Europe After Wyclif

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Published by Fordham University Press

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One of the main chapters in the history of “Europe after Wyclif” indubitably took place in Bohemia. It is a well-known fact that Wyclif’s teachings met with a much bigger reception in Bohemia than in any other country on the continent. It suffices to recall the oft-quoted observation that more copies of Wyclif’s works survive in collections of Bohemian manuscripts in Prague and Vienna than in libraries on the British Isles. The adoption of Wyclif’s thinking by Master Jan Hus and his colleagues gave a decisive momentum to a preexisting Bohemian religious movement. This in turn gave rise to a distinctive theological system and ecclesiastical structure. The Hussites proved able to survive despite their condemnation by the church and repeated calls for their extermination. While the English Wycliffites were increasingly pushed toward a clandestine existence during the fifteenth century, the Hussites in Bohemia and Moravia successfully defended their public presence and even fought off several international crusades. By that time, the political and doctrinal autonomy of the Hussites was beyond doubt.

Yet, the nomenclature used to describe them was not so distinctive. Whereas the prevailing majority of modern historians use the term Hussite to describe the Wyclif-inspired movement in Bohemia, the fifteenth-century usage was much more blurred and ambiguous. The crusade against Bohemia that was proclaimed in 1420 officially aimed to exterminate “the Wycliffites and the Hussites.” Nevertheless, the pope, when proclaiming the crusade, is understood to have meant one, not two groups, and this group consisted of the followers of Jan Hus in Bohemia. The formulation of the bull and of those many other documents which continued to use the term Wycliffite for Bohemian heretics raise some questions for historians. Did contemporaries mean to imply that the Hussite movement was thoroughly affiliated with the Wycliffites? Or was it a mere linguistic per-
sis tence, when in fact Bohemia’s links to Wyclif were becoming increasingly weaker with time? This essay suggests that terminological developments in the first third of the fifteenth century reflected changing discursive as well as political circumstances. It shows how linguistic usage reacted to both church politics between the councils of Constance and Basel and the theological treatment of heresy within the framework of the anti-Hussite polemical campaign.

In the introduction to his book Hussitica: Zur Struktur einer Revolution, first published in 1965, Ferdinand Seibt expressed his astonishment that virtually no research into the late-medieval use of the term Hussite existed. “One can hardly understand why none of the numerous Hussite scholars took pains to do this,” he commented. However astonishing this may have been, Seibt’s own four pages on the origins of the term Hussite remain to my knowledge the sole treatment of this subject. Seibt had his only predecessor in Johann Loserth’s book on Hus and Wyclif, published in 1884. Loserth, well known as the editor of multiple volumes within the Wyclif Society’s series of the Latin Works, first collected evidence for what Hus and his followers were called. By showing that contemporaries spoke about the Wycliffites in Bohemia, Loserth wanted to confirm his key thesis, namely that there was nothing original in Hus but paraphrases of, or direct copying from, Wyclif. Seibt rejected this approach and offered his own interpretation, which rested on the evidence gained from the two volumes of letters from the Hussite wars published by František Palacký as Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hussitenkrieges. According to Seibt, the term Hussite first appeared during Hus’s trial at Constance, and from that moment on, it dominated in theological discourse as well as in the usage of the papal curia. Its German version, die Hussen, was coined by the Nuremberg chancery, whereas North German towns preferred the word ketzer (heretics), and the imperial chancery under Sigismund of Luxemburg insisted on the term Wycliffites. In the Latin usage of church authorities, the label Hussites remained in exclusive use until it was displaced by the neutral appellation Bohemians, which prevailed at the time of the Council of Basel in the early 1430s.

New evidence that has become available since Seibt’s book makes it possible to revise his conclusions. In an attempt to do so, I shall examine what terms were used for the heretics of Bohemia in the first third of the fifteenth century. First, I shall focus on the early evidence from the Prague prosecution
of Wyclifism and the Constance condemnation of Wyclif, Hus, and their followers. Then I shall trace subsequent developments and tendencies in assigning different names to Bohemian dissenters. In order to identify the agents of these developments, I will combine papal documents from the pontificate of Martin V with evidence gained from a survey of theological polemics against the Hussites.

“Can it be that Wyclif was crucified for us, or that we were baptized in his name?,” asked Andrew of Brod, doctor of theology in Prague, in his letter to Jan Hus in 1414. Andrew was complaining about the religious split in Bohemia. “Look, venerable master: charity tends to unity. What should we say to this, if there are such dissensions and schisms between us, that this one is called Johannite, that one Wycliffite and the others Mohammedans, and Christ is divided?” Andrew obviously preferred to be called a Christian and nothing else. After pointing out that he was neither baptized nor could he be saved in the name of Wyclif, he added: “I thank my God that his [i.e., Wyclif’s] opinions never entered my heart.” Still, his resentment toward naming opposing religious groups changed nothing about the fact that it was a common practice in Bohemia. Andrew’s phrase “ille Johannita, iste Wyclifista, ceterique Machometiste nunccupentur” gives three interesting examples. Whereas the expression Johannita remains difficult to interpret, the other two terms are well attested in other sources as names used by both the opponents and the adherents of Jan Hus to denote their respective adversaries.

