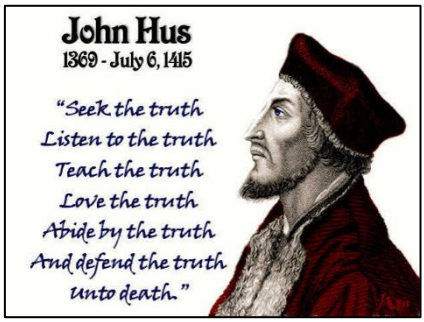
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SOVEREIGN HOPE
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The Life & Reformed Witness of the Czech Reformer - *John Hus* -



This is the 611th year that we remember the death of John Hus executed in 1415 in church history. During the first three centuries, the 15th century Spanish inquisition and the 16th to 17th English Reformation (especially during the reign of Bloody Queen Mary), there were many martyrs for the cause of Christ. The second century Christian**, Tertullian even said that the *"blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church*". Many became Christians when they saw the way believers courageously faced torture and death for their faith**. But martyrdom is not confined to the early church. Authors like James and Marti Helfley, *By Their Blood: Christian Martyrs of the 20th Century (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1979)* in their noted book on martyrdom, have asserted there have been more Christian martyrs in the 20th century than what we imagined it to be.

There are many more Christians, pastors and preachers are still suffering in Asia, North Korea, Iran, Russia, Iraq, Syria and some other Middle Eastern countries. One of the notable Christian martyrs of the pre-Reformation era was John Hus (1372-1415), who ignited the Reformation in Bohemia (Czech Republic today). Below is an account of his life testimony.

Hus' Uncompromising Convictions

John Hus has been a national hero for the Czech people, both Christian and non-Christian, communist and anti-communist alike. His biography has been interpreted from a wide variety of viewpoints. When the communists were in control of Czechoslovakia, they sponsored the restoration of Bethlehem chapel as a monument to the proto socialism of the Husites! When a revolt against communist rule occurred in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, Hus' statue in the centre of Prague was surrounded with flowers and people proclaiming the liberty of conscience for which Hus had died! Hus' life and ministry at the Bethlehem Chapel was

tremendously important for the development of Czech nationalism, a fact recognised by people on all sides of the political spectrum.

John Hus ministered at a time when the nationalistic or least ethnic spirit of the Czechs was stirring. The University of Prague was founded in 1349, the first university of central and eastern Europe. In 1355, a law was passed requiring the parish priest to preach to the people in their native, Czech language. The Chapel of the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem, or Bethlehem Chapel, was founded in Prague in 1391 specifically for preaching in the Czech language on every Sunday and on fast days. Several devoted ministers had faithfully ministered the gospel to the Czech people in their own language before Hus was appointed Rector in 1402.



The Bethlehem Chapel, Prague.

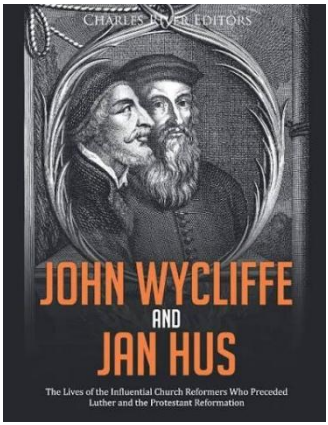
Wycliffe's Influence

Hus' preaching was particularly influenced by the writings of John Wycliffe. In 1382, King Wenceslaus' sister, Princess Anne of Bohemia, married the English King Richard 11. A woman of education, Princess Anne brought with her to England personal copies of the Scriptures in Latin, Czech, and German. Many Czech students went to Oxford to study - and they returned to their Bohemian homeland with copies of the writings of John Wycliffe. writings of John Wycliffe became known in Bohemia. As a student Hus had been greatly attracted by them. His inclination toward ecclesiastical reforms was awakened only by the acquaintance with Wycliffe's theological writings.

The so-called "*Hus-ism*" in the first decades of the 15th century was nothing, but "*Wycliffe-ism*" transplanted into Bohemian soil. The theological writings of Wycliffe spread widely in Bohemia. They had been brought over, as is said, in 1401 or 1402 by Jerome of Prague, and Hus was greatly moved by them. The university arose against the spread of the new doctrines, and in 1403 prohibited a disputation on forty-five theses taken in part from Wycliffe. Under Archbishop Sbinko of Hasenburg (from 1403), Hus enjoyed in the beginning a great reputation. In 1405 he was a bold preacher, and his severe attacks upon the corruption and false teachings of the clergy and the Roman church would later cause him his life.

