



'Minor' educator before Comenius: Petr Chelčický's pacifism

Thiago Borges de Aguiar

Programa de Pós-graduação em Educação, Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba. Rodovia do Açúcar, 7000, km 156, Cx. Postal 68, 13423-170, Piracicaba, São Paulo, Brazil. E-mail: tbaguiar@unimep.br

ABSTRACT. This paper deals with Petr Chelčický, who lived in Bohemia in the first half of the fifteenth century. In the exercise of historiographical look over the place given to this person in the history of religions, the text proposes re (build) his place in the history of education using the category of 'minor' educator. This category binds to the historiographical movement of studying smaller authors and proposes another look at how we research and teach the history of education. For the case study in this article, we start from the contextualization of the Hussite movement in the Czech lands, with a ransom of some little-known names. It follows with analysis of Chelčický's image, his influences and writings, especially his work *The net of true faith*, redeeming aspects of pacifism and opposition to the tripartite division of society. At the end of the text, it approaches Chelčický's ideas with Jan Amos Comenius, the 'great' educator who is consecrated by the history of education.

Keywords: medieval educators, historiography, Bohemia, pacifism.

Um educador 'menor' antes de Comenius: o pacifismo de Petr Chelčický

RESUMO. Este artigo trata de Petr Chelčický, que viveu na Boêmia na primeira metade do século XV. Num exercício historiográfico de observar o lugar dado a este sujeito na história das religiões, o texto propõe re(construir) seu lugar na história da educação utilizando-se da categoria educador 'menor'. Esta categoria liga-se a um movimento historiográfico de estudo de autores menores e propõe outro olhar para o modo como pesquisamos e ensinamos a história da educação. Para o caso em estudo neste artigo, parte-se de uma contextualização do movimento hussita nas terras tchecas, com um resgate de alguns nomes pouco conhecidos. Segue-se uma análise da figura de Chelčický, suas influências e escritos, com destaque para sua obra *A rede da fé verdadeira*, resgatando os aspectos de pacifismo e de oposição à divisão tripartite da sociedade. Ao final do texto, busca-se uma aproximação das ideias de Chelčický com as de Jan Amos Comenius, o 'grande' educador consagrado pela história da educação.

Palavras-chave: educadores medievais, historiografia, Boêmia, pacifismo.

Un educador 'menor' antes de Comenius: el pacifismo de Petr Chelčický

RESUMEN. Este artículo trata de Petr Chelčický, que vivió en Bohemia en la primera mitad del siglo XV. En un ejercicio historiográfico de observar el lugar dado a este sujeto en la historia de las religiones, el texto propone re(construir) su lugar en la historia de la educación utilizándose de la categoría educador 'menor'. Esta categoría está relacionada a un movimiento historiográfico de estudio de autores menores y propone otra perspectiva para el modo como investigamos y enseñamos la historia de la educación. Para este caso en estudio, se parte de una contextualización del movimiento husita en las tierras checas, con un rescate de algunos nombres no muy conocidos. Se ha seguido un análisis de la figura de Chelčický, sus influencias y escritos, con destaque para su obra *La Red de la verdadera fe*, rescatando los aspectos de pacifismo y de oposición a la división tripartita de la sociedad. Al final del texto, se busca una aproximación de las ideas de Chelčický con las de Jan Amos Comenius, el 'gran' educador consagrado por la historia de la educación.

Palabras clave: educadores medievales, historiografía, Bohemia, pacifismo.

Introduction¹

Character known in the history of education, Jan Amos Comenius is a name that appears in all the books that purport to make a synthesis of the area that

circulate in the Brazilian universities today. Let's take, for example, the book by Franco Cambi (1999, p. 281). For him:

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Research Foundation and developed at the post-doctorate program in the Faculty of Education at São Paulo University in 2012. It also incorporates some materials from the paper "Two whales in the net: Petr Chelčický's Hussite 'third way'" presented at the First Southeast Symposium of the Brazilian Association on History of Religion, in 2013.

[...] With the seventeenth century it is stated an explicitly epistemological and socially engaged model of pedagogy, represented, especially in the North European area, where the cultural and political ideals of the Middle Ages are most observed, especially by Comenius and his collaborators, who elaborate an idea of universal education nourished by philosophical and political-religious strong ideals.

Comenius is a prominent name in educational historiography of the XVII century. He is the guy named among various educators of that time, as shown in the synthetic expression used by Cambi 'Comenius and his collaborators.' In a brief survey of the articles that make reference to him in SciELO base, for example, we confirm that the phrase by Kulesza, written more than twenty years ago, continues to assert: Comenius is "[...] much revered but little known" (KULESZA, 1992, p. 81).

There are few texts and the main reference used is his 'The Great Didactic' despite the huge volume of articles published by this author. This is the case, for example, Oliveira (2001), Pougy (2007) and Venera (2009), in which Comenius is one of the authors cited to support the reflections of the authors and The Great Didactic is the only reference to comenian work. The texts by Oliveira (2002) and Chalmel (2004) mentioned another book by Comenius. Nevertheless, these clippings select a very small piece of what the Czech educator wrote. We are not, therefore, discussing the quality of the researches conducted or the conclusions presented in these articles. We are just highlighting the small amount of the writings of Comenius which circulates among researchers who mention him.

