, one should undoubtedly give some attention to the participants in the disputes who could boast a medical education. Undoubtedly, John of Borotín was one of them. Interestingly, the Hussite circles were dominated by theologians and philosophers, as were the academic ones, although Prague attracted outstanding medical figures as well. Křišťan of Prachatic, a significant person and representative of the same generation as John Hus, also wrote about medical issues. At the same time, he was the only important figure in the medical profession of the day who, along with John of Borotín, belonged to the advocates of reforming the Church in the Utraquist spirit. Master Křišťan belonged to the moderate Calixtinists, who were aiming to reach a compromise with the Church hierarchy¹¹. After signing the Compacts of Basel, his appointment as a Prague administrator was seen as a blow to the spiritual leader of the consistent Utraquists, John of Rokycany¹². Křišťan died soon after, leaving John of Borotín

a Magog: lid z konce světa a věků v husitství”, in *Zrození Mýtu. Dva Životy Husitské Epochy. K Počtě Petra Čorneje*, eds. Robert Novotný, Petr Šámal (Litomyšl: Paseka, 2011), 230–243.

⁹ Emanuel Michálek, “Antikrist – klíčové slovo v jazyce doby husitské”, *Husitský Tábor* 4 (1981): 110–112; Pavlína Libichová Cermanová, “Antichristus avarus contra pauperes Christi. Chudoba a její význam v apokalyptickém diskurzu”, in *Colloquia Mediaevalia Pragensia*, Vol. 6, ed. Martin Nodl (Praha: Filosofia, 2007), 111–134.

¹⁰ Paweł Kras, “Furor Hussitarum – husytyzm w wybranych relacjach kronikarzy z XV wieku”, in *Uniwersalizm i regionalizm w kronikarstwie Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, ed. Urszula Borkowska (Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 1996), 86.

¹¹ Zdeněk Nejedlý, “Křišťan z Prachatic”, in *Ottův Slovník Naučný*, Vol. 15 (Praha: J. Otto, 1900), 187–188.

¹² Kateřina Horníčková, “Memory, Politics and Holy Relics: Catholic Tactics amidst the Bohemian Reformation”, in *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, Vol. 8, eds. Zdeněk V. David, Robert HOLETON (Praha: Filosofia 2011), 140.

as the only renowned medical man and intellectual in the Utraquist party during that period. Other famous physicians of the time – such as John Ondřejův (Sindel), Pavel Židek, or John Krčín – were Catholics¹³. Židek, who was an immensely interesting person, was a convert from Calixtinism with a Jewish background and gained fame in several fields. He is known as the author of the encyclopedic study entitled *Liber Viginti Artium*, comparing contemporary knowledge from twenty fields¹⁴. This extensive work, the manuscript of which is kept by the Jagiellonian Library (Židek, Manuscript BJ 257), has been partially published in print. The part of Židek's work dealing with natural science has recently been published with critical commentary¹⁵. Among humanists, however, and especially historians, Židek is known as a political and historical visionary. By far the most famous of his works, *Spravovna Jiriho krále*, is a treatise on good governance, prepared for King George of Poděbrady¹⁶. Židek reappears as an author with an encyclopedic mind, and he exposes his historical and political interests. *Spravovna* is not without a medical perspective, but does not apply medical terms in the polemics on the topic of interest to us here. Namely, the medical discussion in it focuses on Židek's personal opinions on the quality of medical services at the monarch's court. He advises the king to choose the right doctor, adding, with a clear dislike for a person he knows, “not like this Cejkar”¹⁷. He emphasizes the importance of decisions in this regard, reminding the ruler that he is no longer a young man (at the time of the writing of the book, King George of Poděbrady was about 50 years old). Other remarks concern errors in education: he criticizes poor education and “buying” of doctor's degrees. The case concerns masters of various fields, but Židek also mentions physicians here, claiming that they need to have at least five years of experience. In the key fragments regarding the controversy concerning the religious and systemic shape of the state, Židek-as-a-physician gives way to a political advisor and an expert on history.

