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The Apostolic Mirror of the Hussite Image

Introduction

Christ's disciples were men of their time and at the same time they were true men – with their weaknesses, temptations and sins. Chosen by the Saviour however, they eventually passed the test of faith and commitment. Spreading to evangelize and bring people of all the lands to God, they became role models for future generations of Christians. The Czech reformers of the late Middle Ages drew inspiration from the idealized example of the Apostles, but also saw themselves as their successors. In the 15th century it was Bohemia that – in their opinion – was chosen to bring people back to Christ, and renew the moral state of the primitive Church ('*ecclesia primitiva*').¹ It is worth seeing, in some abridgment, the specific fields of manifestation of the apostolic idea, as seen by the Bohemian reformers – the liturgical practice of *utraquism*, the peculiar debate over the role of Judas and the biblical pattern that embodied that milieu. The aim of the article is neither to compose a detailed case study, nor to enumerate each possible example of the pattern. It is rather, respecting the journal's current issue topic, to show the ways the Czech reformers of the Hussite origin referred to the

1. The Hussites were also men of their time. One of their strong opponents and a prominent figure of the conciliar movement – John Gerson also emphasized the role of the primitive Church, especially in explaining the scriptures and divine law. See: L. B. Pascoe, *Jean Gerson: The «ecclesia primitiva» and reform*, "Traditio" 30 (1974), pp. 380–381; 'Ecclesia primitiva' was a vivid concept in the ecclesiastical thought a long time before it was adopted by the radicals of the Czech reform, see: G. Olsen, *The idea of the 'ecclesia primitiva' in the writings of the twelfth-century canonists*, "Traditio" 25 (1969), pp. 61–86.

Apostolic model, how they formed their own image, reflecting the idea they built on reading the Scriptures. In order to achieve that effect, the article focuses on several examples from different periods of the Czech early reformation, bearing in mind, that each decade of the 15th century was different and the religious debate was also evolving. But taking all the differences into account one may bring to light the constant idea that was common for all the reformers, both radical and moderate, from the beginning of the period and its decline.

The problem of the Apostolic model for the Bohemian reformation is reflected in the academic literature usually as a result of researches conducted on some different topics or themes. It is clearly visible in the field of history of idea, especially its visualized forms. For example, Petr Hlaváček juxtaposed the Apostolic model and criticised clergy of the time analysing so called 'Jena Codex', which sums up the experience of the troubled reform movement in the 15th century.² But nearly every analysis of the Hussite thought contains such juxtaposition.³ Another type of academic references is associated with the argumentation of reformers — whether they were formed on the exegesis of the Scriptures or as a part of inner debates. The example of the Apostolic church or Apostles as a role model is often present.⁴

The Apostolic Example of the Last Supper

Among different demands of the Hussites one is most recognizable — giving communion under both kinds to all faithful Christians, not only those who belong to the clergy. The support of the practice of utraquism was based

2. P. Hlaváček, *The Servants of Antichrist: the Denouncement of Franciscans on the Utraquist (Hussite) Pictures in Jena Codex (Bohemia, Around 1490–1510)*, "IKON. Journal of Iconographic Studies" 3 (2010), pp. 239–242.
3. See f.e. M. Nodl, *Utravismus a Jednota bratrská na rozcestí. Dobový kontext náboženské konverze Jana Augusty*, in: „Marginalia Historica“, v. 4, Praha-Litomyšl 2001, p. 141.
4. Cf. S. Bylina, *Hussitica*, Warszawa 2007, p. 123; P. Kras, *Husyci w piętnastowiecznej Polsce*, Lublin 1998, pp. 166–167; A. Molnár recalls the Hussite efforts to reconstruct the image of the early Church: A. Molnár, *The Ideological Significance of Hussitism, "Communio Viatorum"* 31 (1988), pp. 114–116; also: A. Molnár, *Die Funktion der Kirche in der böhmischen Reformation, „Communio Viatorum"* 17 (1974), pp. 20–21; and many others.

on the biblical ground, but also on the tradition.⁵ The roots of renewal of so called "lay chalice" were difficult to trace and there were several theories among the researches over a long period of academic disputes. One of them traced the origin back to the times of Cyril and Methodius – recognized as the apostles of the Central Europe and was popular for some time.⁶ However, it was strongly questioned by Helena Krmíčková, who after an analysis of the sources rejected the Cyrilomethodian theory.⁷