This coexistence between reverence and ignorance is present in our universities. As pointed Nunes (2006), bringing up the challenge of balancing teaching and research in the history of education, we have difficulty to renew the bibliographies we use in training future teachers. And we understand that, facing the need for synthesis of manuals and programs of the subject history of education, some subjects are selected to appear in them, and (many) others are left out. We also live it in our own training. But due to this training we also had the first contact with the category 'minor educator' who is subsidizing our investigations over the past years.

This category was first used by Professor Maria Lucia Spedo Hilsdorf (2006) in a subject offered for the course of Pedagogy of the University of São Paulo. The subject, entitled 'History of Modern and Contemporary Education: The 'Minor' Educators', was proposed as a methodological exercise of historiographical analysis of how educators are portrayed in the History of Education.

In contrast to the expression used by Jean Chateau in his work 'Os grandes pedagogistas' ('The great pedagogists') (CHATEAU, 1978), in accordance with the line of thought of authors such as H Laski, Q. Skinner, J. Pocock, R. Remond, J. Touchard, who drew attention to the importance of studying the minor authors (OLIVEIRA, 2003), in the subject would be sought the guys little mentioned in the historiography, but they were essential to the production of these great names. These 'small' are not necessarily lower 'quality' or lesser contribution to education. It is not the question to be answered. The main issue is the vicious circle around the great names, for which there is greater availability of sources, and greater demand for these and researches about them, which generates greater amount of historical information, which arouse interest in expanding the researches on these subjects.

By choosing this approach to our research, we seek to observe the consequences of a study of a character with a production considerably less about him when compared to the great names in education. We realized that with the 'zoom' of our historical lens, another metaphor of Hilsdorf (VIDAL, FARIA FILHO, 2005), when we approach of a subject, others around him appeared. We have noted earlier that:

[...] There are always other subjects, without whom the historical character we study simply would not exist, either because they dialogued, because one divulge the idea of the other, or because they supported him against opponents and thus the infinite possibilities of the human society (AGUIAR, 2012a, p. 397).

It is in this sense that we seek, in a historiographical exercise, reconstruct a history of the subjects who are considered teachers before Comenius and helped to build a cultural and social context in which he was inserted. We began mapping subjects who lived along the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in the Czech lands, especially those linked to the religious group which Comenius was a member: a *Unitas Fratrum* (Unity of Brethren or *Jednota Bratrská*, In Czech). This article raises a clipping of this mapping, highlighting the figure of an advocate of pacifism that profoundly marked the features of the ideas and actions of these Brothers over nearly two centuries: Petr Chelčický. In seeking the traces he left, we took on exploring the category 'minor educator' by the place he occupies in relation to the 'greatest educator' Comenius.

A step before

To understand who was Chelčický, you need to find other subjects in the historical context of

Bohemia of the early fifteenth century. Let's start with Jan Hus (1369? - 1415). He was a clergyman and educator who, in the early years of this century, took positions that were considered heretical and due to them in 1415 he was led to the fire of the Council of Constance. He left a legacy of education expressed in his letters, as in the two he wrote for one of his favorite disciples (AGUIAR, 2011a), as well as his memory had handed over the XV and XVI (AGUIAR, 2012a) centuries, reaching even up to Comenius, who took him as a master and martyr of Bohemia (COMENIUS, 2011). He was a prominent name for a group of clerics and university professors who proposed reforms in the Czech lands to the Catholic Church, succeeding as a significant liturgical change, the communion in both kinds. He was also the author of a spelling reform of Czech language and prepared a small booklet.

Several of his contemporaries helped to preserve, disseminate and rework his memory and the ideas that circulated in both the University of Prague as in some Czech churches. Subjects as Vavřinec of Březové (c.1370 - c.1437), who was a chronicler, helped to form an idea of Czech nationalism valuing stories of Hussite wars in which the Czechs overcame the Catholic Crusaders or as Jakoubek of Stříbro (c.1370 - 1429) that supported the communion in both kinds fervently, but maybe not as fervently as Jan Žižka (c.1376 - 1424) who led the Czechs armies.

The Hussites, as became known in historiography, were many and very diverse. However, some generalizations made by historians, such as Roger Portal on hussitism, causes the disappearing of some subjects because they were not 'originals'. This author, for example, states that "[...] crushed but not defeated, the hussitism reborn on the Lutheran way in the century XVI" (PORTAL, 1968, p. 13). If we take this statement as absolute, when we look at the hussitism in the sixteenth century, what will we find? A group of individuals who advocate the ideas of Luther.

However, when we look at the study of Craig Atwood over the same period, we really find an approaching with Lutheranism, but in a peculiar way. The author (ATWOOD, 2009, p. 261) states that "[...] The turn toward Lutheranism was real, but it was not nearly as dramatic a shift as the turn away from Chelčický in 1495". Atwood shows that leaders of the Union of Brothers, as Lukáš of Prague (c.1460 - 1528) and Jan Augusta (1500 - 1572), were not exactly Lutherans. Only as an example, the concept of the *physical* presence of Christ on the church altar every Sunday, is present in Luther's thought and absent in those Czechs.

The generalization of Portal makes names such as the last two mentioned not 'relevant', after all, in his reading, were all Lutherans. But through the details obtained by the investigation of these supposedly unimportant names provocative revelations may emerge. Here we are not going to deep the whole story about the Brothers and the many individuals who we found each new reading, each new source. But we can enlarge one of these names and one of those sources. Who was this guy who the group moved away in 1495? Who is Petr Chelčický?