In one of his writings, Jan Hus noted that he considered the term Wycliffite offensive. On another occasion, he proclaimed: “I accept everything that Wyclif had right, not because it is Wyclif’s truth, but because it is Christ’s truth.” In Constance, Hus said that Wyclif was neither his father nor was he a Czech, and added: “If Wyclif disseminated any errors, the English should see to it”. By that time, however, the Wycliffite affiliation of Hus’s teaching was already in the spotlight. A list of forty-five Wycliffite articles was condemned at Prague University in 1403. Five years later, the term Wycliffite first emerged in the extant sources. The diocesan synod of June 1408 condemned “some Wycliffites [Wiklephiste] who hold wrong belief about the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This statute was aimed at Hus’s teacher, master Stanislav of Znojmo. The next complaint from the same year aimed directly at Hus. The Prague cler-
The Waning of the “Wycliffites”

...gy’s denunciation of Hus’s preaching asserted that the Kingdom of Bohemia was considered heretical by Rome “because of some erring people and Wycliffites [propter erroneos et Wyclefi stas].” Bohemia’s heretical fame indeed spread abroad. In 1410, the Viennese ecclesiastical authorities prosecuted Hus’s friend Jerome of Prague, accusing him of “Wiclefiana haeresis.”

While this early evidence from outside Bohemia shows certain morphological instability, soon the form Wiclefista became common in written records. At approximately the same time the Czech priest John Korvík complained to the archbishop of Prague that anyone who voiced any critique of clerical behavior was arrested and “immediately called a Wycliffite and heretic [Wikleffi sta et hereticus appelatur].” In 1413, Jan Hus complained in the same way about his former colleagues who became his adversaries: “Páleč calls us Wycliffites [Wiclefistas], as if we are deviant in the entire Christian faith; and Stanislav calls us infidels, treacherous, insane and cursed clergy.”

To the Council of Constance, Jan Hus’s relationship to Wycliffism was clear. On 6 July 1415, the Council condemned Hus to death as “a disciple not of Christ, but rather of the heresiarch John Wyclif.” In 1416, Jerome of Prague was condemned as a follower of both Wyclif and Hus. The council, however, avoided any collective terms and named only the persons, books, and doctrines of Wyclif and Hus. Only after Hus’s death at the stake did the council began to use the collective label the Wycliffites. In the summer of 1415, one letter mentions “pravitatis Wicleficae vitium,” and a week later “secta haeresum Wiclefi starum” appears. In the fall of 1415, the term Hussite is used for the first time in private correspondence from Constance. While the adherence of the leading Bohemian nobleman Čeněk of Vartenberk to the “Wycliffites” (cum Wiclefistas) is asserted in this report, the convention of the Catholic nobility with the archbishop is said to have been aimed “against the Hussites [contra Hussitas].” In 1416, the anonymous accusations against the king and queen of Bohemia, which also originated at Constance, reproached them for supporting “haeresis Husitarum et Wiclefistarum.” Two letters of the Council of Constance from 10 June 1416 employ the whole range of terminology used so far. They mention the “damned doctrine of John Wyclif, which was blindly followed by the late Jan Hus and Jerome”; they speak of the “doctrine of the Wycliffites” and finally of “that sect of the Wycliffites and Hussites [Wiclefistarum atque Hussitarum].”
The question arises whether the emergence of the new term Hussite reflected a change in perception or in assessment of the Bohemian heresy. It is possible that the council gradually came to realize that the heterodox doctrines in Bohemia could not be entirely reduced to Wycliffism. For instance, the practice of communion under both kinds (now called Utraquism), which was condemned by the same council even before Jan Hus was burned at the stake, had little to do with Wyclif’s doctrine. In the years and decades to follow, the Hussites developed their beliefs and practices further, thus giving the outside world a sign that their doctrine was not necessarily identical with Wycliffism. In 1429 a public debate took place in Bohemia between two Hussite masters, John Příbram and Peter Payne, to decide if Wyclif’s thoughts were true or erroneous. Was this emancipation from Wyclif reflected upon by the Roman Church?