Nevertheless, the reformers not only tried to show and express the long tradition of the practices, but were zealous to stress on its apostolic foundation. They noticed, that it was a common practice in the Church for several centuries.⁸ The Church authorities agreed, but looked at the demand from a different perspective. The authority was to be obeyed, so even if there had been some practice in the past and it was at some point suspended or prohibited, the faithful must respect the decision and do not question it.⁹ The Hussites, however, evoked the apostolic times and showed the practice as a core of the spiritual life for Christians.¹⁰ The polemics evolved

5. English translation of the Four Articles of Prague containing the demand may be found in: H. Kaminsky, *A History of the Hussite Revolution*, Eugene 2004, p. 369. See also: A. Molnár, *The Ideological Significance...*, op. cit., pp. 107–109.
6. M. Kopecký, *Cyrlometodějská tradice v starší české literatuře*, in: *Magna Moravia : sborník k 100. výročí příchodu byzantské mise na Moravu*, ed. J. Macůrek, Praha 1965, p. 573.
7. H. Krmíčková, *The Fifteenth Century Origins of Lay Communion sub utraque in Bohemia*, in: *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, ed. by Z. V. David and D. R. Holton, vol. 2, Prague 1998, pp. 63–64; H. Krmíčková, *Studie a texty k počátkům kalicha v Čechách*, Brno 1998, pp. 13–15.
8. The dispute in its highest point may be seen at the Council of Basel in 1433, where Jan Rokycana gave a speech on the utraquism, but naturally it was present during all the reform period, from the times of Council of Constance to the death of Rokycana and even after that. Rokycana in his speech at the council referred to the apostolic tradition of communion under both kinds, see: J. Rokycana, *Positio Magistri Johannis de Rockozana Pragensis, coram patribus sacri concilii Basiliensis pro parte Bohemorum proposita*, in: *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. by J. D. Mansi, vol. 30, Venetia 1702, col. 270, 289, 290 et al.
9. Concilium Constantiense, *Condemnatio communionis sub utraque, a Iacobo de Misa nuper inter Bohemos resuscitata*, in: *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych. Tekst grecki, łaciński, arabski, ormiański, polski*, red. A. Baron, H. Pietras, t. 3, Kraków 2003, p. 108.
10. A Molnár gave a description of the lay chalice propagator Jacob of Mies' ideas supporting the practice. Among them one may see frequent references to the times of foundation of the Church and preserving the legacy of the apostolic period. A. Molnár, *Theologie husitského kalicha*, „Křesťanská revue. Theologická příloha“ 32 (1965), pp. 3–4.

into a vast stream of treatises, letters and disputes over the decades.¹¹ There were lots of different arguments, ways of approach in disputes and actual demonstrations. One of them is clearly visible at the end of 1421, as noted by the Hussite chronicler, Vavřinec z Březove.

At the end of 1421 the Taborite forces entered Kutna Hora.¹² They wanted to prevent the crusaders led by Sigismund of Luxembourg from taking the city. Vavřinec z Březove gave a detailed description of their stay in the city. One of the most significant parts was undoubtedly the one describing the Taborite mass. The chronicler, who did not hide his reserve towards the radical ideas and behaviour of the Taborite troops, did not forget to mention that Žižka's forces were known among other things as those who "did not observe the ecclesiastical rules".¹³ The day after the arrival at the city, the Taborites gathered in the church of St. John. They were followed by a lot of the people from the city, all curious to see how the radicals would behave. The chronicler writes, that the Taborite priest did not wear a chastuble and was dressed only in his own clothes. He did not follow any liturgical rules, bowing only for a while during the Lord's Prayer and the words of consecration. He used also some random cups for the part of consecration. The consecrated bread was then divided and passed from hand to hand by the gathered people. As the chronicler mentions, the Christ's blood was also distributed among laity, and it was done without special reverence needed in such cases. The residents of Kutna Hora who saw the whole scene, were moved by the behaviour of the radicals and the view grounded their anti-hussite beliefs. Vavřinec writes, that they admitted among themselves that there were no bigger heretics than Czechs and as a consequence they clung to king Sigismund.¹⁴