It seems that the medical vocation had a much heavier influence on John of Borotín, a Calixtinist humanist of a moderate views. Borotín, who obtained a university master's degree five years before the death of John Hus, must have observed the effects of the revolutionary turmoil on his country when he was a young man¹⁸. Therefore, similarly to Křišťan of Prachtatice and some other academics,

¹³ Čornej, Bartlová, *Velké dějiny země Koruny České*, 297.

¹⁴ Jiří Mátl, “Dva osudy v jednom? Osud největší encyklopedie českého středověku *Liber viginti arcium* a příběh jejího autora Pavla Židka aneb když si to s někým rozházet, tak s každým...”, *Acta Historica Universitatis Silesianae Opaviensis* 4 (2011): 83–91.

¹⁵ Pavel Židek, *Kniha dvacatera umění mistra Pavla Židka – část přírodovědná* (Praha: Academia, 2008).

¹⁶ Jerzy Grygiel, “Ideal władcy średniowiecznego w dziele Pavla Židka *Spravovna Jiriho krále*”, in *Piśmiennictwo Czech i Polski w średniowieczu i we wczesnej epoce nowożytnej*, eds. Antoni Barciak, Wojciech Iwańczak (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2006), 333.

¹⁷ Pavel Židek, *M. Pavla Židka Spravovna*, ed. Zdeněk Tobolka (Praha: Česka Akademie, 1908), 34.

¹⁸ Martin Weiss, “Mistr Jan z Borotína”, *Studia Theologica* 2 (2000): 74.

he advocated seeking a compromise with the Church. The belief in the necessity of appeasing the public dominated his thought¹⁹. However, in the face of the prolonged dispute over the interpretation and approval of the Compacts by the Pope, some moderate Utraquists gave their support to John of Rokycany and present a more consistent position in this matter. John of Borotín's ideological journey was exactly like that. In 1451, he actively opposed the mission of John of Capistrano, who came to Moravia with a desire to have a debate with the Hussites and preach to the inhabitants of the kingdom²⁰. John of Capistrano's initiative was not spontaneous. It was announced by Enea Silvio Piccolomini, who had visited Bohemia as a bishop and emissary of Frederick III²¹. Known for his eloquence, but also for his strictness and principled attitudes, John of Capistrano met with strong opposition from the Utraquist clergy and the representatives of the secular authorities alike. For a long time, he tried various devices to be able to preach in either Prague or Cheb, each time receiving evasive answers or open refusals²². He exchanged letters with Utraquist clergy, including John of Rokycany. He also turned to the steward of the time, George of Poděbrady²³. One of the first written exchanges that turned into a religious polemic, however, was a letter sent by John of Borotín on August 20, 1451. The author made efforts to present himself as someone interested in Capistrano's position and his plans in connection with his visit to Bohemia. Therefore, he seemed to be testing the Bernardine. However, the letter in fact establishes the position of Utraquists in the kingdom and marks the start of a debate preceding the activity of John of Capistrano. Borotín focuses on two issues. Firstly, he discusses the Compacts' validity and supports Utraquist views. The second theme which marks the tone of the correspondence lies in the author's considerations on the addressee's personal character. In this aspect, Borotín supports his arguments with medical knowledge, which he includes in his theological discourse.

The Utraquist physician makes his point with a show of reason, proving Capistrano's particular fault: "Dicere igitur et asserere contrarium concilio in Spiritu sancto congregato est dicere contrarium, ut creditur, Spiritui sancto, quod nullus sanae mentis audebit attentare, nisi forte melancholicus, spiritu cujusdam

¹⁹ [Author unknown], "Jan z Borotína", in *Ottův Slovník Naučný*, Vol. 4 (Praha: J. Otto, 1891), 401.