We have at our disposal a coherent set of data that makes it possible to address this question. The published documents of the papal archives reveal the vocabulary used at the Roman curia in the years following the Council of Constance. From the 2256 documents edited in the seventh volume of the *Monumenta Vaticana res gestas Bohemicas illustrantia* (hereafter *MVB*) which covers the pontificate of Martin V, 201 documents mention the Bohemian heresy or heretics. Put into a chart (see Figure 8-1), these data suggest that the church modified its language during the 1420s. The horizontal axis displays the years of the pontificate of Martin V; the vertical axis displays individual terms used. These are arranged from less to more specific or technical terms. The two bottom lines represent expressions where personal names are used: the first gathers evidence for the expression “heresy (error, sect etc.) of Wyclif,” the second analogically the heresy “of Wyclif and Hus.” Toward the top, collective names are displayed, starting with “the Wycliffites” (*Wiclefiste* and other orthographic variants, morphing as far as *Euclifiste* [*MVB* 7:946]). What follows in the chart is the twin designator of “the Wycliffites and the Hussites” (as such or with a preceding *secta, error* or similar), with the reversed form (“the Hussites and the Wycliffites”) displayed above the line. The next line shows the evidence for the exclusive label “the Hussites” (*Hussite* or, much less often, *Husiste* [e.g., *MVB* 7:823, 1114, 1715]) with no appended reference to Wycliffism. The upper line represents the term *Bohemian heretics* (*heretici in Bohemia* and similar), which—as we shall see—seems to be a sort of technical term.
In Figure 8-1, a diagonal tendency from bottom left to top right is apparent. It can be inferred that the older practice of referring to a heresy with the name of its originator was abandoned by the papal chancery as it appropriated the emerging collective names, with the term *Wycliffites* being gradually replaced by the term *Hussites*. However, before drawing conclusions concerning the agency of such development, a closer look at the nature of the sources is desirable. The evidence summarized in Figure 8-1 breaks down into two main types of document: papal letters proper, and other supplications submitted to the curia by clergy (or sometimes by lay persons) from the provinces located within the territory of the Bohemian Crown. In these supplications, clerics typically asked to be relieved from the duty of residence because their church was occupied by the Hussites, or to be able to hold multiple benefices, as one of them brings no revenue due to the heretics. If we distinguish between these two types, we see that the promoter of the change in vocabulary was not always the papal curia.

The label “secta Wyclif et Hus” was inherited from rhetoric that circulated at the time of Constance (when words like *errores, doctrina*, or *dogmata* were preferred to *secta*). Martin V used such expressions on February 22, 1418, when he confirmed the Constance condemnations and introduced the inquisition against the Hussites (*MVB 7:217–218*). It is true that this usage was largely abandoned by the curia by 1419. But the term *Wycliffites*, which gradually replaced the older expression, was not introduced by the curia but brought from the lands of the Bohemian Crown. We have seen that in Prague it was current from 1408 on. The papal chancery used it in September 1413 in an absolution of Prague Carmelites who
had incurred excommunication for holding services under interdict (MVB 6:860). In the registers of Martin V, the word first appears in a supplication submitted by Stephen of Páleč in May 1418, and thus still in Constance (MVB 7:306). More supplications followed in 1420–1421, but it was only in 1422 that the papal administration itself employed the term Wycliffites (MVB 7:904 and 946). By early 1424, the term disappears even in supplications; it returns only in two documents from 1426–1428 (MVB 7:1688, 1939). Even before that, on 1 March 1420, the Pope used the twin expression “Wycliffites and Hussites” when he proclaimed the first crusade against Bohemia (MVB 7:569). This same expression was subsequently used in the context of anti-Hussite campaigns, above all on the occasion of appointing legates, giving them instructions, organizing the prosecution of heretics and fundraising.

The practice of referring to the Bohemian heretics with the single word Hussites was clearly brought to Rome from the province. An early piece of evidence dates to July 1419 (MVB 7:472). From 1421 on, documents in which this term was used were submitted to the curia in considerable numbers. The papacy, on the contrary, used it only exceptionally, such as when appointing Nicholas of Dinkelsbühl as a crusading preacher in 1427 (MVB 7:1715). Otherwise the evidence comes either from letters of grace granted in response to supplications,29 or from special sources such as abjurations of heresy (MVB 7:1928, 1985). By contrast, the term Bohemian heretics was introduced by the papal curia in 1422–1423 in a number of letters, the first of which, from 13 February 1422, absolved from war crimes the participants in anti-Hussite crusades. A series of letters followed in April through May of the same year which aimed to amass resources in the Baltic for the war on Bohemian heretics (MVB 7:937, 949–950, 962–964). Subsequently, expressions like “heretici in regno Bohemie” were used as technical terms in all kinds of letters concerning the war against the heretics, be it crusading bulls or diplomatic correspondence with princes who were supposed to be waging such war. Perhaps a diplomatic tradition of crusading letters played a role here.30

Naturally, these general trends in terminology do not imply any absolutely uniform usage. In individual cases, we can even find contradictory evidence. For instance, in September 1421, the Carmelites exiled from the New Town of Prague asked for a concession to establish a house in a new place, to be relieved from chancery fees, and to be allowed to profit from
indulgences (MVB 7:795, 797, 800). In the three supplications they submitted within nine days, they first spoke of “perfida secta Husitarum,” then of “malediccionis alumni Hussite heretici,” and finally of “malediccionis alumni Vicleviste heretici.” When asking for a new benefice, the parish priest Matthias Kučka explained that his church was burned down by the “Hussites” and suggested he could take over another parish, the priest of which had joined the “Wycliffites.” In reply to this, a letter was issued mentioning the “secta Husistarum et Wiclevistarum” (MVB 7:806–807). Most often, the papal chancery adopted the terms used by the petitioner when responding to a supplication.31 This is how new terms leaked into curial usage. There is even evidence that the writers in the chancery were aware of the extraneous origin of some terms and kept a certain distance from such vocabulary. When first using the term Wycliffite, the curia under John XXIII noted that it was common people’s language: “Wiclefiste vulgariter nuncupantur” (MVB 6:860). And as late as 1429, the chancery of Martin V spoke about the damages caused “per hereticos . . . Hussitas vulgariter nuncupatos” (MVB 7:2078). To summarize: Except for the expression heretici in Bohemia, all of the developments in antiheretical language (e.g., the replacement of multiword circumlocutions with one-word collective names, the employment of the neologism Hussite, etc.) were introduced as a reaction by the papacy to the usage preferred by the local clergy in Central Europe.