Naturally, Vavřinec was neither fond of the liturgical radicalism presented by the Taborites, nor was he supportive for the side of Sigismund. His description had other meaning. First of all he wanted to show the Taborite practices as an exaggerated form of utraquism, which he supported. The

11. As for the period of revolution see a detailed and superb book on the topic: D. Coufal, *Polemika o kalich – mezi teologií a politikou 1414–1431*, Kalich, 2012. The researcher from Prague's Centre for Medieval Studies is currently working on the next period, i.e. the disputes on the utraquism during the council of Basel.
12. J. Durdik, *Sztuka wojenna husytów*, przekł. J. Chlabicz, Warszawa 1955, p. 185.
13. Vavřinec z Březove, *Kronika husitská*, in: *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum*, ed. J. Goll, v. 5, Praha 1893, p. 529.
14. Vavřinec z Březove, *Kronika husitská*, op. cit., p. 530.

Taborites seemed to behave roughly, without gentleness, thus misrepresenting the practice truly venerated by the moderate reformers. But he was also showing their need to be seen as the new apostles – every church becoming the Cenacle, where everybody who was present took part in dividing bread and wine. The apostolic motif was in fact outlined by Vavřinec himself, who inserted the whole description in other parts forming the bigger image of the battle of Kutna Hora – which were composed on the frame of the Passion of Christ.¹⁵

In that composition, the mass at St. John's becomes the Hussite Last Supper, and even if the Taborites are not praised by the author for their lack of reverence towards the consecrated communicants, they still remain in the places of the Apostles. The association is more than visible.

It is quite possible that the whole scene in St. John's church in Kutna Hora did not take place at all. In two other main sources concerning the battle of Kutna Hora one may find no single remark about the residents outraged by the Taborite mass.¹⁶ On the other hand, such an event is very probable – it could happen in Prague in 1420, when the Taborites came to defend the city and in many other places, where especially moderate residents could face the radicals and their behaviour. If it was merely Vavřinec's imagination, we shall never know. However, the apostolic motif in the support of giving communion to laity under both kinds, was a wider one and exceeded colourful images from the Hussite chronicles.

The inspiring role of the Last Supper in the liturgical changes during the period is obvious and finds its place both in primary sources and secondary works. If one wants to discuss the foundation of the *utraquist* idea or the observance of the Scriptures by the *Unitas Fratrum*, he may find many such references.¹⁷ But the example brought by Vavřinec shows something

15. P.F.Nowakowski, *Wielowymiarowość opisu bitwy pod Kutną Horą w ujęciu Wawrzyńca z Brzezowej*, in: *Religia wobec historii, historia wobec religii*, red. E. Przybył, Kraków 2006, pp. 253–262.
16. *Kronika velmi pěkná o Janu Žižkovi*, in: *Staročeské vojenské řády. Hájek-Vlček, Žižka, listy a kronika*, ed. F.Svejkovský, Praha 1952, p. 33; *Staří letopisové čeští od roku 1378 do 1527 čili pokračování v kronikách Přibíka Pulkavy a Beneše z Hořovic z rukopisů starých vydané*, ed. F.Palacký, Praha 1941, pp. 60–61.
17. Rokycana about the origin of the Eucharist under both kinds as the Christ's commandment and apostolic obedience: *Traktát Mistra Jana Rokycany o přijímání krve (české zpracování latinského traktátu Contra sex propositiones frivolas doctorum apostatarum)*, ed. F.Šimek, Praha 1941, pp. 8–11 et al. What Christ supposedly pointed to, talking about 'body' and 'blood' during the Last Supper, is discussed by

else. It is the actual attempt to recreate the Eucharist as it was in the apostolic times. The Last Supper and following eucharistic gatherings of the early Church are seen by the Hussites as a fraternizing feast as Amedeo Molnár called it.¹⁸

Some years later one of the most significant reformers got into dispute with the taborite radicals. Petr Chelčický was a unique thinker, who followed his own ways, combining some moderate and some radical views on different matters, basing on his own convictions rather than on some intercepted ideas.¹⁹ As for communion, he opposed those who denied Christ's presence in the sacrament in breaking bread seeing just a symbol and commemoration. He stated that when the Apostles started visiting homes for breaking bread, it was not just a typical, normal everyday bread. Petr reminded that such bread was present at homes anyway, without apostolic involvement. What was important in their service was bringing that one bread which is a participation in Christ's Body.²⁰ Thus, for Chelčický this apostolic activity was surely important and should not be neglected nor abandoned.