²⁰ Agnieszka Lissowska, "Antyhusycka misja Jana Kapistrana na Śląsku", in *Bernardyni na Śląsku w późnym średniowieczu*, ed. Jakub Kostowski (Wrocław: Atut, 2005), 52–55.

²¹ Janusz Smołucha, *Polityka kurii rzymskiej za pontyfikatu Piusa II (1458–1464)* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2008), 89–92.

²² Joannes Capistrano, "Copia literarum fratris Joannis de Capistrano ad Magistrum Joannem de Rokyczana (Rokycana)", [letter, 1451], in *Životopis svatého Jana Kapistrana*, ed. František Walouch (Brno: Wilém Burkart, 1858), 714; Jan Rokycana, "Epistola Rokyczani ad Capistranum", [letter, 1451], in *Životopis svatého Jana Kapistrana*, 722–723.

²³ Georgius de Podiebrad, "Joanni Capistrano Ordinis Minorum", [letter 1453], in *Annales Minorum seu trium ordinum a S. Francisco institutorum*, ed. Luke Wadding (Roma: Rochus Bernabo, 1735), 166–167.

melancholiae plenus"²⁴. According to Borotín, no man in his right mind would be able to oppose the Council of Basel, as a body that deliberates and makes decisions with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Thence, the undermining of the Compacts, which the author clearly has in mind, should only be explained by a mental illness – in this case, melancholy. John of Borotín, making such a long-distance diagnosis, supports himself with his medical authority, while all his arguments combine seeming medical care with the irony of a polemicist. This polemic character of the letter is additionally stressed by references to mythological examples. Borotín seems to flatter the addressee with the suggestion that many historical figures and heroes (*virii politici et heroici*) suffered from this ailment. To this end, he cites Aristotle and his *Problemata* as his inspiration. However, he does not further expand on this argument or deepen it. Thus the implication hints at the tragic examples of Heracles, the heroes of the *Iliad*, Ajax and Bellerophon, and the philosophers Empedocles, Plato, and Socrates²⁵. For someone knowing Greek mythology, it is a very eloquent indication, since Ajax, ashamed of his mad attack on a herd of sheep, committed suicide²⁶. Heracles also sought death, but counted on human help in this final act. Bellerophon, after his many heroic deeds and victorious combats, including killing the Chimera, ultimately turned the gods against himself by to his conceit and, in consequence, he died ailing, lonely, and sad²⁷.

Historical research has been done on the perception of melancholy and its connection with depression in the Middle Ages²⁸. According to some authors, melancholia was then perceived as a “fashionable” condition, based on Aristoteles’ *Problems*²⁹, which makes Borotín a precursor of such a connection, even if this was pointed out with some dose of irony. Regardless of its outcome, or the state of medical knowledge in the mid-15th century, the example of Borotín’s correspondence with Capistrano is a reference to such an understanding of melancholy: as a symptom of mental illness (*nullus sanae mentis*). To prove this point, Borotín’s second letter to Capistrano suggests much less gently that those who question the conciliar ruling are insane. Starting the passage devoted to this issue, he uses

²⁴ Jan Borotín, “Johannes Borotin schismaticus ad presbyterum Johannem de Capistrano”, [letter, 1451], in *Životopis swatého Jana Kapistrana*, 791–792.

²⁵ Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle*, trans. W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 953.

²⁶ Roger D. Woodard, *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 183.

²⁷ Robin Hard, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 434.

²⁸ Joseph Ziegler, *Medicine and Religion, c. 1300: The Case of Arnau de Vilanova* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 154; Jennifer Radden, *The Nature of Melancholy. From Aristotle to Kristeva* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 75–93; Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 213–218; Greg Eghigian, *From Madness to Mental Health: Psychiatric Disorder and Its Treatment in Western Civilization* (New Brunswick–New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 47–89; Matthew Bell, *Melancholia – The Western Malady* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 45–52.

