

JOHN HUSS

The Goose of the Reformation

John Huss: The Goose of the Reformation

© 2015 Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church

Published by:

Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church

201 Pandan Gardens, Singapore 609337

Website: calvarypandan.sg

Email: enquiry@calvarypandan.sg

This booklet is made available free to our members and friends.

Where copyrights have been infringed, we crave the forbearance of the parties concerned.

We trust that any infringements will be graciously overlooked.

CONTENTS

Foreword	3
1. Pre-Reformation Movements	5
2. The Life of John Huss	10
3. The Trial and Martyrdom of John Huss	17
4. The Teachings of John Huss	28
5. The Legacy of John Huss	32
Timeline of Huss' Life and Legacy	34
Bibliography	36

FOREWORD

(JOHN HUSS, 1373 – 6 JULY 1415)

The year 2015 commemorates the 600th anniversary of John Huss' martyrdom. He was known as "the goose that became a swan." His surname "Hus" means "goose." The enemies of God wanted to cook the goose because the Roman Catholic Church hated John Huss and all that he did and stood for! We remember men like John Huss for their courage and strength in the face of great threats and persecution. They counted their lives as loss for Christ, as the only way to live. For all believers, there is no better way to live than to live and die for Christ, which is the greatest honour they could ever wish and hope for!

This was the life of John Huss. He was a man of humble beginnings but he impacted saints like Martin Luther whom God used to spark the flames of the 16th

Century Reformation, 100 years after Huss' martyrdom. Although men like John Huss and Martin Luther have been called home to glory as their service for Christ was completed, their testimony of courage and strength continues to encourage the hearts of other believers.

This is what a godly testimony can do and this is what every believer's life must be like even after he is gone from this world. Be encouraged Christian, whoever and wherever you are. Be faithful unto death for Christ's sake. Hebrews 12:1 (KJV) reminds us, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Amen.

1

PRE-REFORMATION MOVEMENTS

The story of the Reformation really began before 1517, the year in which Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the castle door of Wittenberg. The story can be traced back to the time of pre-Reformation, which laid the foundations and paved the way for the 16th century Protestant Reformation. Since the 11th century, God had been working in the hearts and minds of the people, and dissent was already stirring among the people. Reforming movements by the lay people outside of the Roman Catholic Church had already started. Groups like the Albigenses, which started in the 11th century, and the Waldensian movement, which started in the late 12th century, had already begun to stand against the Roman Catholic Church.

ALBIGENSES

The Albigenses, so called due to their huge numbers around Albi in Southern France, called the Roman Church the Great Harlot mentioned in Revelation 17 and the pope the Antichrist, and also criticized the corruption of the clergy of their time. Allegedly, they had several wrong teachings (followed the Gnostics, Paulicians, Bogomils, Manichean heresy of Dualism). We cannot be sure whether this is true because much of what we know about them was written by their enemies who might have wrongly pinned heresy on them. Nevertheless, they protested against the Mass, denied hell and purgatory, denied giving alms and prayers for the dead, denied

invocation of saints, and condemned the system of idolatry and superstition which reigned in the Church of Rome. The New Testament was of greatest authority in their faith, overruling the authority of the Roman Church and the pope.

They were condemned by Alexander III at the Third Council of Lateran of 1179 due to their reformed religion. However, that did not stop them. Their influence spread to Italy, Spain, and England and they flourished in the twelfth and thirteenth century amidst persecution. In order to subdue them, in 1208, Innocent III raised a forty-day Holy War, the Albigensian Crusade, against them, led by Simon de Montfort. Soon after, the king of France forbade the laity from reading Scripture. This, and the Inquisition established by Pope Gregory IX in the south at Toulouse, Albi, and other towns during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries managed to stamp them out.

PETER WALDO AND THE WALDENSES

The Waldenses, also known as the Poor Men of Lyons or Sandalati, were simple, unlearned lay evangelists who appeared in the last quarter of the twelfth century. Their founder was Peter Waldo, a rich merchant of Lyons. He repented of the worldliness of his life, and at the instruction of the priest, he sold all he had, gave some money to his wife and distributed the rest to the poor,

and sent his two daughters to a convent. In 1170, he then employed men to translate the Bible into the vernacular, and went around preaching and teaching. About a decade later, Waldo gathered a group of men, who also had the desire to bring God's truth in the Bible to others. These were the Waldenses. Waldo was the head of the Waldensian society till 1217 when he died.

The Waldensian movement started in Southern France and spread to Germany, Austria and Italy. The Waldenses went out in pairs like the disciples of old to preach to the poor in the vernacular. In 1179, they appeared at the Third Lateran Council and pleaded with Alexander III to allow them to preach and continue with their lifestyle. They even gave him a copy of their Bible translation. However, Alexander III denied them permission to preach apart from the invitation of the clergy. Nevertheless, they continued preaching. Five years later in 1184, the synod of Verona anathematized, expelled and excommunicated them for their rebellion. Later, they endured harsh persecution under Innocent VIII who announced a crusade against them in 1487. They survived mainly in the Piedmont region of Italy. However, the worst persecution came during the 15th and 16th century after they accepted the Reformation and were absorbed into Protestantism.

Initially, the Waldenses followed some Roman Catholic teachings. They existed like a religious order of the Roman Church. The Waldenses did not reject the authority of the pope, the sacraments, and the system of the Roman Church. However, as they continually and constantly studied the Word of God, they soon saw the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. In obedience to God's Word, they started to reject all the

erroneous doctrines of the Roman Church. They opposed purgatory, prayers for the dead, did not go to Mass, did not confess to the priest to receive absolution etc. In the Middle Ages, the Waldensian teachings adhered most closely to the Bible among the many sects, with many of its ideas anticipating those of the Protestants of the Reformation. They believed that all good men were priests, and placed emphasis on following the Apostles' practices and obeying the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. As such, they willingly made the choice of poverty and the vow of chastity. In all their conduct they chose to obey God rather than man, which their opponents distorted to mean non-submission to the authority of the pope and Roman Church.

They firmly believed that the Bible was the final rule of faith and life and that everyone should have the Bible in his own language. Hence, Scripture was used widely by them, as opposed to the Roman Church's limiting the use of Scripture to the Roman clergy. They were convinced that the preached Word of God (and not the sacraments) was necessary for salvation. They saw the importance of preaching and taught that laymen could also perform that function, and not the priests only. They denied that the Roman church was the only one that could interpret Scripture. They had their own system of government with clergy, bishops, priests and deacons. In 1350, they came up with a treatise which aimed to prove that the system of popery was of the Antichrist. They had literature of their own, which included various Bible translations.

JOHN WYCLIFFE AND THE LOLLARDS

Pope Innocent III (pope from 1198-1216) brought the medieval papacy to the height of its power. He believed that the pope was "the vicar of Christ" and as such, had

supreme authority over the whole earth, so that even civil kings had to obey him. He ruled mightily, but at the same time destroyed the power of the Holy Roman Empire. This left his successors in a weak position. His successor Boniface VIII (pope from 1294-1303) later saw the papal power decline when he, without a strong Roman emperor, failed to subjugate the kings of England and France. Boniface VIII's successor Clement V transferred the papal court from Rome to Avignon in 1309. There, he was heavily influenced by the French king. This was the start of the Babylonian Captivity of the papacy (1309-1377), during which the papacy lost much of its power, partly due to the gain in power by opposing rising nation-states. Also, the English people were reluctant to pay their huge and unreasonable papal taxations. In time, people grew more and more unhappy with the abuse of power of the papal clergy, their neglect of spiritual duties, greed, corruption and immorality. People yearned for reform. It was during this time that John Wycliffe appeared on the scene.

John Wycliffe, the Morning Star of the Reformation was born in Ipswell, Yorkshire, in the diocese of Durham, and lived from around 1324 to 28 December 1384. At Oxford, he studied theology and ecclesiastical law, and also won early recognition in philosophy. He had been associated with Merton, Queen's and was even the master, and later, head of Canterbury Hall. For the first part of his life, Wycliffe was mainly an Oxford schoolman. Wycliffe's public career coincided with the time when nationalistic antipapal sentiments and anti-ecclesiasticism was brewing among the English people, due to their reluctance to having their papal taxation sent to England. This state of events greatly

influenced his views on papal authority.

In 1374, he made a trip to Bruges on the king's commission, and after his return to England, he became more active in religious reform. In 1376, he wrote *Of Civil Dominion* in which he stated that if the clergy misused ecclesiastical properties, civil authorities had the right to take them away. He rose to stand more firmly against the pope, with John of Gaunt (duke of Lancaster with very free notions of religion and was at enmity with the clergy) backing him and providing him protection from ecclesiastical violence. Wycliffe sought to reform the Roman Church by removing the Roman Church's immoral clergymen, confiscating ecclesiastical property and refuting her false teachings. 1378 marked the year he inaugurated himself as a doctrinal reformer. After 1379, he started going against the teachings of the Roman Church with revolutionary ideas. Some of them included: Christ is the head of the church, not the pope; the Bible is the sole authority of life and truth, not the pope; and the church should follow the example of the New Testament church.

Wycliffe introduced many theological and practical reforms. He preached against the pope (his usurpation, infallibility, pride, avarice and tyranny), bishops (their unbecoming extravagant lifestyle) and friars (they were begging due to sloth and misconceptions of Christ as a beggar). He also warned the people against the deceptions of the Roman Church, such as clerical celibacy, indulgences, transubstantiation, confession, absolution, false ideas behind pilgrimages, and condemned their superstition. He was the first to call the pope the Antichrist. Philip Schaff summarized Wycliffe's assault of the Roman Church under five heads: 1) the nature of the Church, 2) the papacy,

3) the priesthood, 4) the doctrine of transubstantiation and 5) the use of the Scriptures.¹ Of the nature of the Church, Wycliffe said, “The Church is the totality of those who are predestined to blessedness. It includes the Church triumphant in heaven and the Church militant or men on earth. No one who is eternally lost has part in it. There is one universal Church, and outside of it there is no salvation. Its head is Christ. No pope may say that he is the head, for he cannot say that he is elect or even a member of the Church.”²

By sermons, tracts, pamphlets and other writings which were penned with much conviction and passion, he reached the hearts of the people in his bid to break down priestly pretensions. Wycliffe also exalted preaching and attempted to bring the pure Gospel to the people. In around 1380, Wycliffe began a movement against the friars. He trained “pore priests”, otherwise known as Lollards, to be itinerant preachers. The Lollards were men who adopted Wycliffe’s views, and were at first composed of Wycliffe’s supporters at Oxford led by Nicholas of Hereford, and some in the royal court. Despite persecution against them, the movement rapidly gained strength, especially among lay people, and reached the merchants, members and knights of the English gentry, a few members of the House of Commons, and even the lower clergy. These went around spreading Lollard teachings, which became very popular in the Oxford University.