To discover a possible source for these developments, let us look at the language used in theological polemics against the Hussites. The preliminary data from a running inventory of anti-Hussite literature allow us to work with a total of some 230 treatises from the first four decades of the fifteenth century.32 Not all treatises could have been taken into account for this study, as many of them are unpublished and their full texts remain inaccessible. Moreover, a number of works cannot be dated with sufficient precision, which makes them unsuitable for statistical processing. In some instances, it is impossible to determine if the term used in the title of the tract comes from the author of the text, or rather from a later scribe (or even a modern editor or cataloguer). In Figure 8-2, which summarizes the terminology used in polemical works, the evidence gained from headings is displayed separately in the top section of each column where applicable.33 So far, data from 140 treatises have been collected. For statistical purposes,
I divide the period in question into eight time spans. The first covers the early Eucharistic polemics from 1406 to 1407, when the doctrine of remanence was the main controversial topic. In the next period, circa 1407 to 1411, other Wycliffite teachings were also debated. From 1412 to 1414, the concept of the church became the major topic in the debate. The practice of Utraquism, introduced in 1414, condemned by the Council of Constance in 1415, yet further discussed in 1417 and beyond, attracted most of the attention in the following period. In 1420, the proclamation of the Hussites’ program in the form of the Four Articles of Prague opened a new chapter of the controversy. While the Hussite wars continued, the production of polemic slackened somewhat in the second half of the 1420s. Yet from 1430 to 1432, the debate was revived thanks to the Taborite manifesto, which circulated widely in Europe, and also thanks to the preparations for the Council of Basel. The disputation between the council representatives and the Hussites at Basel in 1433 and the subsequent negotiations including debates about the Compactata treaty of 1436 closed the first phase of the Hussite controversy.34

In many polemical works, no specific term for the opponent was needed. The argumentation was aimed against certain opinions that were at most described as heretical, or against a certain author who was identified by proper name or described with words like adversarius or opponens. At the early stage of the polemic, the Carthusian prior Stephen of Dolany’s expressive treatises stood out for their rhetorical characterizations of opponents.35

In one dialogic fiction, Stephen addressed Wyclif (“auscula, Wikleff, et considera, erubesce et confundere”) or Hus (“O Husska care”; “reverte,
Huska Magister”—hůška is the diminutive of the Old Czech word hus, meaning “goose”). In another of his writings, Stephen called Wyclif a “superheretic.” The most frequent of the collective names were, unsurprisingly, Wycliffites, Hussites, and Bohemians. The term Wycliffites emerged around 1408, albeit in manuscript headings, which may have been added later to the texts. In the same year, Master John of Rakovník warned Hus that through his advocacy of Wyclif he was losing not only his own words but also his name: “Iam propria cum iunctis perdidistis vocabula, a Wykleff suscepistis cognomen.” In 1411, a foreign author, Dietrich of Niem, spoke about Bohemian Wycliffites. In the Prague debate of 1412–1414, the expression was already common usage, especially in the ecclesiological polemics of Stephen Páleč and Stephen of Dolany. The former explained in his Antihus why he called Hus and the likes of him Wycliffites: “You and your co-apostles have advocated and today advocate the pestiferous Wyclif . . . therefore you are deservedly called patrons of Wyclif and thus Wycliffites [patroni Wykleff et sic Wykleffi ste appellamini].”

At the same time (in 1413), Andrew of Brod—the same man who complained about assigning names, as was quoted above—used the term Hussonitae. The form Hussitae had to wait for Stephen of Dolany to be used in polemical literature. In his 1414 Dialogus volatilis, Stephen spoke about the “Wycliffites and modern-day Hussites,” presenting the Hussites as Wyclif’s disciples. He also played with the signification of the name Hus and created the Latin term aucarii, which he used alongside the term Wycliffites. In 1417, he used the word Hussitae in his polemical letters.

In the second half of the 1410s, the word Wycliffites began slowly to wane in preference for Hussites, although the former was still used by authors in both Bohemia and Constance. In 1420, the Hussite factions agreed on a common program of the so-called Four Articles and began to disseminate it, together with brief theological substantiation, in the form of manifestos within Bohemia and abroad. In the first reactions to the Four Articles, the term Hussitae prevailed, and it remained the most frequent name until the end of the period in question. Initially, it seems to have been preferred by authors outside of Bohemia, while Bohemian authors or those from neighboring lands still spoke about the “Wycliffites.” In the latter part of the 1420s, the term Wycliffites largely disappeared from the debate. The Englishman Thomas Netter was one of only a few to apply it to Prague heretics. This was in accord with his polemical agenda: Netter insisted on the
homogeneity of Wycliffite heresy, and its broad international impact confirmed how dangerous it was. At the time of the council of Basel, however, the term Wycliffites was almost completely out of use.