²⁹ Bell, *Melancholia*, 121.

the following wording: “o stulta insania et insana stulticia”³⁰. This undoubtedly is a stylistic device, but it interacts with the earlier assessment which he had made of Capistrano, just slightly more cautiously. In contrast, it is worth mentioning that in later Central European historiography, education, and art, it was the Hussites who were depicted as a mad or freakish element. “Furor Hussitarum” became a term describing the behavior during the invasions called “spanilé jízdy”, organized by Hussite troops at the end of the 1440s³¹.

Capistrano quietly accepted Borotín’s correspondence, responding to some of the accusations, correcting them, and also referring to his assumed melancholy. He claimed that he rather represented the sanguine personality type³². It should be stressed that the author of the letter admitted that he did not know John of Capistrano personally, but that he drew upon others’ opinions about him³³. This reservation, which would have been unnecessary in another case, could protect the physician’s authority when making a “long distance diagnosis” without actually seeing the potential patient.

The combination of medical knowledge with mythological references was typical of John of Borotín’s style. Thirteen years before his correspondence with Capistrano, in the period when he debated with the archbishop of Prague, John of Rokycany, he also included mythological and medical issues in his correspondence. This example, however, is not as interesting as the verbal skirmish between Capistrano and Borotín, who referred to Hippocrates’ *De aere et aqua*³⁴. Among the various religious debaters of the Hussite period, John of Borotín manifested his medical vocation the most in his letters, using his medical expertise to strengthen his arguments in a completely different context.

A short but interesting reference to health in a religious polemic is the example used by Enea Silvio Piccolomini during his visit to Tabor in the summer of 1451. On a diplomatic mission in Bohemia, Piccolomini held several discussions with

³⁰ Jan Borotín, “Johannes Borotin Johanni Capistrano”, [letter, 1451.2], in *Des Franciscaners Johannes von Capistrano mission unter den Hussiten 1451–1453*, ed. Felix Carl Raimund Weber (Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1867), 38.

³¹ Conrad Clauser, *De educatione puerorum liber unus* (Basilea: Ioannes Oporinus, 1554), 558; Jan Tomáš Vojtech Berghauer, *Proto-martyr poenitentiae eiusque sigilli custos semper fidelis, divus Joannes Nepomucenus, S. metropolitanae ecclesiae Pragensis ad S. Vitum M. in regno Boemiae canonicus* (Augusta Vindelicorum: Veith, 1736), 12, 330; Aemilian Ussermann, *Episcopatus Bambergensis Sub S. Sede Apostolica Chronologice Ac Diplomata Illustratus* (Sankt Blasien 1802), 198–199; Michał Baliński, *Pielgrzymka do Jasnej Góry w Częstochowie odbyta przez pątnika z XIX wieku i wydana z rękopisu* (Warszawa: G. Sennewald, 1846), 214.

³² Johannes Capistrano, “Responsum Johannis de Capistrano ad praefatam epistolam”, [letter, 1451. 2], in *Des Franciscaners Johannes von Capistrano mission unter den Hussiten 1451–1453*, ed. Felix Carl Raimund Weber (Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1867), 41–42.

³³ Borotín, *Johannes Borotin schismaticus ad presbyterum Johannem de Capistrano*, 790–792.

³⁴ Jan Borotín, “Ad te mihi sermo est...”, [letter, 1438], in *Druhý dopis mistra Jana Borotína Rokycanovi*, ed. Anežka Vidmanová, *Listy Filologické* 120 (1997): 284.

the Hussites³⁵. Later, he presented the course of these discussions in two detailed reports. The document should be analyzed with some caution, as the author described the course of conversations which he himself conducted while trying to give his relation an objective appearance. During the talks with the Bohemians, he reflected on their fascination with some customs and practices preserved in eastern Christianity. At the same time, he noted that as Bohemians they were brought up in a Western, Latin environment, and therefore, the Roman tradition should feel closer to them. In any event, as he argued, it is difficult to follow partly the Latin rite and partly the Greek rite. He summed up this thought with a call to become either cold or hot³⁶. This eristic trick was a covert but at the same time witty commentary on the situation of radical reformers. The opposition between “cold” and “hot” was taken from the Epistle to the Laodiceans, which is a part of the Book of Revelation. The postulated strictness of attitude is rendered by the following words: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! / So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15b–16).