Jerome of Prague, a supporter of Hus, who was martyred the year after Hus, studied at Oxford and brought back many of Wycliffe's spiritual treatises to the University of Prague. Hus imbibed deeply from Wycliffe's works. The Royal Library of Stockholm has five of Hus' copies of Wycliffe's writings. Many of Hus' works, were done with slight adaptations to fit the particular circumstances in Bohemia. Hus did not share all of Wycliffe's ideas, but he did share Wycliffe's teachings on the authority of the Scripture, the nature of the true church as distinct from the visible church hierarchy, and the evils of the papacy.

A spiritual revival swept Prague and Bohemia under Hus' teaching. In a letter to Richard Wyche, an English Lollard, Hus expressed thankfulness "*that under Christ's direction Bohemia received from the blessed England ... already so much good". He continued to rejoice at the receptiveness to the Scriptures: Under the direction of our Saviour it is most ardently received by the multitude, the lords, knights, burghers, and the common people ... Be assured, dearest brother, that the people wish to hear nothing but the sacred Scriptures, especially the gospel and the epistles*." Wherever in city or town, in village or castle, a preacher of the holy doctrine appears, the people flock together in crowds, disdaining the incapable clergy.



The claims of Wycliffe and Hus were indeed revolutionary. They opposed the authority of the Roman church hierarchy but with the personal conviction that all conscience should be based upon Scripture and not on a religious system of tradition. As Hus told the Council of Constance, "I am humbly ready to retract anything that shall be proved erroneous to me according to the Scriptures" but the Council were not able to prove that to him. This is the same Scriptural conviction which Luther later boldly expressed at the Diet of Worms in 1521 before Charles V and a host of prelates.

Like Wycliffe before him, Hus believed that the true church was made up of those whom God had chosen. There might even be many in the official hierarchy of the visible church who were not part of the true church. True Christianity was not to be found in monastic orders, indulgences, masses, or "*wishing to be pious by the piety of others*". True Christians may be recognised by whether they seek the glory of God and the salvation of men. It matters little to inquire whether one is sent by a pope or a bishop or whether he has certain papers or confirmations. Instead, we should recognise that he is sent of God when he diligently seeks the salvation of men and the praise of God.

On the walls of Bethlehem Chapel, Hus had painted various pictures and inscriptions which contradicted the unscriptural teachings which he believed had developed in the Roman church. Together with his scriptural and bold preaching this brought great dissatisfaction on the part of the Roman church. He was then summoned to Rome to face charges which initially he did not want to go but was forced to by an interdict. He was finally indicted to appear before the Council of Constance in1415.

It was reported that after the publication of the bull in 1410, Hus appealed to the pope, but in vain. All books and valuable manuscripts of Wycliffe were burned, and Hus and his adherents put under the ban. This procedure caused an indescribable commotion among the people down to the lowest classes; in some places turbulent scenes occurred. The government took the side of Hus, and the power of his adherents increased from day to day. He continued to preach in the Bethlehem chapel and became bolder in his accusations of the Church. The churches of the

city were put under the ban, and the interdict was pronounced against Prague, and the pressure was too great.

(see http://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1201-1500/john-hus-faithful-unto-death-11629878.html)

The Injustice at the Council of Constance

The Council at Constance had been called to settle the scandalous situation of having two popes, one in Italy, one in France. This "*Great Schism*" (1378-1417) had to be dealt with. The council of Constance was perhaps the most misguided, unproductive gathering in medieval church history. More than 50,000 people came to the Swiss town of Constance for the Council, which met from 1414 to 1417.

Philip Schaff recorded that there were Delegates from all Europe included 33 cardinals, 238 bishops, a thousand university scholars, representatives of 83 kings, and 2000 musicians. There were also over 700 immoral women who were present at Constance as well. The atmosphere was more a secular fun fair with worldly tournaments, dances, acrobatics shows and music rather than reverence and the fear of God. It was not the scene of sober piety one would expect at a church gathering. John Hus wrote, "*This Council is a scene of foulness ... a generation will not suffice to cleanse Constance from the sins which the Council committed in this city*".

The Council met to resolve the Great Schism of the Papacy (1378-1417) between Gregory, Benedict and John XXIII who each claimed to be pope at the same time. Ridding the church of all three, the Council persuaded Gregory and Benedict to resign, and deposed John by convicting him on charges of simony, sodomy, lying and unchastity. The council elected Martin V as the new pope but the church's woes were far from over.

Though John XXIII was formally convicted of grievous sins and immorality, the Council simply deposed him and allowed him to leave the city. The righteous and godly John Hus, however, was burned at the stake for his beliefs. He died singing and revived Bohemia who refused to be threatened by the church and was one of the few countries which was freed of the Roman church control before the Reformation.