On top of preaching against the errors of the Roman Church, another of the main missions of Wycliffe and the Lollards was

to translate the Bible into English, enabling the English peasants to read it themselves. Wycliffe successfully translated the New Testament into English from the Latin Vulgate in 1382. Nicholas of Hereford of the Lollards finished translating the Old Testament into English later on in 1384, and it was later revised by Wycliffe’s secretary, John Purvey. During the same year of Wycliffe’s completed New Testament English translation, his teachings were condemned by a church court (Synod of London) and he was banished from the University and forced to leave Oxford. He settled in Lutterworth, Leicestershire. There, he never stopped labouring and spreading his teachings, and finished works such as the polemic tract *Cruciata* and a theological treatise *Triologus*. At Lutterworth, Wycliffe died of a stroke while hearing mass on Holy Innocent’s Day, 28 December 1384.

After Wycliffe’s death, his reform continued on with the Lollards. From 1390 to 1425, its number grew so rapidly that half the population were Lollards. It was a decentralized movement with no specific doctrinal system. However, they did come up with the Twelve Conclusions, containing its main teachings. They presented it to the Parliament of 1395. By 1400, the Roman Catholic Church found favour in the courts with the rise of King Henry IV. In 1401, Henry IV passed the first English statute, the *De Haereticis Comburendo*, for the burning of heretics, such that many distinguished men connected with the earliest period of Wycliffism recanted. Yet, others stood firm in their belief. The Lollards’ first martyr, William Sawtre, was

¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 6, chapter 5, section 41. Quoted from http://www.bible.ca/history/philip-schaff/6_ch05.htm#_edn111, which states, “This material has been carefully compared, corrected and emended (according to the 1910 edition of Charles Scribner’s Sons) by The Electronic Bible Society, Dallas, TX, 1998.”

² <http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/john-wycliffe.htmlChrist:>”

actually burned a few days before the act was passed.

In 1414, a Lollard uprising of about 20,000 men led by Sir John Oldcastle was stopped by Henry V, and this brought a slowdown to the Lollards' activity. From 1450 to 1517, they were limited to rural districts, held meetings in secret, and operated mainly among traders and craftsmen, supported by a few clerical adherents. This movement lasted till the time they were absorbed into Protestantism. The Lollard tradition facilitated the spread of Protestantism and predisposed opinion in favour of King Henry VIII's anticlerical legislation during the English Reformation. Philip Schaff says of the movement, "Lollardy was an anticipation of the Reformation of

the sixteenth century, and did something in the way of preparing the mind of the English people for that change. Professed by many clerics, it was emphatically a movement of laymen."³

One theme that distinguishes the time of Reformation from the time of Pre-reformation is the emphasis on "justification by faith". The 16th century Reformation had this additional aspect where the teaching of justification by faith was emphasised. Nonetheless, the pre-reformers, in many ways, paved the way for the Reformation and may be regarded as reformers themselves.

It was during such a time that the Lord raised up John Huss, the goose of the reformation, to shine for him.

³ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 6, chapter 5, section 43.

THE LIFE OF JOHN HUSS

TIMES OF JOHN HUSS

John Huss was born in 1373 in the southern part of Bohemia, in the village of Husinec, Prague. He was born in a time when ecclesiastical and civil powers were combined under the papacy. In 1302, Boniface VIII's bull *Unam Sanctum* had decreed that the Roman Catholic Church's authority was highest and supreme. The pope was regarded as the supreme representative of God on earth endowed with divine authority, and thus was infallible and his commands were to be heeded absolutely.

The Roman Catholic Church did not want the lay people to have their own copies of the Bible or to read and interpret it on their own, lest they come up with heresies and teachings/practices deviating from theirs. Therefore, they banned and punished those who attempted otherwise. The lay people never looked to Scriptures or interpreted them on their own, and generally speaking, they based their beliefs on what the Roman clergy taught. Those who taught against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church or were not submissive to their authority were deemed heretics, and could be sentenced to death. This death was in terms of excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church and physical death. This was part of the Inquisitions that first started in the 12th century to combat heresy, whereby the Roman Catholic Church would set up tribunals

to investigate and sentence those believed to be guilty of heresy and punish them physically. This way, the Roman Catholic Church had both ecclesiastical and civil power. Huss fell victim to the abuse of civil powers granted unto the Roman Catholic Church.

On top of the above issues, the lay people also depended on performing the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church to grant them divine grace and life, some of which were even deemed necessary for salvation. The major problems facing the church in Western Europe then can be categorized into three main groups: 1) Papal absolutism, 2) The Inquisitions, and 3) The Roman Catholic Church as an organization that could dispense life.

At the same time, there were changes in the education system which aided in the movement towards the Reformation. Scholasticism, a method of learning which employed critical thought to defend a teaching, placed strong emphasis on dialectical reasoning. Dialectical reasoning was where people used rational arguments for or against a teaching through discourse, to resolve disagreements and make the perceived truth a united whole. This method of Scholasticism was widely used in the 1100s to 1700s. Scholasticism had two main schools of thought, namely that of realism and nominalism. Realism emphasized universals, whereas

nominalism emphasized individuals. As such, realism supported the system of the Roman Church, where individuals were subordinate to the institution or organization of the Roman Church (people depended on the sacraments of the institution, had to follow the teachings of the whole group as set by the pope and clergy); whereas nominalism opposed the system of the Roman Church (people could read and interpret Scripture on their own, did not have to go through the system of confession and absolution but could go to God directly on their own).

By the time of the birth of John Huss, the mind of Europe was contending to be released from the tyrannical bondage of the Roman Church. People had begun to recognize that they could have a personal relationship with God individually outside of the Roman Church. They asserted their rights to obey teachings as their individual conscience dictated, according to the truth of Scripture, and not have to absolutely obey whatever the pope said. Scripture, not what the pope said, was the supreme and final authority in belief and practice; and the conscience, not the papal decrees, was their guide. They turned away from the Roman Church organization to the living Christ. They also objected to the Roman Church's right to exercise physical punishment against heretics. John Huss joined this fight against the medieval order.

In the city of Prague, where John Huss lived, there were three main issues going on. Firstly, there was a moral movement, which protested against the clergy's immorality and neglect of spiritual duties. Secondly, there was a doctrinal movement, which was the result of Wycliffe's teachings that had spread there. Thirdly, there was a patriotic movement, where the Bohemian people wanted more power to govern the

affairs of Bohemia instead of the Germans holding power over them. John Huss had a leading part to play in all three issues.

By nature, John Huss did not like to court danger and would rather withdraw from fights. However, because of his unwavering convictions that were contrary to that of the Roman Church, he stood against their mighty power. He had the right motivations and purposes, was popular among the people, had unabated zeal, was dauntless in facing his foes, was blameless in his moral life and personal conduct, and could speak powerfully and clearly. These qualities made him suitable to lead in these reforming movements. In fact, Huss even gained the support of King Wenzel and his wife Queen Sophia. The Archbishop Zbynek of Hasenberg was initially drawn to him too, but later opposed him.

HUSS' EARLY LIFE

Born of poor peasant parents who saw education as a way out of poverty, Huss studied and worked towards priesthood, which at that time was considered a means to wealth. This points to the luxurious life of the Roman clergy, who gained their wealth through the exploitation of the people. At 16 years of age, he enrolled in the University of Prague, and obtained his BA in 1393, BTh in 1394 and MA in 1396. Whilst studying, he had earned money to survive and to pay for his studies through singing and doing manual work. But after he got his MA, he taught in the University of Prague and got his income from that.

Five years later in 1401, Huss was ordained a priest and was also appointed Dean of the Philosophical Faculty at the University of Prague. The following year in 1402, he was chosen to be Rector of the University of Prague, a position he filled for six months. On March 1402, he became a preacher at

the Bethlehem Chapel (aka Chapel of the Holy Infants/Innocents of Bethlehem) in Prague. As a teacher in the University of Prague where novel ideas about the church were constantly brought up and discussed, and as a preacher of the Bethlehem Chapel which was raised in 1391 for preaching in the Bohemian language and boasted a tradition of Scripture-based preaching, Huss was stationed in prime positions to influence the people of that time.

HUSS AND THE MORAL MOVEMENT

Today, we have at least nine collections of Huss' Latin sermons, as well as some of his Bohemian sermons. Huss as a preacher was Bible-based, clear in his explanation of the text whereby the lay person had no difficulty understanding them, and drove home the application of the message directly and simply into the hearts of the hearers. He emphasized moral conduct and edification, always bore in mind the needs and rights of the lay people, and often spoke against the failures of the papal clergy. He accused and rebuked the clergy of immorality, greed, simony, sacrilege and exploitation of the lay people for their own benefit.