The lens focuses on Chelčický

Even today, there are questions about who was Petr Chelčický. It is known that he was a person with lower training and instruction when compared to Jan Hus. Probably he did not enter the University since his poor knowledge of Latin. He called himself as a 'servant' or 'peasant' and had available time for the study and to the religious life. Maybe he was a yeoman farmer. He may have been born in 1390, but there is also a theory that links him to another Petr called Záhorečí, who was born between 1379 and 1380. This theory was proposed by the historian František Bartoš in the 1940s and there was no consensus so far. It is also unclear at what time Chelčický died. Molnár states that he must have died near the year 1460. Atwood suggests about 1458.

His name appears in several publications about Hus and the Hussite movement (eg ATWOOD, 2009; ČORNEJ, 2011; PORTAL, 1968; SPINKA, 1943, 1968; SCHAFF, 2001). It grows in bold when Unity of Brethren is specifically noted, since he was something like an 'inspiring' to the foundation of the group. There is some research about it, most of them concentrated in the Czech language. A survey of these texts can be seen in Iwańczak (1997), one of the few newer texts in English about the author. In Portuguese we do not find any relevant publication about Chelčický.

One of the important and classical references in English, Enrico Molnár (1947), refers to the Czech Republic as a reform movement in which three names stand out. The reform;

[...] bears the deep imprint of three prophetic personalities: of John Hus, its protagonist, hero, and martyr; of John Amos Comenius, its philosopher, educator, and theologian; and of Peter Chelcický, its stern prophet, conscience, and climax (MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 3).

When we direct our lens of historian to Comenius and see his origin, we find Jan Hus.

When our lens tries to keep both, Chelčický appears. He is the subject considered the link between Hus and Comenius, since it was from his ideas that the Unity of Brethren was founded, the movement of which the Czech educator of the seventeenth century was a bishop.

What we know regarding the biographical data of Chelčický often comes from the same authors. Molnár (1947) refers to František Bartoš, Rudolf Holinka and Matthew Spinka, all authors of texts of the 1940s, in addition to Jaroslav Goll, with texts published between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Atwood (2009) refers to Molnár, Spinka and Murray Wagner (the latter 1980s). Iwańczak (1997) cites other names, some of the traditional studies about hussitism as Howard Kaminsky and František Šmahel, and authors who have published in different languages like German and Polish. Jaroslav Boubín (2005), in his recent biography about Chelčický cites all previous names except Holinka. The biographical notes of these authors, however, are similar.

What we can see when we compare these references is a historiographical trend of studies about him that remains with little change for several decades. And right now, we cannot escape from this production already established. We can, however, map features of this line of thought that we observe to be built around Chelčický.

Spinka seems to have been the founder of an image about Chelčický in English. This is because both Molnár and Atwood quote him in their most flattering expressions. Molnár brings this quote from Spinka:

Among the outstanding figures of the period of the 'flowering of the Czech Reformation', Peter Chelcický occupies a prominent, and in some respects a unique, position. 'Although not as well-known as John Hus, from certain points of view Peter is more important, and certainly more original, than the great Czech Reformer', insofar as in his radical Biblicism he went far beyond the latter (SPINKA apud MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 5, our emphasis).

Atwood also brings early in his chapter on the Czech thinker, Spinka words:

According to the historian Matthew Spinka, Chelčický's unyielding and unequivocal insistence on the separation of church and state, and to a somewhat less degree his pacifism, raised him to the rank of a pioneer of future types of Christianity (SPINKA apud ATWOOD, 2009, p. 133).

It is interesting to note that both Atwood as Molnár make different cuts of the same paragraph,

the initial, from the Spinka article. And those clippings say much about how the figure of Chelčický was historiographically built. The full passage in the text of Spinka, is this:

Among the outstanding figures of the period of the 'flowering of the Czech Reformation', Peter Chelcický occupies a prominent, and in some respects a unique, position. Although not as well-known as John Hus, from certain points of view Peter is more important, certainly more original, than the great Czech Reformer, insofar as in his radical biblicism he went far beyond the latter. 'Moreover, his influence lived on in the Unity of Brethren and affected the course of history more than Utraquism did'. His unyielding and unequivocal insistence on the separation of church and state, and to a somewhat less degree his pacifism, raised him to the rank of a pioneer of the future types of Christianity (SPINKA, 1943, p. 271, our emphasis).

We transcribe the full citation to draw attention to two issues. First, the addition of the conjunction 'and' in the quote from Molnár. In a way, by adding this conjunction, this author states that Chelčický is more important and more original than Jan Hus, while Spinka says that if Chelčický is not more important than Hus, at least he is more original. In a way, the mistake of Molnár is a sign of his 'excitement' with Czech thinker who studies, who already appears in his first paragraph, stating that just in case if somebody asked a Slavic:

[...] Who is, among all Slavs, the most original thinker and the most radical Christian?' the consensus of opinion would certainly say, 'Peter Chelcický!' (MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 3).

The second issue is the tendency, both in Molnár as in Atwood in maintaining that despite Chelčický have been important to the history of Christianity; he was an unknown until recently. The Spinka phrase that precedes the quote from Atwood (featured in above) suggests that his pioneering exist in comparison with the role of Utraquism in the training of the future types of Christianity and not necessarily before the whole history of Christianity. This restriction of the argument is not clear with the omission of the phrase highlighted.

