THE LIFE AND WORK OF JOHN HUS*

July the sixth, five hundred years ago, beyond the city walls of Constance, Switzerland, with hardly a voice raised to comfort, encourage, or to praise him, John of Husinecz, a man of God, died at the stake for his faith. With the sound of his singing still lingering in the air and with his lips murmuring prayers to his blessed Master, his soul passed on to God who gave it. His ashes, soon after dissipated upon the waters, drifted on to the sea. But his message remained warm in the hearts of his fellow-men, now truly understood by a few, now perverted by the many, now prominent in the bitter civil wars, now re-expressed as a part of the Protestant Reformation and now at last finding a noble end in the inauguration of the grand and glorious endeavor to carry the gospel to every land, that all might know of the love of God manifested in Christ Jesus.

A hero was John Hus and a great one, a patriot and the truest, and in all things a great noble God-fearing soul, and he died at the stake for his faith. He was brought to death by a church grown worldly, grown rich, grown faithless to God's will, finding its head in the most pretentious council in the history of Christianity, yet narrow, bigoted and mean, sending a son of its own, unheard, to the burning stake. He was brought to death by a state finding its head in a man false to his word, false to his friends, false to his own kinsman, unworthy of the name of king: He was brought to death by the church and the state, but he was beloved and honored by the best of his own people, the rich and the poor, the great and the small, the noble and the peasant, with a fervent love that continues down to our own day. Well may we remember his death, for by his sacrifice he achieved a great victory. Well may we recount the story of his life, for it is one that thrills, inspires, ennobles, and im-

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pels to deeds of valor for God, for truth, and for the land we love so well.

John Hus came from obscurity and died the most talked of man of his day. One of many children of a humble but thrifty peasant pair, he was born some time between the years 1369 and 1375 in the little village of Husinecz near the Bavarian frontier, where the Teuton met the Slav, where the border spirit ran high and the race rivalry was bitter. The son John was a lad o' pairs with loving sacrificing parents and a vision lighting his heart. His early education was obtained in the larger town of Prachtice a short distance removed from Husinecz. These vague bits of information and the statement that he was the favorite son of his mother constitute the sum of our knowledge of this period of his existence.

In 1389 he left his home and journeyed forth to the city of Prague, his heart strong, his purse empty, but a great ambition moving him forward to better his condition and to serve God in the labor of the ministry. Here in the University he lived and labored many years. Here he found the truth and became its loyal servant. Here he led his people in their religious and political struggles and aspirations. Here his troubles originated. Here his great friends were made. Here his enemies were busy, spying out and seeking to accomplish his downfall.

The University of Prague was founded in 1348 by Charles IV for his people, the Bohemians, but it very soon came under the control of the ever-present Germans. They had the majority in the voting. They controlled the church of Bohemia and secured for themselves the rich benefices. They domineered over the Bohemians to the point of desperation. What the Czech advocated, the German despised, and what the German proclaimed as true the Bohemian was ready to declare false. In the scholastic controversies the Bohemians were Realists, the Germans were Nominalists. In the questions of empire, the Germans recognized the claims of Rupert, the Czechs rallied about Wenzel. In
the troublous conditions arising out of the papal Schism the Germans supported Gregory XII, the Bohemians forsook him and gave their approval to the Pisan cardinals and later Alexander V. This was the condition of things when Hus arrived at Prague, a poor student, unknown, with his heart afire with patriotism; and it was in this very struggle of nations that he was to play the leading rôle.

We have some information concerning his student days. We know that he did his work well and was interested therein, though not especially proficient. He was well liked by his companions, cheerful in labor, interested in the recreations of the time, particularly in the playing of chess—in which he showed great skill; and in spite of poverty and oftentimes dire want the days seem to have passed in a rather happy and healthful way. The latter part of his student life was rendered free from great care by his admission to the newly founded college of Wenzel, where his expenses were greatly reduced.