In contrast, the suspension of the hitherto thriving term the Hussites was sudden and had clearly political causes. It was deliberately abandoned by the representatives of the Council of Basel in order to facilitate communication with Bohemia. During the solemn disputation of the two parties at Basel, the labels “Hussites” and “heretics” were avoided and the somewhat neutral term Bohemians was used in their stead. Significantly, the only author of theological polemics in this period to employ the expression “haereticus Hussita” was the Camaldulensian John Jerome of Prague—himsel a Bohemian, yet not a Hussite. Theological opponents had been on occasion described as Bohemians since the later 1410s—in those times usually as “heretics from Bohemia.” This can be understood as a term situating the particular heresy geographically, like when Gerson wrote about “haereses in Bohemia” and “apud Bohemos.” A little later, some authors may have used it to emphasize the fact that they visited the heretical country personally: Martin Talayero experienced the “perfidia hereticorum de Boemia” during the first crusade; Johannes of Frankfurt participated in the second crusade and refuted Hussite teachings with the exclamation “ostulte Boheme!” In 1430, we see quite the opposite: authors from distant regions who grasped the pen against the Taborite manifesto perceived the general geographical designation (“Bohemians”) as a sufficient identifier. In 1432, during the theologians’ preparations for the Basel disputation with the Hussites, political correctness brought the term Bohemians to the fore—in this case without the annexed “heretics.” At the same time, however, some of the authors involved, prominently Heinrich Kalteisen, still stuck to the term Hussites. When this term was abandoned out of precaution, factual emphasis on the opposing person or idea replaced it, a practice that had almost disappeared after 1421.

In addition to the expressions just mentioned, other terms were occasionally used in polemical tracts. In the most hostile writings, we find a whole range of figurative names derived from medieval antitheretical imagery (such as disease, plague, weed, venom, beasts, foxes, fools). Besides these, some authors came up with quite original expressions. In the debate of 1412–1414, the polemicists developed the term quidamista, mocking the
frequent unspecific references to opponents on either side as “quidam.” Stephen of Dolany’s neologism “aucarii” has already been mentioned. Hus’s name of course gave birth to a collective designator for heretics, but his was not alone: Johannes Hoffmann, writing a polemic against communion under both kinds in 1421, made a reference to the originator of Utraquism, Jacob (Jakoubek) of Stříbro, and called the Utraquists “Jacobitae.” The same term appears in Johannes Nider’s refutation of the Taborite manifesto; and as late as 1452, Nicholas of Cusa spoke about “iacobelliani.”

Some authors were even able to distinguish between the Hussite parties. The wide range of names Johannes Hoffmann used in his treatise included “Wiccleffistae,” “Hussitae,” “Jacobitae,” and also “Pragenses.” In 1430, he was able to name three Hussite factions: “alius Thaborita, alius Orphanus, alius Pragensis.” Thomas Netter, too, was able to name the Orphans and the Taborites in addition to Prague Wycliffites. Martin Talayero noted the lack of concord between the Hussite groups already in 1421 when he said that “the Taborites hereticate the Praguers and vice versa.” Nider’s expression “Iacobite inter Hussitas” also signals an awareness of factions within Hussitism. Heinrich Kalteisen showed similar knowledge of the Hussite question when he spoke about the “sects” in Bohemia in his Avisamentum. Andrew of Regensburg managed to distinguish five Hussite factions in his Dialogue: “quidam vocantur Pragenses, quidam equestres, quidam Thaborite, quidam orphani, quidam populares.” The name Pragenses appears more often in the sources, yet it does not always necessarily refer to a Hussite party. In the 1415 Estote sine offensione, the expression “per quosdam Pragenses” indicates the geographical theater and is equivalent to phrases like “hodie in Praga quidam.” At the time of the first crusade, some authors of responses to the Hussite program spoke about “illos de Praga” simply because they received the articles in question from that particular city.

Geoffrey of Montchoisi, abbot of Lérins in France, suggested that the Bohemian heretics should be called not only “Hussiste” but also “Julianiste” after the emperor Julian the Apostate. Geoffrey then used the apostrophe “Boeme, Julianista, Apostolice, Hussista, heretice.” Integration of Hussitism in the history of Christian heresies was a widespread strategy. The Disputatio contra communionem plebis sub utraque specie spoke about Bohemian followers of Nestorius and Pelagius. The connection between Hussitism and earlier heresies was inferred by other authors as well. George
of Bor, listing reasons for excommunication, included subscription to an existing, already condemned, heresy such as that of the “Arians, Nestorians, Manicheans, and Wycliffites,” as well as fabricating a new heresy. He was not explicit about the question of whether Hussitism belonged to the latter category, or whether it was just a variant of the old error of Wyclif.