Concerning whom Chelčický read, Atwood, quoting Molnár and Spinka, proposes three influences: the writings of the Waldenses, although these with only a direct reference, John Wyclif and the Hussite literature. We believe, at this point, that when the author refers to the 'Hussite literature' he is considering the writings of Jan Hus and subjects close to him, especially Jakoubek of Stříbro. This made the translation of the texts of Wyclif to Czech

(cf. IWAŃCZAK, 1997). According to Atwood, there are indications that Chelčický has met personally with Jan Hus, and that in 1412, during the exile of this preacher, have talked about the Eucharist.

The same author shows that Chelčický, besides debating with Jakoubek and probably with Jan Hus, wowed with a gathering of thousands of people on Mount Tábor, in 1419, waiting for the Kingdom of God on earth, he attended the first defenestration of Prague², in the same year, and remained there until 1420. It was Martin of Volyně, disciple of Hus, who received from him this legacy as an educator (cf. AGUIAR, 2011a), who introduced to the Chelčický the texts of one of the first thinkers of Czech reform, Matěj of Janov (late fourteenth century), and his ideas of coming back to the early Church.

Whence he wrote

To understand the place occupied by Chelčický in the early fifteenth century, we must also understand the place of subjects among whom he is: those who gathered on Mount Tábor and who attended and participated of the first defenestration of Prague. Somehow, the death of Jan Hus sparked an increasingly autonomous movement in relation to the ecclesiastical hierarchy. His ideas, which were in his letters, marked a position of disobedience to 'men' and obedience 'to God' (AGUIAR, 2012b). His writings in the last month of his life served not only as an instrument of friends and followers farewell, but also to preserve his memory (AGUIAR, 2011b). His followers began to write about his martyrdom and to transform that memory as a motto to organize themselves collectively. Among those who wrote about them, we have Petr Mladoňovice with his account of the death of Hus, and Vavřinec of Březové with his Hussite chronicles, texts produced in the early fifteenth century.

Progressively, two groups were established. The first, that the historiographical tradition refers to as Utraquists, a reference to the communion in both kinds (*sub specie utraque*), and it was linked to the University of Prague and the Bethlehem Chapel. Somehow, it was the group that Hus was part and that was seen as part of the Church although it was continually questioning by it. It was the group that remained influential politically throughout the years and who defended the *Compactata*, a document agreed at the Council of Basel (1433) that allowed the practice of four doctrinal points upheld by the

Czechs, among them the communion in both kinds. They were recognized and established agreements with Roman Catholics, being persecuted only in the Austro-Hungarian period in the Czech lands (XVII - XIX centuries). The guys who stand out as leaders in this first generation after the death of Hus are the aforementioned Jakoubek of Stříbro and Jan Rokycana (1390 - 1473).

The second group settled around a millenarian and militarist project established in the region of Tábor, in the southern of Bohemia. Jan Žižka and Prokop Holý (c.1380 - 1434) were the main leaders of the group that the historiographical tradition refers to as Taborites. This is the group that mobilized armies to fight against the crusades sent to Bohemia by Rome. In a way, it used the armed force for its proposal to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. It is iconic from this group a set of hymns sung by the marching troops. One of these hymns came to these days as a song that circulates in *mainstream pop* Czech entitled *Ktož jste boží bojovníci* (LANDA, 1993). The original text of the hymn, written in Czech of fifteenth century, is in the songbook of Jístebnice. In free translation, the lyrics say:

Ye who are God's warriors and of his law, /Pray to God for help and have faith in Him; /That always with Him you will be victorious. /Christ is worth all your sacrifices, /He will pay you back an hundredfold. /If you give up your life for Him you will receive eternal life. /Happy is he who believes this truth. /The Lord commandeth you not to fear bodily harm, /And commandeth you to even put your life down for the love of your brothers. /Therefore, archers, crossbowmen, halberdiers of knightly rank, /Scythemen and macebearers from all walks of life, /Remember always the Lord benevolent. /Do not fear your enemies, nor gaze upon their number, /Keep the Lord in your hearts; for Him fight on, /And before enemies you need not flee. / Since ages past Czechs have said and had proverbs which state, /That if the leader is good, so too is the journey. /Remember all of you the password which was given out. /Obey your captains and guard one another. /Stay sharp and everyone keep formation. /You beggars and wrongdoers, remember your soul! /For greed and theft don't lose your life. /And pay no heed to the spoils of war!³

³This is the original text of the song: "Ktož jste boží bojovníci/ a zákona jeho/ prostež od boha pomoci/ a důfajtež v něho/ že konečně vždycky s ním zvíťazíte / Kristusť vám za škody stojí/ stokrát víc slibuje/ pakli kdo proň život složí/ věčný míti bude/ blaze každému, ktož na pravdě sejde / Tent' pán velíť se nebáti/ záhubci tělesných/ velíť i život složiti/ pro lásku svých bližních / Protož stfelci, kopinici/ řádu rytířského/ sudličníci a cepníci/ lidu rozličného/ pomnětež všichni na pána štědrého! / Dávno Čechové říkali/ a přísloví měli, / že podle dobrého pána/ dobrá jízda bývá / Nepřátele se nelekejte/ na množství nehleďte/ pána svého v srdci mějte/ pro a s ním bojujte/ a před nepřátelei neutikajte! / A s tím vesele křikněte/ řkúc: "Na ně, hr na ně!" Zbraň svou rukama chutnajíte/ bůh náš pán, křikněte / Heslo všichni pamatujte/ kteréž vám vydáno/ svých hejmanů pozorujte/ retuj druhého/ hleďte a drž se každý šiku svého! / Vy pakosti a

²Event that occurred on July 30, 1419, when a group of Hussites, led by Jan Želiv, takes to the streets in protest, invades the town hall and threw the city officials through the window, killing them then. This was one of the fuses of the Hussite Wars.