The third period in the life of Hus, extending from 1393 to 1408, may be characterized as one of academic activity, patriotic leadership and popular preaching. In 1393 he received the bachelor's degree, in 1396 the master's, in 1398 he began to lecture in the University, in 1400 he was ordained priest, and in 1402 he was elected rector, which position he held according to the custom, for about half a year.

In the year 1402 he was also appointed preacher at the recently founded Bethlehem Chapel, an establishment which had come into existence as a result of the reformatory preaching of Milicz and through the munificence of two rich burghers. Here preaching was the chief concern and the gospel—a fact which is noteworthy and important—was proclaimed in the Bohemian tongue. Here Hus had a popular outlet for his great spirit. Here he influenced many from all classes who came to hear him and who remained his ardent supporters and the leaders in the Hussite movement. Among those who were affected by his message de-
livered in the Bethlehem Chapel was the wife of Wenzel, Queen Sophia, who remained loyal to Hus to the end, thereby on several occasions endangering her own reputation for orthodoxy.

It was during these years that Hus became intimately acquainted with the writings of Wyclif, which were to play such an important part in the reform movement in Bohemia. The works of John Wyclif had been introduced into Bohemia by students who had gone to England in the reign of Richard II. The occasion of their departure for England was the marriage of their country-woman, Anna, sister of Wenzel and Sigismund, to Richard, and the reason for it was the great fame of the University of Oxford. During the years of their sojourn Wyclifism was at its high water mark in the University circles. They became imbued with his doctrines and returned home with many of his important works. Wyclif was first known in Bohemia as a philosopher and schoolman and in the scholastic controversies as a Realist, but as matters of speculation were to him secondary to the preaching of God's word and the reform of the church, so were they soon relegated to the background by his followers in Bohemia, and he became through his writing their leader in solving the more vital questions of holy scripture and holy church. Wyclifism became especially popular in Prague where his works were studied, expounded and popularized primarily by John Hus, by other masters of the University many of whom afterwards fell away, and by the occasionally present but ever erratic Jerome of Prague.

We have during these comparatively untroubled years the Hussite movement taking definite form and the opposition developing which was to wreck the career of its leader. It is during these years that the storm clouds were packed and the winds piled up which were to be loosened in full fury in the years which were to follow. Here we can trace ever so clearly the lines of force which were uniting to break his influence and destroy his life.
In the first place Hus was the leader of the Bohemians in the University struggles and won for himself in his identification with their cause the personal hatred of the Germans, and the Germans held the ruling power in the Bohemian church. Secondly, his popularity in the Bethlehem Chapel was a source of great envy for the less successful parish priests who became at first secretly and then openly his enemies, spying out and spreading abroad their evil gossip, charging things which were often slanderous, many times perverted and generally groundless. These very charges were themselves a third source of opposition in that they spread to Rome itself the endeavor to crush out his influence. He was charged with false teachings concerning the church, the sacraments, and the Trinity, and with the full advocacy of the already condemned Wyclifism. But especially did he draw upon himself the bitter hatred of the clergy in his clear-cut condemnation of their life, in his bitter denunciation of the shocking clerical immorality, of the practices of simony, and of the worldliness and greed of prelates and especially of the See of Rome. His words rang out with the fierce challenge of a John the Baptist, and as of old they who felt themselves accused resolved to silence the accuser.

The year 1408 marks the turning point in the life of Hus. Now he begins to reap what he has sown. Now he stands forth as the avowed enemy of clerical immorality and the champion of his people in their religious and political struggles with the worldly forces in the church openly arrayed against him. Now we find the parish priests, the powerful archbishop and the pope of Rome all united in the endeavor to stem the tide which had swept over the country as a result of the preaching of one poor priest. Now he rises to the position of the greatest popular leader Bohemia has ever known, with all classes of the people ready to support him, ready to defend him with their lives. Now popular enthusiasm rises to the very heights and clerical antagonism and bitter hatred begin to lay the mines for his destruction.
It was towards the end of the year 1408 that the volcanic conditions in the University came to the eruptive point and that Wenzel, with considerable difficulty, was persuaded by his courtiers, his queen, and the French envoys present and interested in the papal question involved, to side definitely with the nationalists. January 18, 1409 he was induced to sign the decree of Kutna Hora by which the king declared that the Bohemians, who in all University assemblies, judgments, and so forth, had heretofore had but one vote out of four should henceforth have three. This decree changed radically the constitution of the University and was a great victory for the Bohemians. It was followed almost immediately by the famous withdrawal of the Germans and the founding of the new University of Leipzig.

