

passage devoted to this latter question, and the immediately following explicit rejection of Purgatory is merely part of the argument for a negative answer—the house of Christ has only three storeys, Hell, Earth, and Heaven, and those who have died are either in Hell, where prayers will not help them, or in Heaven, where they have no need of prayers. The authority here is Pseudo-Chrysostom,⁹⁴ one of Nicholas's favorites, but even this doctor must yield in importance to the Gospels, and the real theme of the tractate is contained in the following passage, still on the first page:⁹⁵

Neither the prophets, nor Christ with his apostles, nor the saints who immediately followed them, taught explicitly that we should pray for the dead, but rather carefully taught the people to live without sin and to be holy. Wherefore the Savior in his Sermon on the Mount taught his disciples and others of the crowd . . . about the strait gate and the broad way, saying (Mat. 7: 13-14): "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. How strait is the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Whence the saints had great confidence of being immediately saved, because they led a holy life in the present world; and so, undoubtedly, if men were to live well in the manner of the saints, they would reach the Fatherland [*patriam*: Heaven] immediately after death. For who does not know that the most secure way to life is to live as Christ and his apostles taught?

These are sentiments that animate virtually the whole corpus of Nicholas's work, but they are not peculiarly his: in fact all the elements of the above paragraph, except for the scriptural reference, appear in various parts of John Hus's sermon on the text, "Dixit Martha ad Iesum," preached on 3 November 1411.⁹⁶ Hus accepted the doctrine of Purgatory and of works for the dead presumed to be there, but he was concerned to show that a truly evangelical faith would not make much of such works, and he sharply attacked various superstitions and greedy practices involved in them, especially in funeral ceremonies, chantries, and the contracts for thirty masses for the dead. What Nicholas did was to take over Hus's criticisms, sometimes in large chunks, sometimes in fragmentary lines; passages in which Hus acknowledged the existence of Purgatory were by-passed or excised from the borrowed material.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *Opus imperfectum in Matthaum*, ed. Migne, *Patrologia graeca* 56: col. 817. Nicholas's attachment to this work is discussed by Bartoš, p. 143 ff.

⁹⁵ MS. Prague Univ. III G 8, f. 36.

⁹⁶ Ed. A. Schmidová (above, n. 81), pp. 172, 177, 177, 169, in that order.

⁹⁷ An example is offered in the text, below, *ad n.* 106. Many others could be cited, but none as charming as the following (Hus, p. 170; Nicholas, f. 39; the text is quoted from Hus, passages deleted by Nicholas are in italics): "O utinam sic faceremus nos sacerdotes, tunc enim non *solum* triginta missas propter pecuniam, sed quotidianas propter vitam eternam, spernentes mundum et sic mundi pecuniam in purgacionem omnium defunctorum fidelium missarem, denique non pactatio symoniaca nos percuteret. . . , doceret autem nos caritas et mentis sinceritas annunciare populo, quod quelibet missa [Nicholas

In the paragraph just quoted, four separate passages from different parts of Hus's sermon are put together to make up Nicholas's mosaic; elsewhere the pattern is even more intricate, and these cases suggest that we have here something more than just ordinary medieval borrowing: Nicholas took what must have been a good deal of trouble in order to use Hus, even though he certainly realized that the very work he was using contradicted his own.

His *modus operandi* becomes even more curious later on in the treatise. The borrowing from Hus in the first part is made without acknowledgment, and what must have been perfectly obvious to Hussite contemporaries has had to be rediscovered by modern scholarship, but elsewhere the appeal to Hussite consensus is more explicit. In a rather contrived fashion the demand for scriptural proofs of Purgatory is compared with the University of Prague's demand, in 1412, for similar proofs before it would agree to condemn the Forty-five Articles of John Wyclif; and the account of this episode is given in the very words used by John Huss, three years earlier.⁹⁸ Then, towards the end of the dialogue, when the orthodox protagonist, *M*, has chosen a procurator to carry on the argument, Nicholas's spokesman, *V*,^{98a} chooses a procurator of his own—Master John Hus! In fact, Hus's attack on John XXIII's indulgences is quoted, this time with due acknowledgment, to refute a point of the opposite side, and this passage leads into the most extraordinary twist of all: *M*'s procurator, now at a loss for arguments, resorts to a judicial process—he is indeed an inquisitor—and has Hus cited to the Council of Constance.⁹⁹ There follows a brief account of what happened to Hus there, including his martyrdom, which is thus presented, literarily, as consequent on his defense of *V*, in whose central position Hus did not in fact believe. Furthermore, the whole procedure in the tractate is tied in with the cause of utraquism: *V* chooses his procurator because he himself has no more time to argue—he is needed back home to give communion in both kinds and to administer other sacraments. Then, reflecting on Hus's death, *V* says that he is not surprised that the Council has done this to a saint of God, when it did not fear to condemn what it itself