(WIKIPEDIA CONTRIBUTORS, 2013, our translation).

We realize that the song portrays an image of meeting of all those who are willing to fight a war that is holy. This idea of authorizing a war to defend their position was supported not only by Rome but also by the two Hussite movements mentioned here briefly. And this is one of the central points of opposition from Petr Chelčický. No wonder that the Czech was remembered by Tolstoy, in his work, *The Kingdom of God is within you*, which deals with pacifism and non-resistance. After summarizing the text of Czech author based on secondary sources (since he had no access to the original text), Tolstoy (1994, p. 23) writes:

This book is one of those rare works that escaped from the faith-papers, among those that hit the official Christianity, and this is what makes it so interesting. But in addition to its interest, this book, from any point of view that we examine, is one of the most remarkable products of thought, both by the depth of opinions, as the extraordinary power and beauty of popular language in which it is written. And yet, this book remains as a manuscript for more than four centuries and continues to be ignored by all but the experts.

For Atwood (2009, p. 133), Chelčický was the father of modern pacifism,

[...] and one can trace a line of descent from Chelčický to Gandhi through Leo Tolstoy, who promoted the Chelčický writings when they were republished in nineteenth century.

The Czech thinker wrote several treaties. There are about a dozen of publications with original texts by the author, although it is known the existence of nearly six dozen texts. In the decade of 1420, Chelčický starts writing intensely in terms of the issues that he was contrary to Utraquists and Taborites. Molnár (1947) summarizes the break with both groups. In 1424, the Czech thinker writes a *Replika proti Mikuláši Biskupci Táborskémi* [Reply against the Taborite bishop 'Nicholas'], in which deplores the attitude of the Taborites in relation to the Eucharist, opposing to the conception of the physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In 1425, he writes a *Replika proti Rokycanovi* [Reply against Rokycana], addressed to the Utraquist Archbishop that, according Chelčický, was in a hierarchical power position contrary to what the Hussite defended. The Czech thinker opposed himself to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, to the defense

of war as a necessary evil and to the idea of the physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Atwood dates *Replika proti Rokycanovi* with the year 1440 (15 years ahead of Molnár's dating) and brings a quote from that document, establishing it as a landmark in relation to Hus, Matěj and Jakoubek. In a way, these Chelčický words are an indication that he thought to establish an alternative position to the other defended until then among the Czechs:

And this much I say of them [Hus, Matthew, Jakoubek], not abusing their good works that they have done in the name of God by zealous preaching and other things. But I will further say, they too have drunk the wine of the Great Whore, with which she has besotted all the nations and the people... For they have written things in their works which are denied by the divine laws, especially when Master Hus has written of murder, the oath and images. Therefore, I cannot condone what they have passed on of an offensive nature to the scandalizing of many (CHELČICKÝ apud ATWOOD, 2009, p. 134-135).

If we look at the writings of Hus and Chelčický with a present-day look, we see many similarities, perhaps more than differences. But they are the details that make people differentiate themselves and what that was the central to Chelčický was sufficient to his rupture. Even the dating of Atwood is more correct than Molnár, it is a fact that the writings of Chelčický point to his separation from both Utraquists and Taborites.

Iwańczak (1997) refers to the Czech thinker as someone who is between pacifism and anarchism. By analyzing the social positions of Chelčický, especially his early writings, the author shows that not only the question of pacifism is the central thought of that Czech, but his opposition to the tripartite structure of medieval society (those who fight, those who pray and those who work), considering it before the Christianity (and, therefore, pagan), and arguing that there should be a separation between faith and authority. Commenting under Chelčický writings, published in 1966 in Czechoslovakia, the author asserts:

But the truth is that authority is not governed by faith nor does faith need authority. Neither owes anything to the other, so it would be a mistake to treat them jointly. They have different spheres of activity and different designations. Authority is embodied in worldly possessions, large hosts of knights, and strong castles and towns, while faith is reflected in God's wisdom and the power of the Holy Spirit. This difference inspires Chelčický to formulate another contrast which shows the contradiction between the secular order and the law

drabantí/ na duše pomněte/ pro lakomství a loupeže/ životů netrattě/ a na kořístech se nezastavujte!"

of love. He says that the world and the faith are at opposite poles (IWAŃCZAK, 1997, p. 279).

It is this opposition between the 'law of love' and the 'secular authority' that marks not only the position 'anarchist' of Chelčický as proposed Iwańczak, but also bases his pacifism characteristic present in the foundation of the Unity of Brethren and that will reverberate, as we will show, centuries later in Comenius.

Molnár and Atwood follow this line of analysis and synthesize the work of this Czech thinker on the following topics: pacifism, not physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist desecration of the state with consequent rupture with the established authority and opposition to the feudal hierarchy and its loyalty. However, there is a difference in how the authors refer to community life proposed by the Czech thinker. While Atwood uses the word 'separatism' and 'apostolic poverty' and Iwańczak speaks of 'anarchism', Molnár refers to a 'Christian socialism and communism'. He writes that:

Chelčický's socialism is not a dialectic materialism; to speak figuratively; he stands on firm Biblical ground and examines his contemporary society with a strong searchlight of Christ's ethic. What he finds is devastating, and his conclusions are more radical than those of Marx or Lenin. Christian faith is dead unless it can show fruits of its existence. [...] His communism is thoroughly Christian, springing from a theocentric view of life (MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 37-38).