Although Huss' sermons were not very dynamic in style, they had a lasting impression on the hearers. "He addressed himself to the understanding, aroused reflection, taught and persuaded, and at the same time was not lacking in pungent utterance. The keenness and clearness of his mind, the tact with which he got at the very heart of subjects under discussion, the ease with which he presented a case before his hearers' eyes, his wide reading, especially in the Scriptures, the decision and the logical consequences with which he pressed home a whole system of teachings secured for him great superiority over his

colleagues and contemporaries. To this were added moral earnestness of character, a pious mind, a daily life in which enemies could find no stain, glowing devotion for the moral uplift of his people and the reformation of the church..."⁴

As part of ridding church abuses, the Archbishop Zbynek sent Huss with a team to investigate the authenticity of a poplar relic called the "red wafer". This relic first appeared in 1383, was located at Wylsnack, and many pilgrims from various parts of Europe flocked there to receive its alleged miraculous qualities of the holy blood of Christ. Huss confirmed that it was a fraud. After this, much discussion arose in the University on the subject of Christ's blood. Huss then wrote a treatise entitled "The Blood of Christ—de sanguine Christi."

HUSS AND THE DOCTRINAL MOVEMENT

By the time of John Huss, John Wycliffe's teachings had spread to Prague. Wycliffe's teachings were increasingly taught and studied in the University of Prague and they divided the University into two camps; one for and the other against Wycliffe's teachings.

On 28 May 1403, 45 articles from Wycliffe's teachings were presented to the heads of the University of Prague and they were to consider their truthfulness. The end result was the forbidding of the 45 articles. Three years later, in 1406, a synod was convened which reaffirmed the action taken in 1403 that forbade Wycliffe's 45 articles. In the same year, Nicholas Faulfisch brought a document from Oxford University to Prague. The content said that Wycliffe was a good man and not a heretic and should not be condemned. This letter heated up

⁴ David Schaff, John Huss: his life, teachings and death, after five hundred years, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), 42.

the contention between the Wycliffites and their adversaries. Finally, this led to a meeting on 20 May 1408, during which Huss protested against the condemnation of Wycliffe's 45 articles. The conclusion was that the articles should not be taught in a way to give a heretical or erroneous sense. Also, Wycliffe's statements should not be used or discussed at public disputations and that bachelors of theology should avoid lecturing on Wycliffe's three tracts, the *Dialogus*, *Trialogus* and the *Eucharistia*.

In 1408, some of the clergy brought charges of Wycliffry against Huss, because they did not like that Huss spoke against them. The Archbishop Zbynek, previously not opposed to Huss, and had even appointed Huss as Synodal preacher in 1405, had to make a choice between Huss who held to Wycliffe's teachings, and those who opposed them. For fear of angering the pope through siding with Huss and essentially labeling himself as a Wycliffite too, Zbynek sided with Huss' opponents. The clergy managed to turn Zbynek against Huss. However, most of the lay people, as well as King Wenzel and Queen Sophia, were on Huss' side. Queen Sophia had even made Huss her personal confessor and attended Bethlehem Chapel.

HUSS AND THE PATRIOTIC MOVEMENT

At the same time, another issue was going on. There was a Western Schism in that two popes were claiming the papacy: Gregory XII in Rome (elected 1406) versus Benedict XIII in Avignon (1394). In 1409, they convened an ecumenical synod at Pisa to heal the schism. Originally, the synod wanted to depose them both and elect a new pope, Alexander V. But in the end, all three were popes. Wenzel, king of Bohemia, originally supported Gregory XII, but changed to a neutral stand at this

meeting. King Wenzel asked the University and also asked Archbishop Zbynek to be neutral also, but Zbynek still supported Gregory XII. When it came to the University deciding whether to be neutral, they had a vote. Huss and the Bohemians at the University went with King Wenzel and were neutral, but the Germans at the University went with Gregory XII.

In governing the University of Prague, the Germans had three votes, while the Bohemians had only one vote. Huss was against foreigners having so much more power over Bohemia than the native people did and protested against it. After certain things happened, King Wenzel finally issued a document to change the constitution of the University that returned power to the Bohemians. He took other actions to make sure it happened. Huss was one of the leaders in this transfer of power. As a result, the Germans did not like him. This event also associated Huss with the Bohemian cause of patriotic reform. Because of this change, many of the foreigners withdrew from the University of Prague, and started a new University at Leipzig. Because Huss supported King Wenzel and was neutral, Zbynek also became hostile towards Huss. Under this new order, on 15 October 1409, Huss was elected the first rector. From then on, the University of Prague was closely associated with Hussitism, just as Oxford was closely associated with Wycliffry.

HUSS' EXCOMMUNICATION

On 26 June 1409, Alexander V was elected as pope. Zbynek the Archbishop reported to Alexander V that the heretical teachings of Wycliffe had spread. On 20 December 1409, Alexander V instructed Zbynek in a papal bull to take action against them in the pope's name and power. In March 1410, the papal bull reached Prague. In June 1410, Archbishop Zbynek proceeded

to eliminate Wycliffe's teachings in Prague. This he attempted to do by decreeing the public burning of Wycliffe's books and banning the preaching of his teachings.

Without delay, within five days from Archbishop Zbynek's decree, Huss, along with some teachers and scholars of the University of Prague, stood their ground against Archbishop Zbynek's demands. The basis for not complying was that, as prescribed in the royal and papal charter, the right over the University's teachings and books belonged to civil and not ecclesiastical authorities. Upon the University's appeal of protection, King Wenzel delayed the execution of Archbishop Zbynek's decree till a more qualified scholar (Margrave Jost of Moravia) arrived at Prague to assess the contents of Wycliffe's books.

On 22 and 25 June 1410, Huss preached against the decree. His arguments were that the decree was made under misinformation of Wycliffe's teachings as being heretical and erroneous when they were not; that the decree should not stand; and it would be a crime against God to abide by Archbishop Zbynek's decree. Huss chose to obey God rather than man.

Huss also sent a translation of Wycliffe's *Dialogus* to John XXIII (antipope from 1410-1415, opposed to Gregory XII and Benedict XIII, successor of Alexander V) in Rome, for him to understand Wycliffe's teachings. Later on, John XXIII placed the case in other men's hands and they found nothing in Wycliffe's teachings that made them worthy to be burned. However, this was too late. On 16 July 1410, Wycliffe's books were publicly burned.

Two days later, on 18 July 1410, Archbishop Zbynek excommunicated Huss and seven others. Charges were made against Huss

for disobeying papal orders, and he had to appear in Rome to be examined. Many (like King Wenzel and Queen Sophia and other cardinals) interceded for Huss. Huss sent representatives to ask for a withdrawal of their demand for him to appear personally before the papal court. He did not want to go for fear of perils in the way, lest he put his life in danger (people may set traps to kill him during his journey). His representatives got thrown into jail. For this refusal to appear in Rome, Cardinal Colonna in February 1411 placed Huss together with all his followers and sympathizers under excommunication.

On 1 September 1411, Huss wrote a letter to John XXIII, addressing him and the college of cardinals. Huss wrote that he was always ready to make a confession of his faith, and that he was willing to stand for and defend his faith before the University of Prague, the Bohemian prelates and all the people, even if people might view him as a heretic and burn him for it. He further explained his reasons for previously not appearing before the papal court. Huss' boldness in defending his faith and Wycliffe's teachings can be seen again when he challenged John Stokes to a public debate when John Stokes linked Wycliffe with heresy. This occurred in September 1411, when John Stokes and Hertonk Van Glux travelled from England to Prague, sent by Henry IV to make a league with Sigismund (King Wenzel's brother, king of Hungary in 1386, then king of the Romans crowned in 1411). Stokes declined to do it at Prague and went back, but he was willing to do it elsewhere.

HUSS' PROTEST AGAINST INDULGENCES

In 1411, Pope John XXIII wanted to fight against Ladislaus, king of Naples. This was because Ladislaus supported Pope Gregory XII, and John XXIII also wanted

to stop Ladislaus' expanding kingdom and his conquering of many of the papal states. John XXIII issued two papal bulls to stigmatize Ladislaus (Sept and Dec 1411), calling for a crusade, a holy war, against Ladislaus. He also promoted the sale of indulgences and pardon of sin to collect money for war. In May 1412, Wenzel of Tiem brought the bulls to Prague.

Huss opposed the papal bulls. On 7 June 1412, in the large hall of the Carolium, Huss publicly disputed this at the University of Prague. Firstly, Huss argued that only God can grant pardon, and selling pardon is simony. Secondly, Huss made a distinction between the secular soldiery and the religious clergy, the material and the spiritual sword, which were not supposed to mix. The pope was not allowed to use his ecclesiastical power and the spiritual things of the Roman Church to get money to finance his fight with physical weapons of war and physical armies. It would be an abuse of his power. The holy war that John XXIII was declaring and the method he was using to finance it were unbiblical and against the laws of Christ. Therefore, the people did not have to obey Pope John XXIII in this matter. In fact, it was their duty to disobey him.

To stop this fight against the sale of indulgences, the magistrates caught three men with Huss' views and who participated in riots. They summoned the people to attend the three men's execution to be held on 11 July 1412. On that day, a huge crowd gathered, including Huss, and pleaded against the death sentence. Huss even offered to die in their place. The magistrates, unable to handle the large number of protestors, promised Huss that if he managed to disperse the mob, the three men would not be hurt. Huss did so and he then returned home. However, a

few hours later, the magistrates went back on their word and executed the three men. Those three men were buried in Bethlehem Chapel, also henceforth called Chapel of the Three Martyrs.

HUSS' VOLUNTARY EXILE

On 10 July 1412, purportedly at the king's command, the opponents of Huss ordered a review of the original decree of 1403 regarding Wycliffe's teachings. This time, the outcome was worse than before. The king ordered that those who held to the 45 articles were to be banished. Huss argued against this. Before the king and an audience at Zebrač, Huss vindicated at least five articles. He challenged his opponents to vindicate their views and be burned as heretics if they failed to present the truthfulness of their views, but they refused to do so. Huss also wrote a document against obeying papal bulls if they were against God's Word, against the pope's infallibility, against papal authority to absolve sin, against the inhibition of preaching in chapels and against the waging of hostilities/physical wars with the church's sanction, and against putting heretics to death.