With deep divisions among reformers as for the form of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, communion under both kinds to all faithful was one of the demands shared by all. It was included in the Four Articles of Prague.

the utraquist and taborite theologians: *Žaloby kněží Táborských na mistry Pražské, podané sněmu zemskému o sv. 3 králích 1444*, in: Z. Nejedlý, *Prameny k synodám strany pražské a táborské v letech 1441–1444*, Praha 1900, p. 102; its later explanation by Lucas of Prague: *Hádka Rokycánova s Táboři na sněmu u Hory léta Páně 1444, sepsaná od něho, jakž se mu libilo*, in: *Akty Jednoty Bratrské*, v. 2, ed. J. Bidlo, Brno 1923, pp. 27–28; The brothers of Unitas Fratrum stick to the idea of the Last Supper as a source for their eucharistic beliefs: *Čtvrtý list k Mistru Rokycanovi*, in: *Akty Jednoty Bratrské*, v. 1, ed. J. Bidlo, Brno 1915, pp. 46–47.

18. A. Molnár, *The Ideological Significance...*, p. 117. About radical Hussites' views on the matter, see also: S. Bylina, *Na skraju lewicy husyckiej*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 38–39.
19. From the rich literature on Chelčický in the context of the article it is worth mentioning especially: F. Bartoš, *K počátkům Petra Chelčického*, „Časopis Musea Království českého“ 88 (1914), pp. 27–35; J. Goll, *Chelčický a Jednota v XV. století*, ed. K. Krofta, Praha 1916; J. Goll, *P. Chelčický a jeho spisy*, in: *Vybrané spisy drobné*, v. 2, Praha 1929, pp. 70–98; Among the recent publications: J. Boubín, *Dílo Petra Chelčického a současný stav jeho edičního zprístupnění*, „Český časopis historický“ 102 (2004), pp. 273–296; J. Boubín, *Petr Chelčický. Myslitel a reformátor*, Praha 2005; J. Boubín, *Petr Chelčický a mistři pražské univerzity*, in: *Jakoubek ze Stříbra. Texty a jejich působení*, ed. O. Halama, P. Soukup, Praha 2006, pp. 241–256; E. Petrů, *Soupis díla Petra Chelčického a literatury o něm*, Praha 1957.
20. P. Chelčický, *Tuto se počíná řeč a správa o těle božím*, in: *Čítanka Petra Chelčického*, ed. K. J. Obrátil, Brno 1925, p. 94.

In several lists of the articles it was stressed, that this practice is based on the apostles' precept.²¹ It is a continuity then, not merely a commemoration. The need to renew the apostolic way of life, as it was understood by the reformers, may be seen also in the case of another article. It was formulated differently, once demanding division of secular and spiritual power, once concentrating on the purity of life among the clergymen.²² But the core of this point was a comeback to the apostolic role model of life. It was often expressed like so: the clergymen should live according to the apostolic way and in harmony with St. Gregory's formula.²³

More than Apostles – Judas – a Peculiar Dispute

Being the Apostle was not just a technical term used to name the disciples chosen by Jesus. It was a term to describe the true Christ's follower, with the formal affiliation treated as less important. A specific example of that way of thinking may be found when we look at the role model of Judas, who appears in the polemics of the era. The Christ's traitor is evoked by the Catholics, as well as the reformers from different groups – both moderate and radicals. We may find him in the speeches at the council of Basel, but also in the teachings of Chelčický, as well as the treatise composed in the community of the Unity of the Brethren.²⁴

Judas served as a good example that not everything and not everyone in the church is expected to be perfect. At least such was the general way of mentioning him by the Catholic side. That way of thinking aroused a strong and firm disagreement on the side of the reformers. For example Petr Chelčický compared Judas to the Antichrist, describing his several features. Judas, in Chelčický's opinion, was Christ's servant only by his external behaviour. However, in his internal life he carried the seed of treason. It resembled the characteristics of the Antichrist, who sits in the apostolic offices, serves at the altar, bows and kneels and in all the external symbols