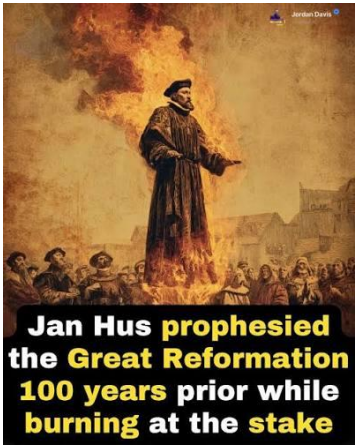
The Council formulated 42 articles against John Hus' teachings. 36 of these were taken from his work The Church, which in turn was almost a direct translation of a work by Wycliffe. Some of Hus' teachings to which objections by the Roman church were made included the following:

1. **The true Church is made up of those chosen or predestined unto salvation by God.**
2. **Christ, not Peter, is the Rock on which the Church is built.**
3. There should be no secular punishment for so-called heresy.
4. A preacher should continue preaching even if he has been unjustly excommunicated.
5. If a pope, bishop or prelate continues in mortal sin, he is not a true minister at all.

6. Most aspects of the interdict of Prague (ie when a province is not allowed to have any sacraments and other church services as decreed by a cardinal or pope as a form of ecclesiastical punishment) were unscriptural.
7. Wycliffe should not be condemned completely without proper Scriptural refutation.

Hus was also falsely accused of doctrinal articles which he did not write nor believe and was not even allowed to defend himself. It was a Kangaroo Court when there was total injustice and mismanagement of a faithful preacher by the church. One ridiculous charge was that Hus claimed to be the fourth person of the Trinity! Hus was promised safe conduct by the Emperor Sigismund, but the latter was threatened by the Cardinal with the possibility of excommunication if he should intervene.

The emperor Sigismund, fearing for his crown, capitulated to the threat. "*The fear of man bringeth a snare*", Solomon aptly said. Hus died with unflinching courage, singing as he burned. His teachings lived on until the Reformation when the Husites largely accepted Protestantism. It has been said that they asked him to save his life by a recantation, but Hus declined with the words "*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*." There upon the fire was kindled with John Wycliffe's own manuscripts used as kindling for the fire. **With uplifted voice Hus sang, "*Christ, thou Son of the living God, have mercy upon me*." Among his dying words he proclaimed, "*In 100 years, God will raise up a man whose calls for reform cannot be suppressed*." God answered his prayers in the person of Martin Luther and his ashes were gathered and cast into the nearby Rhine River.**



(see http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/john-hus.html)

Hus' Chronology (adapted)

1372 Born in Husinec in South Bohemia - 75 miles Southwest of Prague
1390 Began studies at the University of Prague
1400 Ordained a Priest
1401 Appointed Dean of Faculty at University of Prague
1402 Rector and Preacher at Chapel of Holy Innocents of Bethlehem
1408 Deposed as Synodal Preacher
1410 Excommunicated and forbidden to preach
1412 Interdict placed upon Prague. Hus withdrew from Prague, writing and preaching in the countryside

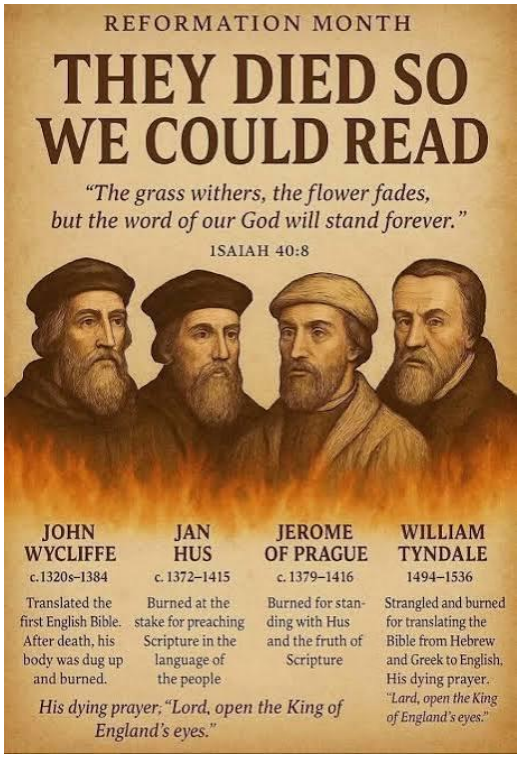
1413 Wrote his major work, De Ecclesia - The Church

1414 Travelled to Constance and was arrested

1415 July 6 - Condemned and burned at the stake.

Conclusion

John Hus was a faithful and bold preacher, and he paid dearly for his biblical convictions in blood. He led the pre-Reformation in Bohemia which was inspired by his martyrdom which later paved the way for the 16th century Protestant Reformation in Europe and it was not ruled by the Roman church. His prayer at the execution was answered by God for a light that will not be put out in 100 years' time and that light was Martin Luther. Today we still need faithful witnesses in our times**. Like William Tyndale and other Puritans who were executed later, Hus did not die in vain. Remember those who are in bonds, the author of the book of Hebrews reminded us In Heb 13. Let us remember to support the suffering saints in prayer or in any practical means possible**.