inserts: que] agitur *pro defunctis, a qua etiam nullus in purgatorio excluditur, sed quod tantum sibi* [Nicholas: cui libet] proficit, quantum meruit hic in via [Nicholas: meruit et se disposuit]."

⁹⁸ MS. III G 8, f. 47'; see Novotný, *M. Jan Hus 2*: p. 125, n. 3.

^{98a} Sedlák, p. 40, understands *V* and *M* as "Viklefista" and "Machometista," and he cites a contemporary writer who interpreted the initials similarly; Bartoš, p. 139, opts for "Veritas" and "Mendacium" (in n. 77 he erroneously gives Sedlák's conjecture as "Vita" and "Mors"). There is no reason why both Sedlák and Bartoš cannot be right, although in favor of the latter it may be observed that "Viklefista" was usually used as a term of abuse by the Catholics, not as a confession of allegiance by the Hussites.

⁹⁹ MS. III G 8, f. 64 sq.

recognized as Christ's own institution, the lay chalice. And he goes on to prophesy that the people will do God's will not only in this matter of utraquism but "in every truth inspired by the Spirit of God."¹⁰⁰ Thus, hardly a half-year after Hus's death, the martyr replaced the actual man, the symbol of evangelical anti-Romanism suppressed the living teacher, and the man who had steadfastly refused to embrace doctrinal extremities that would have separated him from the Roman Church was transmuted into the patron saint of endless sectarian innovations. In fact, at about the same time that Nicholas was composing his *Dialogus de purgatorio*, the Waldensianist extremism that he stood for was being put into practice by Hussites in South Bohemia and elsewhere, who rejected all works for the dead, along with other standard orthodox practices, and who drew the line between good and bad priests according to the attitude taken to Master John Hus.¹⁰¹

But if the foregoing paragraphs have suggested that Nicholas was a perhaps excessively cunning artist, they also show that he had good material to work with. The Benedictine monk, Paul de Vooght, has recently submitted Hus's "Dixit Martha" to careful scrutiny and has concluded that it is perfectly orthodox,¹⁰² but if we read it along with Nicholas's *Dialogus de purgatorio*, marking out the common passages, we are less impressed by its conservatism than by its radicalism. Thus Nicholas could begin the dialogue between *V* and *M*¹⁰³ by having *V* say, in Hus's words:¹⁰⁴

I wonder why it is that men of modern times are so concerned with suffrages for the dead, when in the whole of canonical Scripture the Spirit of the Lord has not expressly taught these things.

M replies with II Maccabees 12:43, the story of Judah's offering of money for the dead, but *V* counters, again using Hus, that this book is of the Apocrypha; since, of course, this fact is more important to *V* than to Hus, who had no objection to such offerings in principle, *V* must develop the point further by stipulating that the apocryphal books are not binding, only useful, and that anyway the passage in question refers not to the dead in Purgatory but to the dead in the limbo of the Fathers, which was subsequently emptied by Jesus. But *V* then goes on, with a mosaic from Hus:¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 65'.

¹⁰¹ *Documenta*, pp. 636-638; see my "Hussite Radicalism" (above, n. 22), p. 109 ff.

¹⁰² P. De Vooght, "La doctrine et les sources du sermon *Dixit Martha ad Jesum*," *Hussiana*, pp. 365-378; the verdict is pronounced on p. 377.

¹⁰³ The dialogue begins on f. 38, after three pages of preliminaries setting up the difference of opinion about Purgatory in terms of the "three-storey house" vs. the "four-storey house" (see above). *V* is introduced thus: "Aggrediatur aliquis ex parte tritege domus, et sit gracia exempli 'V', adversarium suum de quatrirstega domo, et sit 'M', in hac forma. . ."

¹⁰⁴ MS. III G 8, f. 38; Hus, p. 171 f.