Piccolomini, who was not only a highly educated priest (at the time he was the Bishop of Siena, and later he became Pope Pious II), was also an Italian Humanist, and as such he was well familiar with the sources of biblical imagery. In this case, it is important to note the specific position of Laodicea, which the author of the Book of Revelation was alluding to. This rich city was located between two others: Hierapolis, which was famous for its healing hot springs, and Colossae, which had access to cold drinking water. Laodicea was devoid of both resources its neighbors had. The hot springs of Hierapolis, when they reached Laodicea, had already become lukewarm. Besides, becoming polluted on the plain, they were not suitable for drinking, and they caused nausea and vomiting³⁷. Without a doubt, Piccolomini was aware of the health allusion which applied to Tabor’s radicals, positioning them as the source of a disease, which was heresy in the body of the Church. We do not know what the reaction of the recipients was; however, one

³⁵ Howard Kaminsky, “Pius Aeneas among the Taborites”, *Church History* 28 (1959): 287–295; Janusz Smołuca, *Polityka kurii rzymskiej za pontyfikatu Piusa II (1458–1464)* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2008), 92–94.

³⁶ Aeneas Piccolomini, “S. Bischof Eneas an den Kardinal Juan Carvajal”, [1451], in *Der Briefwechsel des Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini. Fontes Rerum Austriacarum*, ed. Rudolf Wolk (Wien: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1918), 48–49.

³⁷ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 109–110; Craig R. Koester, “The Message to Laodicea and the Problem of Its Local Context: A Study of the Imagery in Rev 3.14–22”, *New Testament Studies* 48 (2003): 409; Randolph E. Richards, Brandon J. O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Illinois: IVP Books, Downers Grove, 2012), 10; Paweł Podeszwa, “«Temu, który nas miłuje» (Ap 1,5). Miłość Chrystusa do Kościoła w świetle wybranych tekstów z Apokalipsy św. Jana”, *Teologia Praktyczna* 16 (2015): 102.

can presume that they did not recognize the bishop's vitriolic comment hidden behind the biblical reference.

The allusion to a physical condition as an image of spiritual weakness also appears a little later in a letter by Martin Lupáč, an ally of John of Rokycany and one of the leading Utraquists, directed to Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa. The correspondence was open and therefore it is seen as one of the Hussite manifestos³⁸. Lupáč, in his letter, defended the Compacts and accused his opponent of misunderstanding them. He suggested that Nicolas should look at the matter using the glasses of his heart, as he is not able to comprehend them. This suggested weakness of "spiritual eyes" is an ironic reference to the interest in optics that Nicolaus of Cusa was known for³⁹. Lupáč's letter was written in mid-1452, therefore, a few years prior to the Cusan's main work in the field, *De Beryllo*, in 1458⁴⁰. Lupáč did not fail to refer to John of Capistrano as well, who was, at that time, unsuccessfully trying to carry out his mission in Bohemia. Unlike Borotín, he did not accuse him of madness, but instead, of being possessed, calling the Bernardine "Satan's monk" and "a vile man"⁴¹.