The clergy of Prague brought the case of Huss' defiance to John XXIII, who passed the case to Cardinal Annibaldi. Annibaldi threatened Huss with greater excommunication, if within twenty days he did not submit to the Church. On top of that, people were banned from speaking to Huss or welcoming him into their houses. Going against the ban would mean excommunication. Huss did not comply. As a result, John XXIII put Prague under an interdict, that no religious services could be performed wherever Huss was on that day, plus one more day of banning all church services. This sentence was to be read regularly every Sunday in every church

across Bohemia. Soon after, John XXIII passed a second decree, ordering Huss to be seized and burned, and Bethlehem Chapel to be destroyed. Huss was sentenced to aggravated excommunication.

In October 1412, Huss voluntarily left Prague, so that the city would not suffer. Huss was not sure if he made the right decision. He was absent from Prague for two years (October 1412-1414), with occasional short visits to Prague. During his time away from Prague, Huss found a place of safety and hospitality in Southern Bohemia, in the castle of Kozi Hradek,

which belonged to John of Austi. There Huss remained until April 1414 when John of Austi died and the castle fell into the hands of those who opposed him. He then moved to the castle of Krakowec, which belonged to Henry Lefl of Lazan. During his time in exile, he wrote 17 letters, as well as his chief work "Treatise On The Church" and other tracts. He also revised a Bohemian translation of the Bible of the 14th century. In so doing, he improved the popular language, established fixed rules of grammar and invented a new system of spelling (in general use today). The rest of his time he spent preaching the Bible.

THE TRIAL AND MARTYRDOM OF JOHN HUSS

SUMMONED TO CONSTANCE

While in exile, Huss had written, “What fear shall part us from God, or what death? What shall we lose if for His sake we forfeit wealth, friends, the world’s honors and our poor life? ...It is better to die well than live badly. We dare not sin to avoid the punishment of death. To end in grace the present life is to be banished from misery. Truth is the last conqueror. He wins who is slain, for no adversity “hurts him if no iniquity has dominion over him.” Soon after, Huss would prove the strength and depth of his conviction with his life.

In 1414, Emperor Sigismund and Pope John XXIII convened the Council of Constance in order to put an end to both the Papal Schism, as well as the “heresies” of Wycliffe and Huss. Huss was summoned by the Emperor to the Council with the promise of safe-conduct. On 1 September 1414, Huss replied Sigismund, expressing his readiness to head to the Council “under safe-conduct of your protection, the Lord Most High being my defender”. Before he left, Huss spared no effort in declaring his doctrinal beliefs and proving his blamelessness. In August, he applied for a certificate of his orthodoxy from the bishop of Nazareth, grand inquisitor of the diocese of Prague, who obliged only under the pressure of the pro-Huss public. In the days prior to his departure, Huss wrote and fastened bills on the gates of the cathedrals, parishes, cloisters, abbeys, as well as the

palace, in which he declared his desire to defend his beliefs at Constance, and challenged any who could prove any error in his doctrines to do so either before the Archbishop of Prague, or before the Pope and doctors at the Council. He requested an audience before a general assembly of the clergy of Prague to defend his innocence, but was denied it, undoubtedly due to their unwillingness to lend him more support, which they would have had to give for fear of Huss’ influential friends in the city.

Huss’ farewell letters revealed that he was not at all oblivious to the dangers that awaited him at Constance. Bidding farewell to his people, he wrote: “I confide altogether in the all-powerful God, in my Saviour. I trust that He will listen to your ardent prayers that He will put His wisdom and prudence into my mouth, in order that I may resist them; and that He will accord me His Holy Spirit, to fortify me in His truth, so that I may face with courage, temptations, prison and if necessary, a cruel death. Jesus Christ suffered for His well-beloved; and ought we then to be astonished that He has left us his example, in order that we may ourselves endure with patience all things for our own salvation? He is God, and we are His creatures; He is the Lord, and we are His servants; He is Master of the world, and we are contemptible mortals; yet He suffered! Why then should we not suffer also, particularly when suffering is for us a purification? Therefore, beloved, if my

death ought to contribute to His glory, pray that it may come quickly, and that He may enable me to support all my calamities with constancy. But if it be better that I return among you, let us pray to God that I may return without stain, - that is, that I may not suppress one tittle of the truth of the gospel, in order to leave my brethren an excellent example to follow. Probably, therefore, you will never more behold my face at Prague; but should the will of the all-powerful God deign to restore me to you, let us then advance with a firmer heart in the knowledge and the love of His law." A second letter written to his disciple Martin, was in fact, a will: it was to be read only after his death, and in it, he enjoined Martin to fear God, to watch against greed and debauchery, to have his grey cloak, and to give his white gown to the rector, and a guinea to George his servant.

JOURNEY TO CONSTANCE

On 11 Oct 1414, Huss began his journey to Constance with a party of 30 men, fully cognizant of the danger that lay ahead, yet nothing daunted, trusting in his God. The Lords John de Chlum and Wenceslaus of Duba were appointed by the Emperor as his travel companions and protectors, whom Huss called "the heralds and advocates of the truth" for the godly manner in which they treated him. The Emperor's safe-conduct was only issued on 18 October, and reached them only at the town of Nuremburg. Nonetheless, it was to Huss' comfort and joy that the commoners, and even certain humbler clergymen whom he met on the way received him with much hospitality and honour. In his letters to his friends, Huss recounted how the people of all the places they passed by, Bohemians and Germans alike, welcomed him kindly in spite of the papal interdict, and heard him with great interest and approval. Such geniality continued even

in the hostile city of Constance, where Huss found a resting place and safe haven in the house of a poor widow, Fida (Faithful), whom he affectionately dubbed "a second widow of Sarepta".

HUSS' ARREST & IMPRISONMENT

A huge crowd met Huss' party outside the city as they arrived on 3 November. The next day, John de Chlum and Baron Lacembok met with Pope John XXIII, who vouched that "Had he (Huss) killed my own brother, not a hair of his head should be touched while he remained in the city". The interdict was suspended, and Huss was granted the liberty to move around Constance, though he was barred from public mass. This did not bother Huss, for he was content with preaching and celebrating mass daily in his own abode with the many who came.

His chief enemies, Stephen Paletz and Michael de Causis, on the other hand, were incensed. Bent on stripping him from such freedom, they instigated the cardinals to have him arrested. On 28 November, the cardinals sent the bishops of Trent and Augsburg to the widow's house under the pretense that the cardinals wanted a hearing with him. Soldiers surrounded the house as Huss answered, "... I will not refuse to go with you before the cardinals; and if it happen that they evil entreat or handle me, yet I trust in my Lord Jesus, that He will so comfort and strengthen me, that I shall desire much rather to die for His glory's sake, than to deny the verity which I have learned by His Holy Scriptures." Having prayed for God's blessings upon his hostess, he yielded, and was led away. False charges of attempting to escape from the city on a hay-filled wagon would later be given as the reason for Huss' arrest.

After a short audience with the cardinals, Huss was imprisoned in the house of the

precentor of the church of Constance for eight days. John de Chlum went and pleaded with the pope, but to no avail. His arrest was made known to Sigismund, who arrived in Constance on 25 December. Sigismund was said to have “blustered”, but did little to make good the promised safe-conduct. On 6 December, Huss was transferred to the Dominican convent on the banks of the Rhine, where he would be incarcerated in a dungeon hard by the latrines. His prized books, including the Bible, were taken from him. Exposed to grossly unsanitary conditions, Huss became dangerously ill with a fever and vomiting. Fearing that the “heretic” might die and be spared from the stake, the pope sent his own physician to administer clysters. His denouncers took no pity on him, and continued presenting articles before the pope, seeking for Huss’ condemnation. Three commissioners were appointed, who heard the charges and read them to a debilitated Huss in prison. Huss’ request for an advocate was denied, for the canon prohibited anyone from so aiding one suspected of heresy.

By the pope’s command, Huss was transferred to a better prison on 8 January 1415. Here, things improved slightly for Huss. With better living conditions, he recovered well enough to write to his friends on 19 January. To his delight, a Bible was brought to him in February by John de Chlum. In his letters written during this period of imprisonment, Huss expressed a newfound appreciation for the Psalms, which brought him tremendous comfort in his suffering. God also provided him a kind jailer, Robert, who helped smuggle his letters to his friends in Constance, and it was for him that Huss wrote short expositions on the Lord’s Prayer, the Decalogue, marriage and the Lord’s Supper. Sadly, even these slight improvements were short-lived. On 20 March, the

deposed John XXIII fled from Constance. Huss, who up till this time had been fed from the Pope’s kitchen, was neglected in the confusion, and starved for three days.

Huss was hereafter handed over to Sigismund, who now had the opportunity to honour his safe-conduct and free him. Instead, Huss was handed over to the bishop of Constance. On 24 March, he was chained and transferred to the bishop’s castle, Gottlieben, about three miles away from Constance. In the day, Huss was free to walk about with fettered feet, and at night, his hands were chained with iron manacles fastened to the wall near his bed. His prison chamber was so low that he could not stand upright. Haemorrhage, headache, and starvation afflicted him. Huss’ Gottlieben imprisonment went on for 73 days. Most ironically, John XXIII was captured, and became Huss’ fellow inmate in this very same prison. John de Chlum proved yet again to be a faithful friend, labouring tirelessly for Huss’ release and a fair trial, albeit unsuccessfully. News of Huss’ unfair imprisonment reached Prague, and the outraged noblemen of Bohemia wrote several letters to Sigismund, seeking redress. However, pressured by the cardinals and bishops, and also motivated by his own agenda, Sigismund violated the safe-conduct he had promised and did nothing.

JEROME OF PRAGUE IS CAPTURED

Meanwhile, Huss’ trusted friend Jerome of Prague had arrived in Constance on 4 April, against the advice of Huss, who wanted him to preserve his life for the cause of the truth. Jerome came in hope of lending aid to Huss. However, after witnessing Huss’ terrible state, and finally realising the hopelessness of the situation, Jerome fled Constance in terror. Writing from the nearby town of Uberlingen,

he requested for safe-conduct from the Emperor and the Council, with which he would return to Constance to defend their case. The Emperor flatly refused, whereas the council promised merely his protection to Constance, but not on his way back. Realising the futility of his attempts, Jerome made his way back to Prague with a heavy heart. Indignation marred his better judgement, and on 24 April, the impulsive Jerome foolishly reviled the Council before many other clergymen at the house of the curé of Hirschau, denouncing them as “a school of the devil, a synagogue of iniquity”. At once, he was arrested and imprisoned in chains. By order of the Council, Jerome was brought back to Constance, cruelly chained to a cart. He reached the city on 24 May, where he was incarcerated in the tower of St Paul’s Cemetery and painfully mistreated.