Luke in Act 5:29 records "*Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men*." Today, we need a return to the courageous and biblical preaching of the pre-Reformation era where there is no compromise on the truth and without fear and favour of men. **We pray for godly men who will undauntingly proclaim and declare the unadulterated gospel of salvation and defend the truth in these last perilous days, in the midst of religious compromise and persecution!**

Jack Sin

(For deeper studies, read Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol Vi, Eerdmans Grand Rapids, 1991,358-371)

Words of Exhortation from overseas….

Thank you, Jack, for your faithfulness to God's calling on your life and your preaching the truth of the great Protestant Reformation. We had a blessed Reformation service this past Sunday as well. Many in our congregation are former Catholics, as Maryland was a colony settled by Catholics who fled Europe. The folks in our church are always glad to hear the truth of how the Lord used Martin Luther and all the Reformers.



Rev David Lewis
Pastor, Cub Hill BPC, Baltimore, USA
Treasurer, ICCC
Board Member, Faith Theological Seminary

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Praise the Lord for a fruitful Reformation service at Faith BPC yesterday and for the evening service as you rehearsed the history and lessons from the Protestant Reformation and its application to us today.
Praise the Lord for the three men who came to Christ, the fruit of your labour of love from your outreach to these Chinese construction workers in your previous church. It is encouraging to see them attending Faith Church after so many years.
Thank you for sharing that an Elder asked for your Reformation message and seminar.
We are praying that those BPCs who do not remember the Reformation anymore will realise its vital importance for the spiritual health of their congregations. May they truly be concerned for the necessity of upholding the pure Gospel and the defence of the faith.



A joy to meet 3 brethren from China above, the fruit of our labour of love from our outreach to Chinese construction workers in our previous church and so encouraged to see them attending Faith BPC after so many years.

Rev Edward & Mrs Lehia Paauwe
Hope BPC, Adelaide, Australia

Memory Verse

2Tim 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Announcements

1. Welcome to our Worship Service! If you are here for the first time, do leave us your contact numbers in our guest book before you leave. Those who share the church vision to acquire a place of worship in due time, may designate your offerings to the SHBPC Church Building Fund.
2. Pastor brings us God's Word this morning on "***The 4-Fold Analogy of a Christian (2Tim 2:1-6]",*** continuing the quarterly series on "***Apostolic Admonitions for Finishing Well in Life - the Epistle of 2 Timothy***",
3. Next Sunday, Pastor will preach on "***Sacred Duty of Every Christian (2Tim 2:7-18]"***.
4. Sunday School classes after the worship service are:
   - Walk Thru the Old Testament (Pastor)
   - Studies in Revelation (Dr Kwong Leen)
5. Chinese Fellowship meets every Sunday night at 7pm via Zoom. [**Zoom ID:883 9662 4157 Passcode: 218178**]. Join us for time of learning on the Book of Hosea (Thirdmill video lessons) and Heroes of the Faith (messages).
6. Do send your prayer items to Pastor and join us for Church Prayer Meeting on Wed at 8pm via Zoom. The prayer list is available in church. **[Zoom ID:863 7527 5431 Passcode: 625551].**
7. Pray for:
   - **Travels: Joseph & Lilian** [30/10-31/12, Adelaide]
   - **Outreach @All Saints Home: 12 & 20 Nov, 10 Dec**
   - **Myanmar Mission Trip Preparations [10-17 Nov] –** Pastor, Angie, Dn Paul, Deborah
   - **Medical: Kin Hoong's daughter Joyce** [post-op recovery], **Simon** [recovery from fall].
   - **Joseph & Rachel**: Gospel Peace Station and void deck outreaches
   - **Lily Almon** [citizenship application]
8. Love gifts, Offering and Tithes to the Lord can be given in the following ways:
   - **Cheque** payable to **Sovereign Hope Bible Presbyterian Church**
   - **Fund transfer** to Church **UOB** Account **392-308-825-1**
   - **PayNow** to Church UEN: **T19SS0116FSOV**

   Kindly indicate **"Church Building Fund"** if you would like to designate towards this cause.