¹⁰⁵ F. 38'; Hus, pp. 177, 172.

I cannot see any other cause why men of modern times are so concerned with suffrages for the dead, than men's evil life and, as a result, their lack of confidence. For this is why men have little confidence that they will enter the Fatherland immediately after death—because they live evilly in their present life. And the cause of this is seduction by the priests, which stems from avarice: the priests do not imitate the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, and carefully teach the people to live well, but they teach them to make abundant offerings, and set before them the hope of blessedness and speedy liberation from Purgatory.

What immediately follows this passage provides an excellent illustration of Nicholas's method: a few pages before the last-quoted sentence, Hus had argued that the best work in aid of the *ecclesia dormiens*—those in Purgatory—was the purification of the *ecclesia militans*, above all through preaching of the Gospel; for this reason Satan sought to suppress such preaching. Nicholas quotes the passage, with a few necessary changes, and makes it refer, simply, to what *V* has just said about living well; the passage is so exemplary that it may be quoted in the original:¹⁰⁶

Hus: Ex quo videtur, quod ewangelizacio sancta, sic—ut dicitur—disponens militantem ecclesiam, multum prestat suffragium ecclesie dormienti. Istud autem Sathan considerans maxime nititur ewangelizacionem extingwere et sophisticans tam sacerdotes quam simplices ducit utrosque in caribdim: clericos in avariciam per vendicionem triginta missarum de requiem et laycos in presumptuosam confidenciam et empcionem symoniacam earumdem.

Nicholas: Istud ergo Sathan considerans, maxime nititur extingwere euwangelizacionem verbi dei, que militantem ecclesiam disponit et multum suffragium prestat, et sophisticans tam sacerdotes quam simplices ducit utrosque in caribdim, clericos in avariciam per vendicionem triginta missarum de requiem, et laycos in presumptuosam confidenciam et emcionem symoniacam earumdem.

And yet, with all his sharp practice, Nicholas remains true to what is obviously Hus's main point. Conceding the existence of Purgatory, Hus has absolutely no interest in developing its cultic implications; quite the reverse, he wishes to reduce the prayers and works predicated on Purgatory's existence to a minimum, in order to foster a religious life based on the imitation of Christ. In pursuit of this aim he not only delivers the most savage attack on the institution of contractual masses for the dead—the thirty masses—but even skirts the edge of heresy by declaring that the masses of a sinful priest, although "valid," will not be pleasing to God and hence will hardly liberate souls from Purgatory.¹⁰⁷ He insists that Christ's sacrifice is the basis of all redemption and is perfectly sufficient to redeem all those needing purgation; in any case, no soul can receive more help after death than it has earned in

¹⁰⁶ F. 38'; Hus, p. 169.

¹⁰⁷ Hus, pp. 172, 174 f; cf. De Vooght, *op. cit.*, p. 376 f., where it is shown that Hus did not embrace the donatist heresy. Nicholas has the passage on f. 39' sq.

life.¹⁰⁸ Nicholas picks up these strains, at length and usually *ad verbum*; he leaves out all references to Purgatory, but in the end it does not matter: given the overriding interest in evangelical *conversacio* shared by Hus and Nicholas, the former's belief in Purgatory is just so much excess baggage that the latter is well rid of. Theologically this statement may be monstrous, historically and practically it is true, and it may be said that in terms of the logic of the Hussite reformation, considered in itself, Nicholas has betrayed Hus in order to reveal Hus's truth.

At the same time Nicholas's tractate is entirely in line with his own body of work and thought, and all of the key themes that we have examined in the previous discussion make their appearance here, often with references to this or that earlier work. Although much space is devoted to the mechanics of theological argument, with citations from Scriptures and the Fathers given, expounded, and where necessary distorted into the desired meaning, all according to scholastic ritual, we are never allowed to forget that the real point is the confrontation between the two churches and their respective spokesmen. *M* is indeed described as:¹⁰⁹

one of the plump priests and fat canons who had daily commemorations of the dead, for which indeed he visited churches . . . , said masses, and received much money, to support his carnal, luxurious life, his idle household, his horses and dogs . . . —to say nothing of his cooks, his mistresses, and his children.