HUSS’ UNJUST TRIALS

On 5 June, Huss was brought back to Constance and kept in the monastery of the Franciscans. He and Jerome never met. The Council tried to condemn Huss without a trial, but was intervened by the Emperor, who caught wind of their plans by the mouth of Chlum and Duba. Grudgingly, the Council acceded to Sigismund’s command to hear Huss before judging him “impartially”. Their intentions to condemn Huss were, however, evidently clear, for they had just denounced more than 300 articles of Wycliffe’s writings as heresy a month ago on 4 May. Wycliffe had been branded a heretic, his memory condemned, and his bones were to be dug up and cast out of the church burial grounds. Huss, whose teachings were greatly influenced by Wycliffe, was unlikely to face a different judgement.

At his first trial, Huss’ books were presented to him, to which he acknowledged authorship. Then, erroneous articles

allegedly written by him were read. Huss tried to defend himself after the first was read, but was interrupted by a huge outburst from members of the assembly. This was repeated with each article that was read. Maldoniewitz, an eyewitness of the trial, wrote that the whole proceeding was so disorderly that it appeared to be an assembly of ferocious wild beasts. Huss, discerning the futility of his attempts to speak, finally held his peace, to which the Council cried out, “Now he is dumb, now he is dumb: this is a certain sign and token, that he doth consent and agree unto these his errors.” On account of the chaos that had ensued, Huss’ hearing was adjourned. Huss appeared cheerful despite all that had happened. Later, when recounting the scene, Huss said, “they tried to frighten me from my constancy in the truth of Christ, but they could not vanquish the strength of God in me.” As he was led back to his prison, Huss caught eye of his friends, and exhorted them: “Have no fear for me”.

Huss’ second hearing on 7 June was delayed by a solar eclipse. When the eclipse had passed, the Council met again at one o’clock in the afternoon. Sigismund was in attendance this time to preserve order, having been informed by Chlum and Duba of the tumultuous state of the first hearing. Paletz and Causis, Huss’ arch-nemeses, did their utmost to make sure of Huss’ condemnation. The first charge against him was that he propounded Wycliffe’s doctrine of remanence and defied the Church’s doctrine of transubstantiation. Huss denied this to be the case. When the cardinal of Florence tried to persuade him to recant on account of the many witnesses that had spoken against him, Huss calmly replied, “I call God and my own conscience to witness... And even though there were many more arrayed against me, I make more account of the witness of the Lord

my God, and of my own conscience, than I do of the judgments of all my adversaries, which I regard as nothing”.

Huss was also charged with teaching and defending Wycliffe’s heresies in Bohemia, as proven by his resisting the condemnation of these articles. To this, Huss replied that he could not assent to the condemnation of Wycliffe’s teachings unless they were proven erroneous from the Scriptures. The Council then charged Huss for appealing against the decisions of Popes Alexander V and John XXIII to forbid him from preaching following his excommunication, to which Huss admitted to have done, but stated that he appealed to Christ as his Judge, having received no answer from the Popes. His accusers declared it unlawful that he appealed to Christ when the Pope had yet to absolve him from his sins, to which he boldly countered, “Verily I do affirm here before you all, that there is no more just or effectual appeal, than that appeal which is made unto Christ, forasmuch as the law doth determine, that to appeal, is no other thing than in a cause of grief or wrong done by an inferior judge, to implore and require aid and remedy at a higher judge’s hand. Who is then a higher judge than Christ? Who, I say, can know or judge the matter more justly, or with more equity? When in Him there is found no deceit, neither can He be deceived; or, who can better help the miserable and oppressed than He?” Huss’ strong words of conviction was only met with the Council’s ridicule.

Another article was read, that Huss had declared, “Oh, that my soul were there where John Wycliffe’s soul is!” Huss answered that he believed, having carefully considered Wycliffe’s teachings and devout life, that Wycliffe was in heaven, and that was where he wished to be. Once again,

the Council responded in derision. After a few more articles were read, the now tired assembly decided to adjourn once again. Huss was then handed over to the charge of the Archbishop of Cambrai. He was being led away, when the Cardinal of Cambrai called him back. In a bid to turn the Emperor against him, the Cardinal asked pointedly, “John Huss, when you were first brought before us, I heard you say that unless you had chosen to come to Constance of your own accord, neither the king nor the emperor could have forced you to do so.” Huss responded resolutely, “I did say, that there were in Bohemia a great number of gentlemen and noblemen, who did favour and love me, who also might easily have kept me in some sure and secret place, that I should not have been constrained to come unto this town of Constance, neither at the will of the emperor, neither of the King of Bohemia.” In the face of the now-incensed Council, John de Chlum bravely defended Huss statement, saying, “if I would have taken it in hand, I could have defended him easily by the space of one year, even against all the force and power of both these great and mighty kings. How much better might they have done it who are of more force or puissance than I am, and have stronger castles and places than I have?”

Taken aback by Chlum’s statement, the Cardinal left the topic at that, and once again counselled Huss to submit himself to the Council. The Emperor likewise told Huss to stop being obstinate, but to submit, “for our part, be ye well assured, that we will sooner make the first with our own hands, to burn you withal, than we will suffer any longer that you shall maintain or use this stiffness of opinions, which you have hitherto used.” To this, Huss calmly rejoined, “I call God to witness, most indulgent emperor, that I never conceived

the purpose of defending anything with extreme stubbornness, and that I came here of my own accord with this intent, that if any one could give me better instruction, I would unhesitatingly change my views.” With this, Huss was led away, and the Council dispersed.

The third and final hearing was held in the Franciscan monastery on 8 June 1415. 39 articles were read, 26 of which were from Huss’ book *De Ecclesia*. Huss acknowledged the few in which he had been rightly quoted, but refused to do so to the others. He admitted to have taught that Peter never was, neither is the head of the holy universal Church, “forasmuch as Jesus Christ is the only head and foundation of every church, and not Peter”, and thus no one has the right to claim to be the head of any Church. Next, he confirmed that he had written, that “if the manner and fashion of his (the Pope’s) life and living be contrary to that which St. Peter used, or that he be given to avarice and covetousness, then is he the vicar of Judas Iscariot,” and likewise, “the cardinals are not the manifest and true successors of the other apostles of Jesus Christ, if they live not according to the fashion of the apostles, keeping the commandments and ordinances of the Lord Jesus. ... the proof of it is this: if they climb up any other way than by that first door Jesus Christ, then are they thieves and robbers.” With great boldness, he declared, much to the Council’s disbelief, that he believed it is not right for a heretic to be given to secular powers and be subjected to capital punishment. He believed that such a man should only face ecclesiastical censure – to be instructed and taught gently and lovingly from the Scriptures, and said that all who would give an innocent man to be so condemned were “as the Scribes and Pharisees who delivered Jesus Christ unto Pilate”.

As in his second trial, he was again charged for appealing straight to Christ, and thus as seeing himself to be above Paul, for Paul appealed to the emperor and not to Christ. Huss responded, “And am I, though I were the first to do this thing, to be accounted a heretic? And yet Paul did not appeal to the emperor of his own motion, but through the revealed will of Christ who appeared to him and said, ‘Be thou firm and constant, for thou must needs go to Rome!’ ”

Then, he firmly insisted, “that albeit the excommunication were either threatened or come out against him, in such sort that a Christian ought not to do the commandments of Christ, ... we ought rather to obey God than man. Whereupon it followeth, that the minister of Christ, living according unto this law, ought to preach, notwithstanding any pretended excommunication... if the Pope, or any other ruler of the Church, do command any minister disposed to preach, not to preach, they ought not to obey him. ... Verily, even so I do now say again, that every excommunication, by which a man is unjustly excommunicated, is unto him a blessing before God.”

Fearlessly, he reiterated the words he had previously penned before the assembly of evil clergymen before him, “the Church, in the time of the apostles, was infinitely better ruled than it is now. And where is the inconsistency, or indignity to Christ, in saying that he would rule the church better—without those monstrous heads that there were, but just now –through his own true disciples? And at present we have no such head at all, and yet Christ does not fail to rule his church.”

At the end of the reading, the Cardinal of Cambray counselled him once again to submit to the Council, openly recant and

confess all his teachings to be erroneous and heretical, and promise never to hold to or teach these doctrines. Others of the Council also echoed his sentiments. To this, he replied, "In the name of him who is the God of us all, I ask and beseech of you this one thing, that I may not be forced to that which, my conscience repugnant to it, I cannot do under peril of the loss of my soul –recant, by oath, all the articles charged against me. ... in respect to those articles which are indeed mine, if any one will instruct me to different conclusions, I will readily yield to your demand." Interestingly, a few who had heard Huss' trial appeared to have changed their minds about the man and his teachings. Gerson, who had been one of his most abusive accusers, was said to have publicly declared later, after pondering on what had transpired during the trial, that Huss would not have been condemned had he been allowed proper defense.

At last, as night fell, the Council was again adjourned to the next day, and the Archbishop of Riga commanded Huss to once again be led back to his prison. Already severely enfeebled from the harsh conditions of his incarceration, and not having slept a wink the night before due to a toothache, Huss was thoroughly exhausted after the long hours of incessant bombarding from the assembly. Nonetheless, God sent great consolation through his faithful and devoted friend John de Chlum, who followed him out and cheered his heart with many words of comfort and encouragement.