We have no intention at this time to oppose completely the Marxist interpretation of history Molnár did. However, it sounds strange to us, for example, the translation he made in the book Chelčický of the expression '*robotná Chudina*' to '*poor working class*'. In the English version, we have:

They are satisfied to know that authority is good, and they find their approbation and proof in their round belly, fattened at the expense and pain of the 'poor working class' (MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 138, our emphasis).

In the original Czech, we have:

To vydává svědectví jim, že jest double panovati, poněvadž feared panováními, lahodnými břicho rozkošemi Pasu obecně in bolesti '*chudiny robotné*' (CHELČICKÝ, 2011, p. 200, our emphasis).

The Czech word used today for 'class' is *třída* and working class is *Delnická třída*. The word *dělnický* originates from the verb *dělat* [to do], while the word *robotná* has its origin in *robota* [Manual labor]. Already *třída* comes from the verb *třídit* [to sort] while *Chudina* comes from the adjective *Chudý*

[poor]. So, *chudiny robotné* would be something like 'the poor who do manual labor' or even saved the temporal context, 'the poor peasantry'. We know the difficulties of a translation process and nor we intend to review at this time the translation from Molnár, since this is a process of many months of work, but we cannot let to wonder this use of the word 'class', which sounded to us, at least anachronistic. This without forgetting that the author made a direct intervention in the text of the Czech thinker inserting a term that was present in his interpretation and not directly in the source.

The net of true faith

His main writing at least that one that circulated among historians and was quoted by Tolstoy, *Siet Viery Práve* [The net of true faith, which appears in modern Czech editions simply as *Sít' Víry* - The net of faith] was written between 1440 and 1443 (BOUBÍN, 2011). Many of the ideas advocated by Chelčický, according to what the historians state who we observed here, are present in this work, although they have been gestated in other previous writings.

The Net of True Faith is a text organized in two parts, with 95 and 51 chapters for the first and second half respectively. Molnár said that the second part contains illustrative examples of the first, in which the key concepts of the author were presented. At this time, we work only with the first part from the translation of Molnár and references to the Czech text in some places. The author constructs an interpretative metaphor of the biblical passage in Luke 5: 4-7, in which Jesus speaks to Simon (who is called Peter) to throw his net and to fish. This episode is the starting point of the book and Chelčický interprets his 'spiritual sense'. Inspired in verse 10, where Jesus says to Simon, 'thou shalt catch men', the Czech thinker says that the scriptures are like a net that fishes all the believers of the world ocean. However, as a normal fishing net, it also fishes what it should not. In his words:

Thus the Holy Scriptures are woven and prepared like a physical net, one knot tied to another, until the whole great net is made; similarly, there are tied one to another the different truths of the Holy Scripture, so that they can enclose a multitude of believers (and every single believer with all his spiritual and physical gifts in order that, surrounded by the net, he might be drawn out of the ocean of this world). And this net is capable of pulling out everyone from the sea of deep and gross sins.

Now we can understand that this net began to break not so much for the multitude of things caught –

like Peter's net – but, just as in a physical sea, a great number of other repellent things get caught in the net, so also a number of lost souls, heretics and offenders, enter the net of faith (sometimes outwardly being of the faith but later – in times of temptation – reverting to abominations and heresies) (CHELČICKÝ apud MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 52).

This allegory of the net will be the support of Chelčický entire argument. He will claim that, in the world today, “[...] nets are a patched of rotten ropes, mixed with arguments of different people [...]” (CHELČICKÝ apud MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 53). He opposes to the different human interpretations of the scriptures, a heavily theme defended by Jan Hus in his letters written from Constance, what we find, for example, in letter 93, written to the members of the University of Prague, when he states:

You should know that I have neither revoked nor abjured a single article. The Council desired that I declar that all and every article drawn from my books is false. I refused unless they should show its falsity by Scripture. I said that whatever false sense exists in any of the articles, and commit it to the correction of the Lord Jesus Christ (HUS apud SPINKA, 1972, p. 198).

Also, to Chelčický, the true faith, which moves the true believer, is in the words of Christ, since that Christ's words were enough for Simon fished fish. Then,

It is indeed imperative to judge any teaching by the words of Christ and by his life, to see whether it agrees with his examples and words. A wise man, considering all these things and establishing their agreement with the teaching of Christ, will have true faith (CHELČICKÝ apud MOLNÁR, p. 55).

Moreover, the image of the net which fishes the faithful, but also those who are on the wrong path, resembles to the discussion of Hus in his treatise about the Church in which he states there are those who are in the Church, but they are not from the Church:

Reflecting upon these things, the faithful should be on his guard against this conclusion: the reprobate are in God's holy church, therefore they are a part of it. For it has already been said that it is one thing to be in the church and another to be of the church or to be a part or member of the church. For as it does not follow, because the chaff and the tares are among the wheat or mixed up with the wheat, therefore the chaff is the wheat, so the conclusion does not follow in the above proposition (HUSS, 1976, p. 46).

The net of the true faith, to Chelčický, is a place of full trust in the words of Christ and the law of God, which leads to a contrary attitude to secular

organization and authority, i.e., contrary to earthly laws established by paganism:

Therefore we of this generation, sitting as it were under the shadow of these laws, discuss weakly the law of God or His rule, because the darkness of these laws has befogged our eyes. And so, groping our way in the dark, we guess and wonder: if the doctrine of Christ is sufficient by itself, without the addition of human laws, can it restore here on earth the full Christian religion? We ask this in fear, and with trembling we affirm it because this law of Christ was adequate to institute a Christian humanity with all his disciples and without the admixture of human institutions (CHELČICKÝ apud MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 67).