The departure of the Germans was almost a death knell to the University of Prague. The institution now became one of secondary importance, and the struggles which had been carried on in a circumscribed way in Bohemia were now aired abroad throughout northern Europe. These conditions resulting from the victory of the Bohemians were unfortunate and unhappy, but a true patriot would willingly and bravely accept them. Rather see the University become merely the instructor of a few Bohemians, rather destroy it entirely, than have it continue under the control of domineering foreigners.

The University now became the rallying point of the Bohemians in the religious and political struggles, and Hus as the newly appointed rector came more and more to the fore.

The archbishop of Prague, during these years, was Zbinek Zajic of Hasenburg, a man of good intentions and truly zealous for the reform of the church, but more of a soldier than a priest, better qualified for service in the camp than in the church. He, at first, treated Hus with high regard and endeavored to support him in his plans for the cleansing of the church. He made him synodical preacher and appointed him upon a rather important commission to Brandenburg. The two were gradually estranged, first through the
position which Hus assumed on the papal question when he refused to recognize Gregory XII, and then because of his fuller acceptance of the doctrines of Wyclif. Finally Zbinek, reading the signs of the times, transferred his allegiance to the pope of the Pisan cardinals and became himself the leader of the opposing forces and the chief representative of the papacy in the endeavor to crush out the Hussite movement.

Alexander V, elected pope June 26, 1409, had been made aware, by letter, by visitation, by voluntary spying and rich presents, of conditions in Bohemia, and as a result on December 20, 1409, he issued a bull against John Hus and his followers. The bull was delayed in passage and was not read in Prague until March 9 of the following year. By its terms a council of four magistrates of theology and two doctors of canon law was to be appointed to examine into the situation. After hearing opinions they were to forbid all heretical preaching and preaching of any kind except in the cathedral, the college and parish churches, and monastic houses. Furthermore the writings of Wyclif were to be delivered up and burned. In the endeavor to execute the bull feeling ran high on both sides and many excesses were indulged in. Hus continued to preach and proclaim the Word of God, to condemn clerical immorality, and to call the people to righteous living, and all with the ardent support of the nationalists, with the protection of the King, and despite the definite prohibition contained in the papal bull.

The next step taken by the church was his excommunication, and in a day when the fulminating power of the papacy had lost its force because of its lavish use very little was accomplished. Then came canonical citation and summons to Rome by John XXIII and finally the city was placed under an interdict and all with little avail, although at this time Stephen Palecz and a few others fell away who were to be numbered by Hus among his bitterest enemies.

Towards the end of the year 1411 Hus came out with all
the force of his powerful invective against the traffic in indulgences carried on to finance the so-called Holy War which John XXIII was undertaking against Ladislas, King of Naples. Conditions in Bohemia were at the breaking point, and for the good of all concerned Hus was persuaded by King Wenzel to go into retirement for a time.

The period of his voluntary exile extended from the latter part of the year 1412 to October 1414. Where the years were passed we know not. Much of the time was probably spent in Southern Bohemia with occasional visits, undoubtedly, to Prague. It was a time of very useful itinerant preaching. It was a period full of literary activity. It witnessed the production of some of his original work. Though absent from the chief center of the reform movement he was continually in touch with it, directing, encouraging and serving his people.