At the same time, Emperor Sigismund declared before the Council, "You have heard the manifold and grievous crimes which are laid against John Huss, which are not only proved by manifest and strong witnesses, but also confessed by

him; of which, every one of them, by my judgement and advice, hath deserved and is worthy of death. Therefore, except he do recant them all, I judge and think meet that he be punished with fire." Both friends and foes tried unsuccessfully to persuade Huss to submit. One doctor of the council even told him, "Even though the council should tell you that you have but one eye, and you have two, you would be bound to assent to their statement". Yet nothing could cause Huss to be moved from God's truth. Unflinching, he averred, "I would sooner have a millstone bound about my neck, and be cast into the sea, than give occasion of scandal to my neighbour; and, having preached to others constancy and endurance, I will set them an example, looking for help to the grace of God."

In his letters, he exhorted his friends in Prague not to be terrified, urging them to recall how the books of Jeremiah and other fathers, as well as many sacred writings had been harshly treated, but could not be suppressed. Most moving of all was his parting letter written to them on 10 June, wherein he included many impassioned exhortations, and closed with this loving counsel, "This letter have I written to you in prison and in chains, and this morning I have heard of the decision of the council that I must be burned. But I have full confidence in God that he will not forsake me, nor permit me to deny his truth, or with perjury confess as mine the errors falsely imputed to me by lying witnesses. But how gently God my Master deals with me, and supports me through surprising conflicts, ye shall learn when, amid the joys of the life to come, we shall, through the grace of Christ, behold one another again ...our bitterest enemies, the Bohemians who have ill-treated us, go from bad to worse. I beseech you, pray God in their behalf. But this one thing I do especially beseech of

you, that ye cherish the Bethlehem church, and faithfully attend to it as long as God shall give you grace, that God's word be preached therein; for of such a church is the devil the sworn enemy, and he raises up against it the priests and their tools, for he sees that by its means his kingdom is in danger of being broken up. But I hope in God that he will sustain the church in his good pleasure, and cause his word to be imparted there through others more largely than it has been by my poor efforts. I beseech you, love one another –swerve not from the truth. Meditate upon it –how the righteous may not be crushed.”

The day before he was condemned, Huss was brought out of prison to meet with four bishops, as well as the Lords Duba and John de Chlum, sent by Sigismund to him to know if he would submit. John de Chlum opened the conversation, imploring him, “Master John Huss, I am a man unlearned, neither am I able to counsel you, being a man of understanding: notwithstanding I do require you, if you know yourself guilty of any of those errors which are laid against you, that you will not be ashamed to alter your mind: if contrariwise, I would not that you should do anything against your conscience, but rather suffer any punishment, than deny that which you have known to be the truth.” Huss replied tearfully, “Verily, I do take the Most High God for my witness, that I am ready with my heart and mind, if the Council can teach me any better by the holy Scripture, to alter my purpose.” The bishops, disgusted by his “stiff-necked” responses, commanded him to be taken back into prison.

HUSS IS CONDEMNED

The next day, 6 July, Huss was brought before the fifteenth general session in the head church of the city of Constance, and was made to stand on a footstool set in

front of a large platform in the midst of the assembly, so as to be seen by all. A box containing priestly vestments was placed on the platform, which he was to later adorn and be degraded of. Immediately, Huss fell on his knees in prayer.

Again, the articles were repeated to him, but when he tried to answer, the Cardinal of Cambray commanded him to keep quiet, and to answer all of them together after they were read. Huss refused, and officers were sent to force him to silence. Realising that no amount of beseeching would move the prejudiced Council to hear his defense, Huss knelt and prayed, “O Lord Jesus Christ! Whose Word is openly condemned here in this Council, unto Thee again I do appeal, Who when Thou wast evil entreated of Thine enemies, didst appeal unto God Thy Father, committing Thy cause unto a most just Judge; that by Thy example we also being oppressed with manifest wrongs and injuries, should flee unto Thee.”

False accusations, for example, that Huss had claimed himself to be a fourth person of the Trinity, were railed at him, which he solemnly refuted with little avail. When charged with treating papal excommunication with contempt, Huss replied that he had not, and had in fact done his best, sending procurators to the Pope on his behalf, yet was never allowed a hearing, and his representatives shamefully mistreated. “For this reason”, he said, looking Sigismund in the eye, “I came hither freely to this council, relying upon the public faith of the emperor, who is here present, assuring me that I should be safe from all violence, so that I might attest my innocence, and give a reason of my faith to all who compose it.” At once, Sigismund blushed, undoubtedly out of a guilty conscience. This truly was a historic moment, for a century later, when

pressured to ignore his safe-conduct to Luther and have him arrested, Charles V would reply, "No! I should not like to blush like Sigismund."

Two sentences were read by the Bishop of Concordia, the first, condemning Huss' books to be burned, and the second, for him to be degraded from the priesthood and committed to secular judgment. Huss repeatedly looked up to heaven in prayer as these were read. At the end of the reading, Huss once again fell to his knees and cried, "Lord Jesus Christ! Forgive mine enemies, by whom Thou knowest that I am falsely accused, and that they have used false witness and slanders against me; forgive them, I say, for Thy great mercy's sake." The Council responded to this loving intercession with atrocious mockings.

The ceremony of degradation then began. Huss was commanded to put on his priestly garments, and seven bishops were appointed to carry out his degrading. As he put on his garments, he recalled how Christ too had been given a robe by Herod, and comforted himself in the example of his Saviour. Yet again, he was exhorted to recant by the bishops. Through tears, Huss said, "now truly I am in the sight of the Lord my God, without Whose great ignominy and grudge of mine own conscience, I can by no means do that which they require of me. With what countenance then should I behold the heavens? With what face should I look upon them whom I have taught, whereof there is a great number, if, through me, it should come to pass that those things, which they have hitherto known to be most certain and sure, should now be made uncertain? Should I, by this my example, astonish or trouble so many souls, so many consciences, endued with the most firm and certain knowledge of the Scriptures and Gospel of our Lord

Jesus Christ and His most pure doctrine, armed against all the assaults of Satan? I will never do it, neither commit any such kind of offence, that I should seem more to esteem this vile carcase appointed unto death, than their health and salvation."

First, the chalice was taken from him, and the curse declared, "O thou accursed Judas, who, breaking away from the counsels of peace, hast consulted with the Jews! Behold! We take from thee this chalice, in which the blood of Jesus Christ for the redemption of the world is offered." To this, he replied, "I trust unto God, the Father omnipotent, and my Lord Jesus Christ, for Whose sake I do suffer these things, that He will not take away the chalice of His redemption, but have a steadfast and firm hope that this day I shall drink thereof in His kingdom." He was then de-robed of his priestly garments, with a curse pronounced as each piece was removed. Unperturbed, Huss said, "All these insults I can endure, undisturbed and calm, for the name and truth of Jesus Christ." Then came the rasing of his shaven crown, the last symbol of the priestly office. A great controversy arose as to whether the proper instrument for the deed ought to be a razor or a pair of shears, whether it be sufficient that the tonsure be merely disfigured, or should be entirely removed. At last, they agreed on using a pair of shears, and his hair was cut in four directions, leaving the form of a cross. His head was washed to remove the oil of his anointing, and finally it was declared that he had been removed from the priesthood, disowned by the church, and given up to the secular arm.

A crown of paper, about a cubit deep, painted with three ugly devils and the title "Heresiarcha" (latin for 'originator of heresy' or 'founder of a heretical sect') was brought to be placed on his head. Catching

sight of the ugly crown, Huss said, "My Lord Jesus Christ, for my sake, did wear a crown of thorns; why should not I then, for His sake, again wear this light crown, be it ever so ignominious? Truly I will do it, and that willingly." The bishops, setting the crown on his head, declared "now we commit thy soul unto the devil". "But I," Huss said, eyes lifted to heaven and hands folded, "do commend into Thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ! my spirit which Thou hast redeemed."

The ceremony of degradation was completed, and Huss committed to the hands of the emperor to do what the priests had no power to – execute capital punishment. Sigismund commanded Louis, Duke of Bavaria, to receive Huss, and deliver him to the hands of the executioners. Huss, his clothes, and all his belongings were to be burned. Surrounded by an escort of eight hundred armed men, Huss was led to the place of execution, which was before the Gottlieben gate, followed by a great crowd from the city. In a malicious attempt to crush the reformer's spirit, the procession went in a direction nearly opposite to the execution place, so that it passed by the episcopal palace where his books were being burned. Huss was, however, unfazed. Smiling at the sight, he exhorted onlookers not to believe that he was to die for heresy, but because he had been falsely accused by his adversaries.

Arriving at the appointed place, Huss knelt and sang psalms, especially Psalms 31 and 51. His earnest prayers caused bystanders to say, "What he hath done before, we know not; but now we see and hear that he doth speak and pray very devoutly and godly". As he prayed, the paper crown on his head fell to the ground. A soldier picked it up and set it on his head again, "that he may be burned with his masters

the devils, whom he hath served." Huss smiled, then prayed once again, "Lord Jesus Christ! Help me, that with a constant and patient mind I may suffer this cruel and ignominious death, whereunto I am condemned for the preaching of Thy most Holy Gospel and Word." To his keepers, Huss expressed much thanks, and said, "Ye have shown yourselves not merely my keepers, but brethren most beloved. And be assured that I rest with firm faith upon my Saviour, in whose name I am content calmly to endure this sort of death, that I this day may go to reign with him."

Next, he was stripped by the hangman, and bound fast with his hands behind his back using ropes that had been wet to resist the heat of the flames. The stake was ordered to be turned to face the west instead of the east, for he was a heretic, and thus must not die with his eyes looking toward the Holy Land. His neck was bound by a black and sooty iron chain to the stake. At this, Huss smiled and said. "The Lord Jesus Christ, my beloved Redeemer and Saviour, was, for my sake, bound with a harsher and more cruel chain. Why therefore, should wretched I blush, for his most holy name, to be bound with this sooty one?"