21. *Manifest husitské Prahy do Benátek*, in: *Husitské manifesty*, ed. A. Molnár, Praha 1980, pp. 84–85.
22. *Zápis velikého sněmu Čáslavského, proti králi Sigmundowi etc.*, in: *Archiv český čili staré písemné památky české i moravské*, v. III, ed. F. Palacký, Praha 1844, pp. 227–228; Vavřinec z Březove, *Kronika husitská*, op. cit., pp. 374, 487.
23. *Manifest husitské Prahy do Benátek...*, op. cit., 91.
24. *Deník táborského kněze o jednání Čechů na koncilu basilejském z roku 1433*, in: *Ze zpráv a kronik doby husitské*, trans. F. Heřmanský, ed. I. Hlaváček, Praha 1981, p. 352; *Spis o dobrých a zlých kněžích*, in: *Akty Jednoty Bratrské*, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 109–111.

and actions he seems to be praising Christ. However, being the opponent of Christ's commandments, in fact he rejects the Saviour.²⁵ In his argument Chelčický is consistent with other reformers, for example Jakoubek of Stříbro. But probably it is Matthew of Janov, living several decades earlier, and predating Jan Hus, who is closest to this line of explanation.²⁶ Shown from this point of view, Judas stops being the true apostle and there is no reason to present him as an example of anything else than treason inside the church.

But the example of Judas worked in opposite ways. He was used by the fierce opponent of the Hussites – John of Capestrano, who tried to visit the Kingdom of Bohemia in order to preach and confront with the reformers' ideas. Capestrano's mission in the beginning of 1450s turned out to be a failure.²⁷ But it was not the Franciscan friar who could be blamed for the result. He was simply prevented from free speech to the Christian flock by the Hussite elites, who at that time seemed to forget about one of the flagship postulates – the freedom of preaching for all the priests. Capestrano, while trying to break the wall of reluctance, exchanged letters with the most important members of the utraquist community, both religious and political. In one of the letters to John Rokycana – the key figure at that time in the religious scene of Bohemia, the elected, but never confirmed by the pope utraquist archbishop of Prague – Capestrano invoked Judas as an example against the Hussites. He reminded that Judas was present during the Last Supper and received Holy Communion under both kinds. But this did not prevent him from treason.²⁸ Capestrano, using this argument, aimed to crush the utraquist conviction about the necessity of the communion under both kinds for salvation, but particularly the plenitude of grace unavailable just under one kind, which was often suggested by the reformers.

Biblical Pattern – The Unity of the Brethren

The Biblical pattern reappeared during the turbulent century many times. In the late 1460s and early 1470s it was once again raised by the new religious

25. P. Chelčický, *O šelmě a obraze jejím*, in: *Čítanka Petra Chelčického*, op. cit., p. 111.
26. *Matthiae de Janov dicti Magister Pragensis Regulae Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, vol. 3, ed. by V. Kybal, Innsbruck-Praha 1908, p. 3.
27. A. Lissowska, *Antyhusycka misja Jana Kapistrana na Śląsku*, in: *Bernardyni na Śląsku w późnym średniowieczu*, red. J. Kostowski, Wrocław 2005, pp. 51–63.
28. F. Walouch, *Žiwotopis swatého Jana Kapistrana*, Brno 1858, p. 771.

group — the Unity of the Brethren. The community emerged when the Utraquist church was in its highest position in the Kingdom of Bohemia — with the support of the king and after eradicating the radicals of Tabor. Coming with high moral standards and condemning the mainstream reformers for their growing resemblance to the once criticised church hierarchy, they formed a community unbearable for many. The members of the Unity of the Brethren criticised the form of institutionalization of the reform movement. If the true Christians, as they saw themselves, were to be genuine, they should accept the way of living of the apostles with all the consequences.²⁹ The Brethren wrote to Albrecht Kostka of Postupice with complaints on the persecutions they suffered, but at the same time one can clearly see that the persecutions become the merit in their eyes, something one could be proud of, because they imitate the fate of the Apostles.³⁰