Yet, in the image of the net, Chelčický brings the figure of two whales that entered it: the emperor and the pope. Both ‘entered the net’ along with a group of ‘harmful fish’ and there they were sleeping:

No one at the time of fishing knew that the net of faith had also enclosed a great number of adverse fishes because they remained quiet in the net for a long time after Peter and other apostles. However, after a certain period of time, when men were sleeping and lulled into security, their enemy came in the night and sowed weeds among the wheat. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also (CHELČICKÝ apud MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 72).

What caused the entry of these whales and of these fish in the net, to Chelčický, was the Donation of Constantine. Le Goff and Schmitt (2006, p. 568) explain the place of this supposed donation to the Middle Ages:

The progressive development of the primacy of the Rome bishop is clearly a major aspect of the history of the Papacy in the Middle Ages. To signify the authority of one who, as the successor of Peter, considered himself as responsible for the universal Church, Pope Gelasius I (492-496) used the term *Principatus* (Principality), derived from *princeps* (‘the First’, ‘the Prince’). The primacy of the pope was by far the most significant result of *imitatio imperii* (‘Imitation Empire’), that the Roman Church had practiced. This formula goes back to the false ‘Donation of Constantine’, written in Rome in the pontificate of Paul I (757-767), and that meant, exactly *ad imitationem imperii ad* (‘In imitation of the empire’), Constantine had given to Pope Sylvester I and his successors the constituent elements of imperial ceremonial in order to make them almost emperors. The document, it was assumed, was also given to them ‘our palace [from Lateran] as well as the city of Rome and all the provinces, regions and cities in Italy and throughout the West’ (LE GOFF; SCHMITT, 2006, p. 568, author's emphasis).

As proof of the falsity of this document was made only by Lucretius in the sixteenth century, during the Czech thinker time it was thought that donation was true. Both Chelčický, as Jan Hus, gave great importance to this event. Hus placed in the Donation of Constantine the origin of papal power:

For the emperor Constantine, about a.D. 301, thought and commanded that the highest bishop should be called by all pope and in his dotation that name also sprang up. [...] *Castrensis*, 4: 14, describes how the excellency of the Roman empire helped the papacy of the Roman pontiff above others. He says: 'The Nicene council conferred this prerogative on the Roman pontiff, that, just as Augustus had rank above other kings, so the Roman pontiff should be held as bishop, and the pope be called chief father - *principalis pater*'. The origin, however, of this name and this excellency is to be found in the dotation of the church, as is indicated in the *Decretum*, 96, *Dist. Constant* (HUSS, 1976, p. 129, author's emphasis).

Chelčický, however, goes further and bequeaths to the Donation of Constantine not only the origin of the papal power, but the corruption of the clergy which expanded, on his vision, to all society. The pope does everything to ensure that the net of Peter do not catch the true believers:

This Whale has so torn the net of faith that it has been rendered useless for catching fishes. And if somebody should laboriously mend it in fear and try to 'fish' people unto salvation, he forfeits his neck, for (the Pope) hates the faith which is the net of Peter. That is why he invaded the net; he did not mend it without reason, for it bothered him and harassed him to no end. For, wanting to have a wide way, he sundered the net of faith so that it would not hinder him and his freedom of movement. And he cannot tolerate anyone to fish with the whole net, for, in doing so, the (fisher) would reveal him naked and destroy his work, forasmuch as a complete net would mean shame to his face and death to his pride and luxury. Desiring to continue in his exalted rule and to be given dominions and honors greater than the Emperor, he is bound to make room for himself and to destroy the net; he can endure only its tatters. Where its gaps would reveal his shameful nakedness he mends them with patches... (CHELČICKÝ apud MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 82).

But, unlike Hus, who directs all his 'attack' against the pope and the church hierarchy, Chelčický also 'attacks' the emperor, as he brought the pagan mode of social organization, with its laws, to the Christian world:

The second whale that has invaded and enormously torn the net of faith is the Emperor with his pagan rule and offices with pagan rights and laws. He is the

root of paganism into which Christianity has turned; it is he who opened the wound from which pours the blood that is spilled among all Christians – even here – and all blood that shall ever be shed. When he entered the net of faith with these evils, he despoiled the innocence and purity of those who were in the net in accordance with the apostolic establishment (CHELČICKÝ apud MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 83).

We raised two hypotheses for this difference in attitude between the two Czechs in relation to the imperial power. Hus had good relations with the Emperor Wenceslas, including being the father confessor of the queen. His opposition was against the emperor Sigismund, brother of Wenceslaus that took place of this and this would be one of the protagonists in the condemnation of Hus, and not against the imperial institution. Chelčický already wrote at a time after the death of Wenceslas, when Sigismund was already figure not loved by the Czechs. This is our first hypothesis. The second, basing on the fact that Chelčický came from another social position. Let us remember, for example, that he was not a clergyman, and therefore, his relationship with the imperial power was different from Hus.

Chelčický proposed a life that reached out to the Primitive Church, an image as common at the time as so differently understood. Many of his analysis of how a Christian should live in relation to the secular power assume that the early Christians could live among the Gentiles, but that changed with Constantine:

As mentioned in the beginning, the churches of God converted to the faith of Christ from the Gentiles and Jews were scattered throughout all countries and regions, and speaking all the languages of the Gentiles for over three hundred years. They were abiding only by the will of God and paid honor only to the gracious laws of Christ's Gospel, without any addition of either papal or imperial laws, not having among themselves any kings with sovereign rights. They were servants among the pagans and their lords, subject to them only corporeally, paying their taxes and performing other physical services until the days of Constantine (CHELČICKÝ apud MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 83).