Two piles of fagots were placed under his feet, and the bundles of straw set around the stake reached the height of his neck. Huss was exhorted for the last time to recant and escape the flames. Loudly and firmly, Huss replied, "I call God to witness, that I have never taught nor written those things which on false testimony they impute to me; but my declarations, teachings, writings, in fine, all my works, have been intended and shaped toward the object of rescuing dying men from the tyranny of sin. Wherefore I will this day gladly seal that truth which I have taught, written and proclaimed – established by the divine law, and by holy

teachers – by the pledge of my death.” To his executioner, Huss said, “You are now going to burn a goose, (Huss means ‘goose’ in the Bohemian language) but in a century you will have a swan which you can neither roast nor boil.” Interestingly, Martin Luther would nail his 95 theses almost 100 years later. Martin Luther also had a swan for his coat of arms.

The torch was lit, and the fire kindled. As the flames engulfed him, Huss began to sing with a loud voice, “Jesus Christ! The Son of the living God! Have mercy upon me!” At the third time this prayer was repeated, the wind greatly kindled the fire, and he was choked into silence. The wood was all burned up, but his upper body still hung by the iron chain. Thus, his remaining bones and limbs were broken, and his head was cut into small

gobbets, and cast into a newly lit fire. His heart, found in the midst of his intestines, was pierced by a sharp stick of wood, and roasted at a fire until it was no more than ashes. The last of his garments that were still in the hands of an executioner were commanded to be burned together by the elector, for “the Bohemians would keep and cherish such a thing as a sacred relic”. With great diligence, the ashes were gathered and cast into the Rhine river. Thus, on 6 July 1415, this valiant defender of the truth, aged forty-two, was absent in the body, and present with the Lord.

JEROME OF PRAGUE IS MARTYRED

A year later on 30 May, at the very same spot, Huss’ friend Jerome of Prague was also burned at the stake. He died, singing the Easter hymn “salva festa dies (Hail, festal day)”.

4

THE TEACHINGS OF JOHN HUSS

As John Huss was about to be burnt at the stake, he said concerning his own writings, “God is my witness that I have never taught that of which I have been accused by false witnesses. In the truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached I will die to-day with gladness.” Such was the conviction that John Huss had. Despite the threats and opposition from the Roman Church, he held on to his conviction and died for it.

John Huss’ teaching shook the Roman Church during his time, but its impact was more far-reaching than he would have imagined. Huss’ teaching was not only important for his time, it would later go on to influence the 16th century reformation.

WYCLIFFE’S INFLUENCE

Huss’ preaching against the clergy and the Roman Church was not something new or original. Much of his preaching and teaching was heavily based on the teachings of John Wycliffe, the morning star of the Reformation.

In 1382, the marriage of King Wenzel’s sister, Anne of Luxemburg, to Richard II of England, promoted the spread of Wycliffe’s writings from England to Bohemia. Anne carried copies of the Bible in various languages to England. Many Bohemians also followed Anne to England and became students at Oxford. There at Oxford University, they were taught Wycliffe’s

teachings. When they returned home, they brought Wycliffe’s teachings and writings along with them to Prague, where John Huss was deeply captivated by them.

John Huss had contact with them most probably through his loyal friend, Jerome of Prague, who in 1401 carried copies of Wycliffe’s writings back from England to Bohemia. Wycliffe’s teachings were increasingly taught and studied in the University of Prague.

This led to John Huss teaching and writing to bring about a reform in the Roman Church. We have, today, at least nine collections of Huss’ Latin sermons, as well as a number of his Bohemian sermons. Available are also his letters and various treatises which he wrote. Two of his most important work include *De Ecclesia*, which is a treatise on the doctrine of the church, and *Treatise on Indulgences*, which opposes the sale of indulgences.

JOHN HUSS ON THE CLERGY

In dealing with the immorality of his time, John Huss preached several strongly-worded sermons against the Roman Church’s clergy. He saw the corruption within the Roman Church and his conviction did not allow him to remain silent. His sermons speak for themselves. Expounding on “wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” from Luke 2:49, he first drew out the doctrine: “This

means that, first of all and chiefly, I be engaged in that which concerns my Father and not in the service of any creature whatsoever. And why did Christ give this answer? Because he came into the world for the purpose of bearing witness to the truth.”

After drawing out the doctrine, he then applied the principle to the people and priest: “And let this be an admonition to fathers and mothers that they put no stumbling-block in the way of their children serving God... So every man, and especially prelates, should take Jesus’ treatment of his parents as an example that they may first of all seek the profit of the church and have respect to God more than to any mortal man. For Jesus, setting aside the will of his earthly father and mother and doing the will of God, has taught us that every man should do the will of God, when he perceives that what God requires is something else than what our parents wish...”

Now the stern warning from the same sermon, especially to the priests: “Against this instruction priests very frequently offend who esteem men’s precepts more highly than God’s commands and obey man rather than God. And priests lead men to a false and sinful obedience, for many of them preach that the people should hearken to all the pope’s commands and obey him, inasmuch as the pope cannot err. They do not seem to know that many popes have been heretics. Other priests preach that laymen should yield obedience even when a bishop or a pope commands something that is evil, for in obeying they commit no sin and only he commits sin who issues the evil command. That is the devil’s yoke, for the devil seeks to lead men into evil and does not concern himself

upon whom the guilt of sin rests. Neither the one who commands nor the one who obeys is without sin, as said the Saviour, Matt 15:14: ‘When a blind man leads the blind both fall into the ditch.’ Here the Saviour was speaking of those prelates who, like the scribes and Pharisees, lead the people by their precepts to transgress the commands of God.”⁵

Another time, Huss preached exposing the immorality of the clergy and neglect of spiritual duties, “Our bishops and priests of today, and especially our cathedral canons, and lazy mass-celebrators, hardly wait for the close of the service to hurry out of church, one part to the tavern and the other part hither and thither to engage in amusements unworthy of a priest, yea, even to dance. The monks prepare dances and entertainments in the public houses in the hope of winning the people and being intrusted with masses, and these rascally ministers of the devil never for a moment think that at the celebration of the Lord’s Supper Christ gives to the disciples his own body and blood. . . . Like Judas, who went away to the high priest to sell Christ, many of our priests, profligate in their lives like beasts, run away from the table of God, the one to serve mammon, the other wantonness, the one to the gaming-table, the other to the dance or chase, all of which are forbidden to priests. And these very ones who ought to be leaders in imitating Christ are his chief enemies.”⁶

Again, in his first sermon before the Synod (Zbynek had appointed Huss as Synodal preacher in 1405), while preaching on John 15:27 and touching on the personal qualities of humility, chastity and poverty of true bishops and priests, he rebuked the clergy in severe language, “There are

⁵ David Schaff, John Huss: his life, teachings and death, after five hundred years, 37, 38.

⁶ Schaff, 61.

many of you... who by wine-drinking and drunkenness are much more tainted than laymen. As laymen walk with their canes to the churches, so these clerics go to the beer-hall with canes, and when they return they can hardly walk, much less talk, and, least of all, do they know what is demanded of the priestly office. The richer among them go to entertainments provided out of the charitable funds, where food and drink are served, more abundant in quantity and more rich and dainty than citizens and even nobles are accustomed to have, and where Christ with his passion is banned. When the blood becomes heated, they talk of women and acts of lust in most wanton language. They fail to attend vespers or cut the vesper service short, and even during the celebration of the mass they do not cease to walk to and fro in the church and pass unbecoming and unchaste remarks. They ought like dogs to be turned out of the house of God, where they give such reproach and scandal to the hearts of simple laymen.”⁷

Such were the issues John Huss had observed and confronted in the Roman Church. These were not small charges brought against the clergy, but this is the confidence one can always have in the truth. Courage, sincerity and truthfulness are observed in Huss’ preaching; it may be said of him, that he was a preacher of righteousness.

JOHN HUSS ON THE CHURCH

John Huss was not only a preacher, he was

also a writer. One of his most important works was on the doctrine of the church. *De Ecclesia*, originally written in Latin, has now been translated into English.

One important doctrine he taught was that Christ is the only head of the church. He wrote arguing from Colossians 1:15 and Ephesians 1:20, that only the Lord Jesus Christ can be the head of the universal church. If the church has any other to be head together with Christ, then the church would be like “a monster having two heads.”⁸

It was also very significant that in explaining Matthew 16:16-19⁹, Huss expressed that the Rock described the Lord Jesus Christ. He identified Peter merely as the rock, with a small letter “r.” And he said that Peter is the confessor of the Rock, with a capital “R” who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. “The rock” being described in Matthew 16:16-19 is therefore Christ and is the foundation of the church.¹⁰ What Huss has described is significant because the Roman Catholic Church has always regarded Peter as the rock on which the church is built.

Huss also argued that the universal church is married to the Lord Jesus Christ and is the bride of Christ. The universal church is not married to any pope or cardinal.¹¹ Huss wrote “Christ alone is the head of the church, and his predestinate are the body and each one his member, because his bride is one person with Jesus Christ.”¹²

⁷ Schaff, 62.

⁸ John Huss, *The Church*, translated by David Schaff, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915), 27.

⁹ Matthew 16:16-19 says, “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

¹⁰ John Huss, 60.

¹¹ Huss, 56-66.

¹² Huss, 66.

Regarding the papacy, John Huss even went so far as to question the necessity of popes and cardinals. He argued that the Church may do without popes and cardinals especially when these are unfaithful ministers of God.¹³ Huss maintained that obedience to God is always of utmost importance and when religious authorities and ecclesiastical laws go against the teaching of Scripture, then God's people must obey God rather than man.¹⁴ In fact, in concluding his thoughts on ecclesiastical authorities he wrote: "He who presides, if he commands anything or say anything otherwise than in accordance to God's will or what is plainly commanded in Holy Scripture, he shall be regarded as a false witness of God, or as committing sacrilege."¹⁵

John Huss was not perfect, and his understanding regarding the doctrine of the Church was not completely reformed yet, but considering the time in which he was living in and remembering that he was brought up in the Roman Catholic system, that he could take the stand he took regarding the papacy and the church is wisdom given by God.

It was the study of the Word of God that led John Huss to the position he took. The Word of God shone brightly even during the Dark Ages.