At this time Sigismund, King of Hungary and of the Romans, brother of Wenzel and heir to the Bohemian crown, instrumental in calling the Council of Constance and its dominant spirit, saw in the Hussite movement a force which was giving Bohemia a bad reputation in the world and which was working against his own personal desires and ambitions. He saw in Hus not only the leader but the power without which the stress of conditions would soon pass away. He felt that the removal of Hus from Bohemia would be the ending of the Hussite movement. If, however, he were to attempt to remove him arrogantly, he would bring upon himself the enmity of many of the influential noblemen who were his warm supporters. The Council of Constance seemed to offer the occasion desired. It was called to reform the church. The Hussite movement certainly needed investigation. Hus was its leader and in his anxiety to plead his cause and prove his innocence would undoubtedly come when summoned. So Sigismund correctly reasoned.

With apparent candor but premeditated deceit he sent a summons to Hus to come to Constance, promising, regard-
Hus as expected felt that this was an opportunity to vindicate before the church his position and to prove in general council that he believed and taught nothing contrary to the accepted faith of the church. In spite of the warning of many who prophesied that he would never return to his native land Hus set out, October 11, 1414, for the Council, before the arrival of the safe conduct. He was accompanied by his proved friends, John of Chlum, Wenzel of Duba, and Henry of Leitembock. The journey made through Bavaria was in the main uneventful, and they arrived at Constance, November 3 of the same year. Hus took up his lodging in a little tavern near the Schnitz Gate kept by a widow named Fida. His enemies were at work even before his arrival, but he was allowed considerable liberty until they accomplished his imprisonment.

The Council of Constance, to which he had come, was the biggest and most brilliant assemblage the Church has ever known. Thousands upon thousands were there, good and bad, noble and prelate, courtier and courtesan, priest and pauper, drawn together from the length and breadth of Christendom. They were gathered to Constance for the purpose of reforming the church under the leadership of the self-seeking Sigismund and the sin-ridden John XXIII. They talked much, debated many questions and condemned to death John Hus, the most godly man present.

A short time after his arrival, on complaint of Stephen Palecz, a former friend, John of Leitomysl, Michael the Pleader, and others, on various pretexts, that he held mass in his apartment and that he had attempted to escape in a hay wagon, Hus was brought, without forewarning and to his great surprise and sorrow, before a commission of the cardinals. He declared that he had come to Constance to make his defense in open meeting after the arrival of Sigismund, under whose safe conduct he was present. His accusers took little heed of this, his former friends gloated over his predicament, and he was soon lodged in confinement in
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a Dominican monastery, situated on an island hard by the mainland. There in a damp and dismal cell near the latrines they placed him. He was deprived of books, of papers, of the Word of God. Communication with his friends was only accomplished by stealth and through a well-disposed jailor, and in increasing weakness and pain he was left in loneliness to suffer.

When John XXIII, seeing the Council slipping from his grasp, fled to Schaffhausen, the keys of the prison were delivered over to Sigismund, and he could have liberated him had he so desired. However, he was removed to the castle Gottlieben of the Bishop of Constance, located some distance from the city. There he was confined in an "airy prison" high in the tower. He was removed from all contact with the world, was chained day and night, and although every effort was made to break his strength, his spirit remained undaunted.

A commission with D'Ailly at its head, appointed to examine the charges made against him, visited Hus at the castle Gottlieben but accomplished little; and with the development of other matters of interest to the Council little was done until the many and powerful friends of Hus in Bohemia and the few in Constance by their very importunity and their imposing seals gained for him what the Inquisition very rarely granted—a public hearing.

On June 5 he was again transferred, this time to the Franciscan monastery within the city, for the convenience of his examiners. The hearing extended over three days. On the first day charges were presented before Hus was admitted, and when he was brought before the assembled commissioners he was not allowed to say a word in defense or explanation. The second day, with Sigismund present, the discussion was concerned chiefly with the scholastic controversy of Nominalism and Realism in which D'Ailly endeavored to prove that Hus, as a Realist, must hold to the remanence theory of the eucharist and therefore must be an advocate of the Wyclifite or some other heretical interpreta-
tion of the sacrament. Here Hus showed great skill in meeting his antagonists on their ground although they knew that his interest and heart were far removed from these unfruitful questions. The third day many articles from his books were read, some in the spirit of their context and some perverted. The discussion was mainly concerned with the question of dominion, civil and ecclesiastical, and was for the most part vain. It was clear to all what the end would be. Hus must abjure and recant. "I am prepared to obey the Council and be taught," he said, "but I beseech of you in the name of God, do not lay snares of damnation for me by compelling me to tell a lie and to abjure articles which I never held."