His proposal is simple: it is only possible to live according to the law of God, which is the law of love, which impels each to help others and does not need external judges to resolve their disputes, as

[...] those who live by the laws of love have a healthy and strong spiritual life. In times of iniquity, temptations, and tribulations they can stand firm, suffering injustice and not returning evil for evil. They have no need of judges and courts of appeal to

carry them through difficult days of tension (CHELČICKÝ apud MOLNÁR, 1947, p. 83).

These were some of Chelčický proposals for the 'times of iniquity' which hovered around him. There were many laws, many artificial and unnecessary inserts for human interaction. His pacifism passed through the identification in order to remove everything that does not come from God, with a view to a life governed by the law of love.

Final considerations

We cannot let to notice the similarity between these ideas of Chelčický and the conclusion of the of travel of the Pilgrim of Comenius in the work *The Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart*. This, after the character knew the worldwide with the glasses given by his first guides, the Searchall and Falsehood, he panics, almost faints and calls for God. He hears His voice, looks inside his heart and there begins the search for the truth. So now guided by Christ, he looks again at the world and realizes that he will only find his peace since he surrenders totally to his guide, saying,

And now, at this moment, I give myself entirely to Thee. And give me only strength so that I do not turn me away from you again in favor of worldly things, handing me to the follies that it is full. Thy grace protects me, because I will entirely depend on it (COMENIUS, 2010, p. 140).

In a way, and this and our next statement, at this time, as a hypothesis to be further developed, Chelčický is the Comenius Pilgrim. We understand this way, because one of the main findings of the Pilgrim is that the Christian does not need many laws. Would these words not fit the character of the work of Comenius in the mouth of Chelčický?

The essence of the whole law is summed up in loving God above all that can be named and sincerely wish good for others as for oneself. I realized the essence of God's laws summed up in these two commandments highly commendable, and I've even seen and proved that they are more valuable than all the myriad laws, rules and decrees of the world. In fact, they are a thousand times more perfect.

For one who loves God with sincerity and without restrictions, it is not necessary to prescribe himself when, where, how and how often should serve Him, worship Him and honor Him. (...) Likewise, who loves his neighbor as himself does not need more detailed instructions on when, how and in what circumstances it should serve Him and in what situation is unlikely to harm him and how to pay the debts that you have. Love will tell you and show you

how to behave with others (COMENIUS, 2010, p. 149-150).

Chelčický sought in his life, increasingly isolate himself from the world and thus suggested to those who shared the same beliefs. A nephew of Archbishop Utraquist Rokycana called Řehoř [Gregory], based on the writings of Chelčický, founded a community near the village of Kunwald, between the years 1457 and 1458 (ATWOOD, 2009, p. 150-152). This community was the *Unitas Fratrum* [Unity of Brethren], group in which Comenius would be part more than a century and a half later. The group did not remain faithful to all Chelčický ideas all that time. However, the impact of his ideas in this comenian vision of the lost world and a paradise found only in the isolation from this, within the paradise of the heart, shows there to be continuity.

This approaching between Hus, Comenius and Chelčický proves our initial hypothesis that smaller figures are always present in the construction of the ideas of the great names of history and it is enough to change the focus of our historian lens to observe the existence of these subjects.

Hus and Chelčický wrote and acted in the early fifteenth century. For the Czechs, that time was of great social upheaval, since they were wrapped in battles, traditionally known as the Hussite Wars, with strong charge of religious and nationalist themes. Just remembering the hymn sung by the Taborites presented above. We have by hypothesis that the comenian vision of Panorthosia (correction of the whole) brings the marks of a Hussite Christian universalism born of a national sentiment besides a world view near Chelčický's, from which the comparison between the *Labyrinth of the World* and *Net of Faith* above provided evidence.

Operating under the category 'minor educator' we found a guy around the Comenius (the 'greater' educator). One may ask if these surroundings were not 'extended' too much. How many years (or decades, or centuries) can be used to circumscribe the surroundings of a subject, his writings or ideas? We remember Barraclough with his historical review of Europe, proposing a different conception of the Middle and Contemporary Ages, stating that (BARRACLOUGH, 1964, p. 86). "[...] Every history that has any meaning is contemporary history [...]". We also remember Carlo Ginzburg with his 'Eurasian conjectures' (GINZBURG, 2007), proposing to study the Witches Sabbath (XV-XVII centuries) from historical connections temporally very distant. We understand that the

historical movements, even if in a micro-historical reading, are not necessarily observable only in a short period of years.

We found a guy who wrote a book whose ideas have shaped the creation of a religious group that has managed to remain active - and transform - for nearly two hundred years. And we cannot deny the presence of the marks of this religiosity in comenian work. Petr Chelčický was the redirector of the Hussite impulse to the path of pacifism. Comenius, while trying to preserve his religious group, preserved somewhat of Chelčický positions, an educator who is scarcely seen in the history of education, because his contribution to education seems very small compared with that of Comenius. But Comenius did not do his 'pampaedic' and 'panorthotic' great design alone. He followed, met, discussed, and recalled the work of many 'smaller' Czechs educators as that pacifist who died in the mid-fifteenth century.

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