JOHN HUSS ON INDULGENCES

In opposing Pope John XXIII's promotion of the sale of indulgences, John Huss wrote another of his most important works, *Treatise on Indulgences*.

John Huss believed that pardon for sins is something God alone can grant and it is given by God's grace alone. A key element in pardon is also repentance where the sinner truly sorrows for his sin. Pardon is not something the pope has authority to grant.

John Huss accused John XXIII of authorizing war in order to secure his own political power. He argued that to use the sale of indulgences to encourage more to fight in these wars goes against Scripture and reason.

John Huss questioned the pope's indiscriminate granting of pardon to all who partook in these wars. Did all who went to war repent of their sins? On what basis, then, did the pope agree to grant pardon indiscriminately? He questioned if the pope truly thought that God approved of it and wrote that the pope could find no basis of such practices in Scripture.

John Huss charged the pope for his abuse of power and compared him to a tyrant. To resist the pope, Huss argued, was not a sin but a mandate.

His stand against the sale of indulgences led to many of his friends turning against him. It was also for writings such as these that led to him being excommunicated by the church, and subsequently also to his martyrdom. However, truth will always prevail, and this conviction would be the legacy that he would leave behind.

¹³Huss, 147-160.

¹⁴Huss, 183-194.

¹⁵Huss, 194.

5

THE LEGACY OF JOHN HUSS

THE HUSSITE WARS

Huss' death would transform the face of Bohemia for years to come. When news of Huss' martyrdom came to Prague, his enraged followers took to stoning the houses of the priests who had opposed Huss. Attacked in his own palace, the Archbishop was forced to flee. The Council of Constance wrote to Prague officials, denouncing Huss and Jerome, and ordering them to put down Huss' followers. In reply, 452 Bohemian nobles signed an angry protest to the Council on 2 Sept 1415, condemning their ill-treatment of this their "most beloved brother", and declaring their readiness to defend the law of Christ and his devoted preachers even if it meant bloodshed. A league was formed three days later, whereby the nobles vouched to defend the free preaching of the Gospel on their estates, and to obey only the ecclesiastical powers that abided by God's Word.

Tension between the Bohemians and both papal and royal powers escalated quickly. Sigismund, greatly angered, threatened in his letters to put down all Wycliffites and Hussites. On 22 Feb 1418, a papal bull was sent by Pope Martin V, ordering the followers of Wycliffe, Huss and Jerome to be punished as heretics. These threats served only to stir up greater indignation amongst the Bohemians. Radical preachers like Jan Želivský began calling for people to fight the corrupt Catholic church with

brute force. On 30 July 1419, the Hussites rushed into the council house and threw seven councillors out of the window to their deaths for insulting their procession, an incident later termed "the first Defenestration of Prague". Shortly after, King Wenzel died, and was succeeded by Sigismund, who insisted that the laity ought not to receive the cup. The common people were incandescent, and civil war ensued. Five crusades of about 150,000 men were proclaimed against Bohemia by Martin V in the years 1420, 1421, 1422, 1427 and 1431, all of which were beaten back by Hussite forces. The Hussite wars did not end until after 1434.

THE IMPACT ON THE REFORMATION

Huss' sacrifice was definitely not in vain. He being dead yet speaketh, and his works would have no small influence on Christendom. After Huss' death, his followers were divided into two different parties. The more radical group was known as the Taborites, and the other as the Utraquists or Calixtines. Both parties were militant in nature, and fought in the Hussite Wars, but soon died off. A third group, however, known as the Unitas Fratrum (Unity of the Brethren) or Bohemian Brethren came into being in about 1450 out of the Taborites. This group of Hussites had close ties with the Waldensians, and it was also from them that the mission-minded Moravians

developed. The founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, was said to have been converted at a Moravian meeting in London, and continued to be greatly influenced by Huss' teachings.

Huss' life also had a more immediate and greatly significant impact on the Reformation. By divine providence, the great reformer Martin Luther, who lived a century later, would come to know of him. Profoundly moved by the teachings and life of this pre-reformer, Luther even took great pains to translate and publish Huss' letters in 1537. In its preface, Luther testified, "When I was a divinity student at Erfurt, my hand happened to alight, one day, in the library of the monastery, on a volume of John Huss' sermons. Having read, on the cover of the work, the words, Sermons of John Huss, I was immediately inflamed with a desire to ascertain, by perusing this book, that had escaped from the flames, and was thus preserved in a public library, what heresies he had disseminated. I was struck with amazement as I read on, and was filled with an astonishment difficult to describe, as I sought out for what reason so great a man – a doctor, so worthy of

veneration, and so powerful in expounding the Scriptures – had been burned to death. But the name of Huss was, at that period, such an object of execration, that I absolutely believed that if I spoke of him in terms of praise, the heavens would fall on me, and the sun veil his light. Having then closed the book, I withdrew sad at heart, and I remarked to myself, by way of consolation – 'Perhaps he wrote those things before he fell into heresy.' At that time I was still ignorant of what had passed in the Council of Constance. ...if such a man, I repeat, deserves not to be considered a generous and intrepid martyr, and true follower of Christ, it will be difficult for anyone to be saved."

During the 1519 Leipzig Disputation, Martin Luther declared before the whole assembly, "Ja, ich bin ein Hussite!" (Yes, I am a Hussite!); the swan had taken flight! It is no wonder then, that Huss, Wycliffe and Luther are inseparably linked in the pages of Christian history. A 1572 Bohemian psalter illustrated this beautifully in a picture, in which the three were so depicted: "Wycliffe striking the spark, Huss kindling the coals, and Luther brandishing the flaming torch".

TIMELINE OF HUSS' LIFE AND LEGACY

(Adapted from David Schaff, John Huss:
His life, teaching and death after five hundred years, 337-339)

- 1305-1378. The Avignon exile of the papacy.
- 1378-1417. The papal schism.
- 1382. Anne of Bohemia married to Richard II. The Earthquake synod in London condemns 24 articles of Wycliffe.
- 1384. John Wycliffe dies.
- 1373. John Huss.
- 1389. Huss enters the University of Prague.
- 1393. Huss earns his B A.
- 1394. Huss earns his B D.
- 1396. Huss earns his M A.
- 1401. Huss is ordained a priest.
- 1402. Huss a preacher at Bethlehem chapel and rector of the University of Prague.
- 1403. The XLV Articles of Wycliffe forbidden by the university to be taught. Zbynek is archbishop of Prague.
- 1405. Huss is appointed to investigate the holy blood of Wylsnack. Innocent, addressed by the Prague clergy, calls upon Zbynek to proceed against Wycliffe's errors.
- c.1408. Huss writes *Com. on the Sentences of the Lombard*. Welemowicz and Knin are tried for Wycliffe's heresy.
- 1409. Charter of the University of Prague is changed. Huss becomes rector of the university after the change in Charter. The Reformatory council of Pisa meets and elects Alexander V. Alexander V instructed Zbynek to proceed against Wycliffism.
- 1410. Wycliffe's books are publicly burned. Huss publicly defends Wycliffe and is excommunicated. Huss appeals to John XXIII. Huss is cited to Rome by Cardinal Colonna.

1411. Huss is excommunicated by the Roman curia. Huss has controversy with John Stokes. Pact of peace is signed between Zbynek and the university on 3 July. Zbynek dies. Albik of Unizow becomes archbishop of Prague.
1412. John XXIII's bulls of indulgences are announced in Prague. Wok of Waldstein's procession. Execution of Stafcon, Martin and John. Interdict against Prague. Huss's withdrawal from Prague. Last bull against Huss. Huss appeals to Christ.
1413. Huss writes the *Treatise on the Church*. Palecz, Stanislaus, etc are banished from Prague.
1414. Huss starts for Constance. Arrives on 3 November. Huss is imprisoned by the cardinals on 28 November. Huss is in the Dominican prison on 6 December. Sigismund arrives in Constance on 25 December.
1415. Huss is in prison at Gottlieben, 24 March. John XXIII is deposed. Huss is transferred to the prison of the Franciscans, 5 June. Huss' public hearings in the Franciscan friary, 5, 7, 8 June. Huss wrote to the University of Prague on 27 June. Huss is condemned as a heretic and burned on 6 July.
1415. Four hundred and fifty-two Bohemian and Moravian nobles agree to protect free preaching, 5 September. Jerome recants in the cathedral of Constance, 23 September.
1416. Jerome dies at the stake on 30 May.
1519. Luther acknowledges Huss during a debate in Leipzig. Luther receives a copy of Huss' *Treatise on the Church*.
1520. Huss' *Treatise on the Church* is printed in Wittenberg.
1722. Moravians settles in Herrnhut on the estates of Count Zinzendorf.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

David Schaff, *John Huss: his life, teachings and death, after five hundred years*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915)

E. H. Gillett, *The Life and Times of John Huss; Or, the Bohemian Reformation of the 15th Century, Volume 1 & 2* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1864)

John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (USA: Whitaker House, 1981)

John Huss, *The Church*, translated by David Schaff, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915)

Martin Luther, *Letters of John Huss Written During His Exile and Imprisonment*, (Edinburgh: Neill and Company)

Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries, 3rd Edition* (USA: Zondervan, 1996)

Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: The Middle Ages, 1294-1517*, (Hendrickson Publishers, 1996)



RAISED OF GOD FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

When seminaries and Bible colleges everywhere capitulate
to the apostasy of the end times,
Far Eastern Bible College stands steadfast,
unmovable, securely fastened on the Rock,
even our Lord Jesus Christ,
and His holy, inspired, infallible and inerrant Word.

FEBC stands for the “old-time Gospel”,
the “faith which was once delivered unto the saints”,
in opposition to the flood of Satanic doctrines now
sweeping over the Church...

Liberalism & Modernism, New Evangelicalism
Charismaticism, Ecumenism, Romanism
& New Age Mysticism

For sound Biblical instruction, Protestant and Reformed scholarship, come to:

FAR EASTERN BIBLE COLLEGE

9A Gilstead Road, Singapore 309063

Email: febc@pacific.net.sg

Website: <http://www.febc.edu.sg>