



John Huss (1369-1415)

John Huss was born in Hussenitz, Bohemia in 1372 and later studied theology at the University of Prague. He was ordained a priest and appointed preacher at the Bethlehem chapel in Prague in 1402. Huss then became rector of the University in 1409.

He had romanism - the great stand between been greatly influenced by the writings and teaching of John Wyclife. He especially rejected the Roman Catholic pope as having authority over the Church. He believed that Scripture was the foremost authority in all Church matters. He believed that there needed to be extensive reforms within the Church to turn away from corruption and abuses of the Roman Church. He believed as Wycliffe did that the communion bread and wine did not become the actual body of Christ when the priest prayed over them. He further believed that everyone should have a copy of the Bible in their own language, to read for themselves.

Huss preached his beliefs from the pulpit and at the university as well. John Huss was soon summoned to Rome by the pope and he, along with those who followed his teachings, were eventually excommunicated from the church. Huss appealed the sentence of excommunication, but to no avail. Since he could no longer preach at Bethlehem chapel, he retired to his hometown of Hussenitz and continued to teach his doctrine.

Huss was invited to attend the Council of Constance, but when he arrived about January 1415, he was arrested and held in a room in the palace. When he went before the Council he listened to the forty articles read against him and appealed his case to the higher judge, Jesus Christ. As the conversation continued, he was laughed at and mocked by council members, who were enraged at his words and condemned him to be burned.

They suggested that the crown of his head should be cut off and that was carried out by using a pair of shears. Then they put a paper bishop's hat on his head that had demons painted on it, as well as the word's "A Ringleader of Heretic's" boldly written. They then bound him to a stake with a chain and placed bundles of his books around him up to his neck. He was then asked to recant his teachings, to which he replied, "I never taught any doctrine that was evil, now what I have taught with my lips, I will seal with my blood."

When the flames engulfed him, he began to sing a hymn so loud and cheerful that he could be heard above the crackling of the flames and the noise of the crowd. His remains, as John Wycliffe's, were gathered and cast into the Rhine River. However, they could not destroy his memory or his teachings from the minds of his supporters. In death, Huss became more of a threat to the papacy than he had been in life.

Information and ideas are taken from *The New Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, updated by Harold J. Chadwick, Copyright 1997, pages 79-85.