Hus had come to the trial with a promise of safe conduct. Shortly after his arrival he was thrown into prison. He had come to defend himself in public hearing against the charges of heresy. He was not allowed to say a word in self-defense. After a period of sickness, of suffering, of great trial, in which his spirit remained undaunted and his faith was refined as through a fire, he was declared a heretic.

After the public examination in the Franciscan monastery there was a month of weary waiting and then a travesty of a proceeding for his public condemnation held in the cathedral on July 6, preparatory to the execution. All the notables of church and state were there. While mass was read poor Hus was kept without the doors unworthy to meet with the children of God at the table of His Son. At last he was taken into the cathedral and the trial began. A sermon was delivered against heresy by Archbishop Lodi which was followed by the presentation of articles against Hus. It was declared that he had taught that the church was the totality of the predestinated, that civil authority depends on character, and that priests and prelates living in mortal sin are unworthy and incapable of administering the sacraments of God. For holding such dreadful views, which he was given no opportunity of explaining or even of denying he had held, he was condemned a heretic. At
the conclusion of a trial which was from beginning to end spectacular and cowardly, he was deconsecrated, disrobed of his priestly garments, his tonsure destroyed, his body given over to the secular authorities and his soul to the devil.

"We commit thy soul unto the devil," they thundered.

"And I," he cried, "commit it unto the most gracious Lord Jesus Christ."

Then they led him forth, the great mob following out of the cathedral, past the pile of burning books, down by the house of the good Frau Fida, out the Schnitz Gate and on to the so-called Place of the Devil.

A stake had been made fast in the ground and faggots were lying about. Hus knelt, recited several Psalms, prayed to God and arose strengthened. He was then stripped and bound to the pole.

"Turn him to the west," came up from the mob. "He is a heretic. He shall not face the east."

The change was made. The fire lighted, and as the flames arose the heart of Hus lifted itself up in praise to God in song. When the flames blew across his face and he could sing no more, his lips were noticed moving in silent prayer and his countenance bore the rare light of joy which comes alone to those who approach the hour of death in the calm assurance of the everlasting love of God.

The end came and with it the further cruelty and barbarity of his enemies. Finally for fear his followers might endeavor to preserve relics of him and thus keep warm his memory, his ashes were gathered together and thrown into the waters.

Thus he perished, a man whose only proved offense even in the eyes of those who condemned him, was that he placed the Bible before the Church, the Lord before the Pope, and the individual conscience before the will of the hierarchy. Thus he perished, John Hus, a man who deserves to live on in the hearts of those who love the Lord, as a dauntless hero, a champion of the Holy word, a martyr to the truth. Thus he perished, a man who was a great patriot
and leader of his people, a heaven-inspired preacher of righteousness and as such one truly zealous for the reform of the church.

He was a man well qualified for patriotic leadership. His was the sort of personality around which men love to group themselves. He was a man pleasing and magnetic with a fervent love of country. He was a man of unquestioned courage and uprightness of character, ready to sacrifice himself in the cause of country, in the service of truth, for the will of God. As a Bohemian patriot his zeal was great for the betterment of his native land in every possible way in which his personality and his talents could be used in her service. He sought to develop foreign ties which would be to her advantage. He sought to disseminate knowledge and raise her intellectual status. He sought to build her up morally and to anchor that morality in the Word of God.

While connected with the University he sought to free her from the dominance of the Germans and to make her truly a place for the education and upbuilding of his people. He was recognized as the leader in this endeavor and after the withdrawal of the Germans he was immediately elected rector on the reorganized plans laid down by Wenzel.