An anonymous author wrote a short treatise on heresies, preserved in a manuscript now in Wrocław. He included a chapter titled “De heresi Wiclevistarum et Hussitarum et de comparacione illius heresis ad alias.” In it, he mentioned a number of historical sects comparable to the “heresis Bohemorum,” yet insisted that “this pestiferous heresy took its origin from a certain Englishman, Wyclif.”

Another manuscript now in New York’s Morgan Library contains a copy of Augustine’s *De haeresibus* (PL 42:21–50) supplemented with three additional chapters: on the Nestorians, the Eutychians and the Hussites. “Hussitę a quodam Bohemo Pragensis ciuitatis eiusdem prouincię presbitero nomen est, qui Johannes Hijs dicebatur,” we read. The anonymous Carthusian author gives brief information about the immolation of Hus and Jerome at Constance, as well as about the major “blasphemies” of the Hussites, and he recalls the destruction of the charter-house near Prague. The scribe, however, perceived the need to mention John Wyclif as the originator of the Hussite heresy at least in the table of contents.

The chronicler Andrew of Regensburg explained the origins of the Hussites as follows: “The Hussites [Hussiste] are named after a certain Bohemian Jan Hus. . . . This Jan Hus was an imitator of the pestilential and damned dogma of an Englishman who was called John Wyclif, which means ‘wicked life’ [mala vita].”

Other authors showed a more differentiated approach. They insisted on the Hussites’ Wycliffite affiliation at certain points where it appeared appropriate. The time when the terms Hussites and Wycliffites were used as equivalents (such as in Andrew Escobar’s “Hussisse seu Viclevisse in Bohemia”) had passed. Even if some authors argued against the Utraquism of the “Wycliffites,” they were aware that the lay chalice was not an idea of Wyclif’s, but an independent intellectual development of his Bohemian adherents. This is especially true of the authors who refuted the Taborite manifesto of 1430. They mostly called their adversaries simply “Hussites,” not bothering themselves with distinguishing the Taborite faction. They knew about the Wycliffite origin of certain ideas. The Dominican Johannes
Nider, for example, reminded his readers that Hus was a disciple of the heresiarch Wyclif (“Wickliff heresiarcha et Husso suus discipulus”). Nevertheless, he spoke about the “Wycliffites” specifically in connection with transubstantiation. Nicholas of Jawór spoke about the “school of Wyclif” when it came to the polemic against the mendicants: “in the school of that greatest heretic, the Englishman Wyclif, who was exhumed after his death and incinerated because of his heresy, they [i.e., the Hussites] learned that all religious orders were illicit.” Similarly, the Viennese theologians who refuted the manifesto called Wyclif a “patron” of the Hussites because he inspired their call for the dissolution of religious orders. Indeed, it seems that by this time, authors who specialized in anti-Hussite polemics arrived at a more balanced view of the Bohemian heresy. They classified certain tenets as Wycliffite, such as the Eucharistic doctrine of remanence or the opposition to the mendicant orders, but at the same time they acknowledged the doctrinal discreteness of Hussitism by refraining from calling the Bohemian heretics “Wycliffites,” but giving them a unique, independent name.

This survey of names given to the Bohemian heretics in the first third of the fifteenth century has rendered a dynamic picture of a relatively wide range of expressions in use. The evidence used here stems from both institutional and individual usage. Documents issued by the Council of Constance and the papal chancery are joined by a number of other sources: supplications sent to Rome, but also theological treatises. These scholarly polemical texts originated in various local contexts and cannot be seen as official statements of the Roman church. Avoiding thus the “inquisitorial” perspective of one single kind of evidence, this study aims to show how the interplay between institutional and individual linguistic choices generated a number of designators for Central European dissenters. In contrast to the variety of names applied from the outside, members of the hereticated party did not go much beyond calling themselves “the faithful” or similar. Ferdinand Seibt was right when he pointed out that the Bohemian heretics did not use a technical term that would embrace them all. Would it be appropriate to say that it was the language employed by the Roman Church that made Hussitism exist? In a certain sense it would. Terminology used by the clergy involved in fighting the Hussite heresy implied exclusion and
coherence—exclusion from the universal church that the Hussites never intended, and a coherence to the Hussite movement that never existed. On the other hand, we need not push the constructivist argument too far. All the internal divisions and quarrels notwithstanding, the Hussites were able to show unity when needed. They defended themselves in joint military ventures against the crusaders, and they negotiated collectively on a high theological level with the Council of Basel. Therefore, it was natural that they were being given one specific collective name, even though they did not come up with one themselves.