The few allusions to health made in Hussite era polemics and used as arguments in direct, personal skirmishes can be complemented by a debate which raged around the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. For obvious reasons, in this case, health was examined in the context of the meaning of the sacrament. No personal attacks or metaphorical allusions were used in the polemics. Also, it was not the medical aspect of the issue that was at the center of interest. An example of such considerations is the treatise entitled *Vyznání a obrana Taboru* by Nicolaus of Pelhřimov⁴². This treatise is a reference to a number of accusations that the Taborites heard from Utraquists in 1431. A significant *passus* was devoted to the anointing of the sick. The Taborites maintained that the term "ultima unctio" should not be called a sacrament, because it was not directly established by Christ. Due to the lack of a biblical basis, they also did not want to regard it as a key element of the faith. At the same time, they did not deny the benefit that can come to a sick person from the rite. This is how the biblical passages concerning anointing and healing the sick performed by Apostles (Mark 6:13), or about prayer over the anointed sick (James 5: 14–15)⁴³ surfaced.

³⁸ Martin Lupáč, "Otevřený list Martina Lupáče kardinálu Mikuláši Kusánskému", in *Husitské manifesty*, ed. Amedeo Molnár (Praha: Orbis, 1980), 218–225.

³⁹ *Idem*, "Martini Lupáč epistola Nicolao de Cusa, data Clatoviae Bohemorum, 14. Julii 1452", [letter, 1452], ed. František M. Bartoš, *Communio Viatorum* 5 (1962): 43.

⁴⁰ *Husitské manifesty*, 262.

⁴¹ Lupáč, *Martini Lupáč epistola Nicolao de Cusa*, 44.

⁴² Pavel Spunar, "Opera Nicolai Biskupec de Pilgram (Pelhřimov)", in *Směřování. Pohled Do Badatelské a Literární Dílny Amedea Molnára*, ed. Noemi Rejchertová (Praha: Kalich, 1983), 104–116.

⁴³ Mikuláš z Pelhřimova, *Vyznání a obrana Táborů*, transl. František M. Dobiáš, Amedeo Molnár (Praha: Academia, 1972), 84–87.

For the Taborites, the essence of this Rite is the prayer and protection of the patient's soul. In their polemic with Utraquists, especially John of Rokycany, the Taborites raised this aspect, calling its relevance for the body into question. At the same time, they did not deny its therapeutic value. If any priest had such a gift, he should use it for the benefit of others. In this reservation, we can clearly see a degree of skepticism and distance towards any other aspect of anointing than the spiritual and symbolic ones.

These few examples give rise to some general conclusions. Heresy was presented in the Middle Ages in the likeness of sickness, and sometimes, related terms were used directly to refer to it. Hussite reformers, on the other hand, believed that it was the Church that should be healed, as her condition had deteriorated significantly by moving away from the teachings of the original Church of the first centuries. But in the Bohemian debates, allusions and metaphors associated with images of disease are rare, and other means of expression predominate. Polemicists on both sides of the conflict allowed themselves personal put-downs suggesting a health condition in the opponent (melancholy or madness). Some of these allusions were veiled and dressed in biblical imagery. Here the participants in the debate were being clearly ironic towards their opponents. Sometimes health allusions drawn from the medical profession were added to the polemic arsenal; however, this was not a rule. Such a personal motif sometimes appeared in the letters of John of Borotín. A completely separate issue was the Anointing of the Sick. Here, too, the argumentations between radical and moderate reformers also included health issues. This time, the references were made directly, not in the form of allusions, and not as issues of style. Instead, they related to the essence of the Sacrament.

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Madmen and a Melancholic: Allusions to Health and the Anointing of the Sick in Polemics of the Hussite Period

Hussitism regarded as heresy was perceived in terms of a disease in the healthy body of the Church. In particular, raids by Hussite troops were interpreted in the category of madness, as *furor Hussitarum*. However, the Hussite side also saw controversies regarding health issues. John of Borotín, a physician and Utraquist, made a long-distance diagnosis of the psychiatric condition of his Hussite adversary, John of Capistrano. Reformist radicals considered the principles of the Anointing of the Sick and pondered whether the rite was a sacrament or not. Although medical and health allusions were not the main rhetorical tool used in the religious disputes, such examples can be found there.