The biblical pattern among the Brethren was not their own invention. Jan Hus preached in the Bethlehem Chapel, the Hussites called some places with the biblical names (Tábor, Oreb) in the turbulent times of revolution. In this case, however, we may see a bigger impact of the apostolic idea. It is, perhaps, caused by the confrontation with the Utraquist church — the mainstream reformers. Whatever the first reformers wanted to change, they changed it in the opposition to Rome and the domestic Catholic hierarchy. But after a few decades, they were verified by a new generation of zealous reformers. As the children, they looked critically at their fathers. And they must have truly felt that they were new apostles for Moravia and Bohemia. Even though it was impossible to keep their harsh rules for a long time, which forced brothers to modify them³¹, that one conviction remained. Like apostles, they set out for new lands. We could see their influence in Saxony and then in the New World, where one can still find towns with biblical names and communities of Moravian provenance (Bethlehem, Nazareth in Pennsylvania and others).³²

The First Apostles known from the New Testament, heard the calling to follow Christ and spread His teaching all over the world. The Hussites

29. *Bratři za krále Jiřího v úzkostech*, in: *Akty Jednoty Bratrské*, op. cit., v. 1, p. 606.

30. *Panu Albrechtovi*, in: *Akty Jednoty Bratrské*, op. cit., v. 1, pp. 199–201, 204–205.

31. M.S.Fousek, *The Perfectionism of the Early 'Unitas Fratrum'*, "Church History" 30 no. 4 (1961), pp. 396–413.

32. C.D.Atwood, *Community of the Cross. Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethelhem, Pennsylvania 2004*, pp. 115–116.

tried to evoke the idealized example of the disciples, treating it like a mirror of their own situation and attitudes. They also felt vocation, were ready to teach and correct all the Christians that in their opinion lost the way once designated by the Saviour. But most probably, even all of that would not be enough to recognize oneself as a new apostle. Several other features helped in acquiring that conviction. It was the death of Jan Hus, seen as a martyr, the antihussite crusades appearing like new persecutions and specific discussions over the biblical examples like Judas, which altogether formed the idea of being new apostles among the Hussites. Moreover, the conviction was so strong, that it appeared in the next generation of the reformers, who confronted it with the imperfections of their fathers' life and religious practices. It is clearly visible, as stated in the introduction, that the apostolic model was common among reformers, both radical and moderate. The urge to recreate or reconstruct the way of life of the early Church, as they imagined it, was tightly linked with the desire to play the role of new apostles in a religiously derailed world. The article's aim was to show some scattered examples of such attitude, but the whole concept needs further researches and deserves a thorough study.

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Abstract

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The Apostolic Mirror of the Hussite Image

Keywords:

apostles, hussitism,
the Unity of
Brethren, Judas
Iscariot, Vavřinec
z Březove.

The aim of the article is to show how the Hussites referred the apostolic pattern to themselves. One of the fields where such an attitude may be observed is the liturgy of the hussite radicals described by Vavřinec z Březove – which at least intended to replicate the Last Supper, and the general conviction about the necessity of communion under both kinds to salvation. Another field is the repeated and fierce discussion over the role of Judas Iscariot and the meaning of being the true apostle. The will to be the new apostles among Christians seduced by evil was so strong among the reformers, that the new generations took over the idea and confronted it with their forerunners.

Abstrakt

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Apostolskie zwierciadło wizerunku husyckiego

Celem artykułu jest ukazanie sposobu, w jaki husyci odnosili do siebie wzorzec apostolski. Jest to zauważalne na polu liturgii – husycy radykalowie, jak podaje Wawrzyniec z Brzezowej, starali się powielać formę znaną z Ostatniej Wieczerzy. Także podzielane powszechnie wśród reformatorów przekonanie o niezbędnej do zbawienia komunii pod dwiema postaciami wskazuje na tę zależność. Innym polem gdzie można ją dostrzec, są ostre i zawzięte dyskusje na temat roli Judasza Iskarioty i tego, co oznacza bycie prawdziwym apostołem. Wreszcie pragnienie stania się nowymi apostołami wśród chrześcijan zwiedzionych przez zło okazuje się tak silne wśród reformatorów, że kolejne pokolenia przejmują je i przeciwstawiają swoim poprzednikom.

Słowa kluczowe:
apostołowie,
husytyzm,
Jednota Braterska,
Judasz Iskariota,
Wawrzyniec
z Brzezowej.