With their common program of the Four Articles, the Hussites were even able to shape the debate with Catholic theologians. Thus, their opponents had a good reason to search for an umbrella term for all Hussite factions. Nevertheless, the church struggled somewhat to find a fitting technical name for the heretics in Bohemia. The inference that Jan Hus and his followers were mere disciples of Wyclif gave rise to the term *Wiclefistae*; both the concept and (a little later) the term were adopted by the Council of Constance. Only gradually the word “Wycliffite” was displaced by the term *Hussite*. When using both terms coupled together, the authorities did not necessarily show their uncertainty about the subject, but possibly instead a juridical caution which recommended condemning the widest range of errors possible. A certain terminological persistence also played a role, especially when the papal curia insisted on the expression “heretics of Bohemia” specifically in a crusading context.

The assumption of earlier scholarship that the church coined and almost exclusively used the term *Hussitae* proves to be wrong. The move toward the word *Hussite* was a gradual one, and was driven by local usage, as the supplications submitted to Rome show. Where was the source and driver of this linguistic development? The evidence presented here suggests that it may be found in the anti-Hussite polemics. Very early on, the terms *Hussonitae* as well as *Hussitae* emerged in polemical writings. The publication of the Four Articles in 1420 aroused a wave of polemical reactions, most of which used the term *Hussites*. This was one to two years before the same term began to dominate the supplications to Rome, which in turn influenced the official usage of the church. Shortly before the Council of Basel, the neutral term *Bohemians* appeared more often in the polemics against the Taborite manifesto as well as in the preconciliar discussion. When the Basel fathers ended the period of crusades and started negotiation, they
used precisely this term (*Bohemi*) in their communication with the Hussites. The assiduous polemical activity delivered more and more information about Hussitism and thus provoked shifts and alterations in naming the Hussite heresy. We can assume that it was an achievement of inventive and diligent Hussite propaganda. By disseminating their beliefs, the Hussites eventually achieved the extrication from the term *Wycliffites* and earned their own independent label. Ironically, when this label was at the peak of its use, it was dismissed again. In 1432, the council’s envoys to Bohemia wrote in a letter to Basel: “It seems expedient that the Bohemians are not called ‘Hussites’ in conciliar letters for they feel much ashamed by this. They should be called ‘Bohemi’ in order not to tease them.”

While the introduction of the term *Hussitae* was a side effect of Hussite propaganda, the Hussites themselves were not happy about it.

**APPENDIX: SOURCES FOR FIGURE 8-2**

**A. Remanence, 1403–1407**


**B. Wyclifism, 1407–1411**

*No name:* Disputacio contra duplicem posicionem magistri Hieronymi de Praga, in Šmahel and Silagi, *Hieronymi de Praga Quaestiones*, 265–271.


C. Ecclesiology, 1412–1414


Ad personam: George of Bor, Consilium contra Hus: “M. J. Hus cum suis complicibus,” in Palacký, Documenta, 502; Stephen of Dolany, Antihuss:


**D. Utraquism and Constance, 1414–1419**


E. Four Articles, 1420–1424


Ad personam and Hussites: Stanislaw of Skarbimierz, Determinatio contra sub utraque specie communicantes: “sectatores Iohannis Hus et
Iohannis Wycklif; “cum Glossis nostris Hussitarum” (in a quote), in Włodek, *Scripta manent*, 146 and 150.


tarum (heading), in Girgensohn, *Peter von Pulkau*, 175; Simon of Tišnov, Tractatus de communione sub utraque . . . adversus Hussitas (heading), in Spunar, *Repertorium*, vol. 1, no. 961, 344.


**F. War Period, 1425–1430**


**G. Taborite Manifesto, 1430–1432**


**H. Council of Basel, 1433–1437**


Pavel Soukup


NOTES

This study was supported by a grant from the Czech Science Foundation (GA ČR) “Cultural Codes and Their Transformations in the Hussite Period” (P405/12/G148), realized at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

1. On Wyclif’s influence in Bohemia, see František Šmahel, “Wyclif’s Fortune


4. On the issues of modern terminology, see Phillip Haberkern, “What’s in a Name, or What’s at Stake When We Talk about ‘Hussites’?,” *History Compass* 9 (2011): 791–801, with further references.


10. Loserth, *Hus und Wiclif*, 88n1, concluded this expression was “identical with Hussite” (apparently he considered it derived from Hus’s first name). In Czech and German, however, the word is used for the Knights Hospitalers. While the order indeed played a role in the Prague religious controversy of 1412, the name “Johannitae” seems to date to a later period.


16. In 1413, for example, the University of Vienna used the words “Wycleffiste” or “Wycleffistica secta”: Novotný, Korespondence, nos. 168 and 171, 350–358.

17. Ibid., no. 167, 347.

18. Ibid., no. 63, 170. Páleč indeed spoke of “sententiae Wiclefistarum” in 1413: Palacký, Documenta, 508.


20. Palacký, Documenta, 572 and 578.


22. Ibid., 639–640.


26. See MVB 7. In the following text, references in parentheses are to document numbers in this edition.

27. See MVB 6, nos. 1073, 1093, 1095, 1096, 1097. Jan Hus’s name was added to that of John Wyclif in Constance after the former’s condemnation. Previously, the Pisan popes typically aimed at the “errores/libros Johannis Wicleff” (MVB 6, nos. 419, 754, 761, 946, 968). The “heresy of Wyclif” (with no mention of Hus) is invoked in the nomination of Giovanni Dominici as papal legate in July 1418 and in a supplication from May 1419 (where, however, the Bohemian followers of Wyclif are subsumed in the expression “Johannis Wikleff suorumque sequencium heresis”) and then disappear: MVB 7, nos. 325 and 431.