He is surrounded by a crowd of others like him, all of them afraid that their snouts will be plucked from the trough by *V*'s teachings—"Non enim gratis facta est mencio de memoria defunctorum in canone misse!" Hence "from that day on, they planned to kill him": "Such a destroyer of the holy church deserves death, let us condemn him to death most foul!" [Sap. 2: 20]. *V* is duly impressed, in fact he is scared, but he comforts himself with evangelical precepts and remembers that Christ had to face just such a gang of simoniacs, fornicators, and brigands, whom indeed he threw out of the Temple. "They are not the Holy Church but the Congregation of Babylon and the Synagogue of Satan." For further details on the difference between the two, we are referred to the *Apologia*. If then we are told that masses for the dead were not the institution of Christ or the Primitive Church, but of the popes—the historical material is drawn from the *Flores*

temporum, which Nicholas had studied and used in his *Puncta*—we have no doubt about what inference should be drawn from this. Later on,¹¹⁰ when *M*'s procurator, an inquisitor belonging to one of the mendicant orders, observes that prayers for the dead are a "praiseworthy custom of the Church," *V* responds by calling the friar a "doctor of custom and present practice" rather than a doctor of law. We are here referred to the *Apologia* again, and we perforce recall its contrast between the Primitive Church, which observed the commands of Christ, and the modern Church, represented by the doctors of the Council of Constance, who explicitly exalted their own custom over those commands.

But all of these considerations—in fact the whole critique of works for the dead and of the clergy who hold to them—are in form an *accessus* to the theological issue, which is broached when *M* "plainly says" that to deny Purgatory and hold that souls after death either go straight to Heaven or straight to Hell is an error, including three others.¹¹¹ These are: (1) that no venial sin remains after this life; (2) that *pena* is remitted along with *culpa*; (3) that the suffrages of the Church are of no help to the dead. *V*'s responses serve to define what Nicholas has to say about the matter at hand and, in the process, to set forth his general and basic religious attitudes with a profundity he does not elsewhere attain; here, for the first time, he appears to us not as a mere critic of abuses, or as a mere partisan of a sloganized *ecclesia primitiva*, but as the preacher of a genuinely reformed religion. Even *V*'s preliminary remarks about the meaning of "error" have an interesting charge of deeper significance; he insists that nothing is an error, with regard to the faith, except what is against Holy Scripture, and he proposes that this be taken as judge: "Igitur iudicium eligamus nobis"¹¹²—the very formula that would appear twenty years later in the negotiations between the Hussites and the Council of Basel, and which would preside over the whole intra-Hussite debate in which Tabor developed its theology against Prague. There could indeed be no human judge in these ultimate issues, only a mortal struggle between two truths. It is at this point that Nicholas makes his only reference in the treatise to the Waldensians, a complaint that because of the false belief that Purgatory was a matter of the faith, "many have been burnt to death as unbelievers."¹¹³ The same

¹¹⁰ F. 59' sq.

¹¹¹ F. 47.

¹¹² F. 47.

¹¹³ F. 47': ". . . in presenti materia purgatorii sicut comuniter de eo loquuntur homines nonnulli et fere omnes, credulitatem dicunt esse necessariam et ponunt quasi fidem—quin ymo ut constat, multi voragini ignis ut increduli traditi sunt. . . ." In the *De iuramento*, ed. Sedlák, *Studie a texty* 1: p. 92, there is a similar reference, in regard to swearing oaths: "In primitiva enim ecclesia communiter fideles ruebant in gladio [Dan. xi, 33; cf. Table Nine, §8], sicut patet de martiribus; postea autem et maxime post dotacionem Constantini incipiebant ruere in flamma ignis, et multi, quia nolebant iurare vel quia ex toto

¹⁰⁸ Hus, p. 165 f.; the passages are also in his commentary on the Sentences, ed. Flajshans, *op. cit.*, pp. 716 f, 715; they are in Nicholas's work on f. 36', minus the one about the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice (cf. f. 51' for an equivalent).

¹⁰⁹ F. 43 sq. Earlier *V* had refuted one of *M*'s arguments and added an apology: "Maneat michi reverencia tua salva et amicitia ab antiquo contenta . . ." (f. 42); but it is not clear what the significance of the last phrase is, unless we suppose that Nicholas had once been a friend of someone who either was or became a prosperous prebendary, and that *V* and *M* were intended to designate Nicholas and his old friend, respectively. But there is no other reason to think this.