28. The evidence from after this date is a supplication from July 1420 and another two from September 1421 (MVB 7, nos. 644 and 809–810). The curia itself used the expression “haereses et errores Johannis Wikleft et Johannis Hus,” outdated as it was by that time, in June 1427 when giving the bishop of Bamberg the right to absolve heretics (MVB 7, no. 1817). This can be explained with the specific contents of this letter, which could have easily been reminiscent of the introduction of the anti-Wycliffite / anti-Hussite inquisition in Constance.

29. MVB 7, no. 823, responding to 806; 1053, responding to 1028; 2229, responding to 2227. In case of MVB 7, nos. 1808 and 2078, the respective supplications are not extant but can be supposed.

30. As far as crusading against heretics is concerned, the situation in the Albigensian war is revealing and analogical to that in the Hussite wars. Although the term Albigensis existed even before the crusaders reached the region, Innocent III and Honorius III continued to use the older and quite vague expression “the heretics of Provence” in crusade-related documents: Daniel Power, “Who Went on the Albigensian Crusade?”, English Historical Review 128 (2013): 1070–1075 (with references to the sources and a brief summary of the previous scholarship). The crusading letters against the Muslims from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries used specific ethnic or geographic names such as “Turci, Egypti, Persae,” usually accompanied by a range of hostile expressions: see Ursula Schwerin, Die Aufrufe der Päpste zur Befreiung des Heiligen Landes von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang Innozenz IV. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der kurialen Kreuzzugspropaganda und der päpstlichen Epistolographie (Berlin: Ebering, 1937), 53–57.

31. To mention one exception: when the town of Jihlava asked for permission to turn the synagogue into a chapel in 1427, they mentioned the devastation of churches through the Hussites; the response avoided this specific term and spoke just about heretics; see MVB 7, nos. 1710–1711.


33. I disregard the heading when the text is available and contains terms different from the title.
34. The evidence underlying Figure 8-2 is summarized in the appendix. In cases where one treatise employs two or three relevant terms, it is counted as half or a third for each applicable category (e.g., if a treatise uses “Hussite” in one place and “Wycliffite” in another, it is counted as half a point in the column “Wycliffite” and half a point in the column “Hussite”).


38. Novotný, Körespondence, no. 14, 45.


43. E.g., “in partem Wicleff et Hussitarum deditus,” ibid., col. 516; “secte illius Hussitarum,” ibid., col. 520.


47. This was the case with Geoffrey of Montchoisi or the anonymous Cambridge theologian: Augustin Neumann, “Francouzská husitica II,” Studie a texty k náboženským dějinám českým 4, nos. 3–4 (1925): 62; Jaroslav Prokeš, “Táborské...
manifesty z r. 1430 a 1431. Příspevek k politice Prokopa Velikého,” Časopis Matice moravské 52 (1928): 32.


49. See Coufal, Polemika, 21 (with references).


56. This is the case with two “Responsiones” to the Four Articles. See Pavel Soukup, “Zur Verbreitung theologischer Streitschriften im 15. Jahrhundert. Eine antihuussitische Sammelhandschrift aus der Erfurter Kartause,” Studia mediaevalia Bohemica 1 (2009): 246, and Coufal, Polemika, 141. On the other hand, from a remote perspective the name of the city of Prague could represent the entire Hussite movement, as it is, for instance, in French and Burgundian chronicles and other texts. See Jaroslav Svátek, “Pohled zvnějšku: husité a cizina,” in Husitské století, ed. Pavlina Germanová, Robert Novotný and Pavel Soukup (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2014), 395.


59. Sedlák, Miscellanea, 234.

60. “Ortum autem habuit hec pestifera heresis a quodam Wicleff Angloico.” Wrocław, Biblioteka uniwersytecka, MS. Mil. II 25 (6078), fols. 235r–243v, quotes fols. 235v–236r. Most of the information provided on the Husssite and Wycliffite heresy is a simple reproduction of the respective articles condemned in Constance.


65. Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, MS. E I 9, fols. 414va and 408vb.

66. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. theol. lat. fol. 672, fol. 254r: “in scola illius maximi heretici Wykleff Anglici, propter heresim post mortem eius diu exhumati et conbusti, didicerunt ordines religionum omnium esse illicitos.”

67. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 4268, fol. 65v.

68. Seibt, Hussitica, 14.

69. Analogically, the emergence of Protestantism as a discrete confession was also induced by opposition. See Dorothea Wendebourg, “Die Einheit der Reformation als historisches Problem,” in Reformationstheorien. Ein kirchenhistorischer Disput über Einheit und Vielfalt der Reformation, ed. Berndt Hamm, Bernd Moeller and Dorothea Wendebourg (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995), 34.