Recognizing that one of the prime requisites for true nationalism is a unity of language, he endeavored in every possible way to make the Bohemian tongue truly the language of the country. He endeavored to purify it from foreign accretions, to cleanse it from stilted formalism, to enrich and strengthen it by building it upon the foundation of the popular spoken tongue. He wrote in it. He composed hymns in it. He preached in it. He sought most of all to make the translation of the Scriptures in the Bohemian language as perfect as possible. To the formation and development of the Bohemian language he bears the same relation that Dante does to the Italian, that Wyclif does to the English, and that Luther does to the German.

Hus sought not only to instill and encourage a love of
country but he sought to found the patriotism of his people in worthy moral living. He sought not only to arouse a Bohemian pride but to make the Bohemians better people. This was the great passion with him. He sought to restore the simplicity, the sincerity, the spiritual fervor of the apostolic church. He sought to make the shepherds of Christ's sheep true patterns for the flock in earnestness, in righteousness, in godliness. He sought to free the Bible and give it to the people. He sought to free the conscience and make religion truly a matter of the heart. He sought, and this was his great endeavor, to build his people up as true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in such a work, in a day of church decadence and degeneracy, he was most assuredly zealous for the reform of the church and the cleansing of her from the many evils within her doors, which had grown strong and now ruled every phase of her life.

As a reformer the field for Hus had been ploughed and watered. No matter how low the church in its life at any period may have fallen, there have always been voices raised in protest, messengers of God sent to lead her back. The Bohemian Church was no exception. His condemnation of clerical immorality was not the first that his generation had heard. The theories as to church and authority which he propounded were not for him discoveries. The Waldenses, Conrad Waldhauser, Milicz, Stitny, Janov and others, before his coming, had preached better living and general reform, and although they had lacked the boldness of Hus they had accomplished good work for the faith. Marsiglio of Padua many years before had taught daring things concerning the church and the state which seem to have been the source not only for the views of Hus but also for those of his English precursor. John Wyclif, himself the path-breaker for the Bohemians, went far beyond Hus in his condemnation of the evils in the Church. Wyclif was indeed a man born out of time, for he varies but little from the later reformers. Hus follows him but a short distance, yet he was moving ever nearer and his development in so far as it had proceeded bears a striking resemblance to that of Wyclif.
Wyclif of England and Hus of Bohemia are two men closely associated in the minds of the historian. Both have their beginnings clouded in obscurity. Both appear first of all as leaders in patriotic movements. Both are prominent in the development of their languages. Both had the first seat of their activity in their respective universities. Both were forceful preachers of righteousness. Both gave form to the restless craving for liberty in religious thought. Both were reformers attacking simony and clerical immorality and seeking to rebuild the church on the foundation of Holy Writ. They differ in that Wyclif, though preceding and influencing Hus, goes far beyond him in the condemnation of errors which had crept into the Roman Church in matters both of faith and of practice. With his fundamental doctrine, the Scripture the seat of authority and the Spirit the revealer of its meaning to the individual heart, Wyclif swept the decks clean for action, condemning pilgrimages, processions, auricular confession, judiciary absolution, image and saint worship, transubstantiation, celibacy, clerical immorality, monastic orders, salvation by works, and the temporal and spiritual claims of an arrogant and decadent papacy.

Hus, indeed, spoke clearly and forcibly against the immorality of the clergy and their worldliness and greed, but he claimed from the beginning to the end that he varied not from the accepted faith of the church, and that if he had taught anything that was contrary to the church and it were revealed to him, he would renounce the same. Wyclif in a day of schism, when the church was weak and he was well supported, died at a good old age a natural death. Hus in a later day, though varying little, when a Council was bold, died at the stake for his faith, died because he would not abjure that which he had not taught, because he would not mislead his followers, because he would not be false to the voice of conscience.

Hus is to be reckoned as one of the Mediaeval Reformers in that his attack was made not so much against doctrines which were false as against practices which were
contrary to the true spirit of Christianity. It is the immor-
ality of the clergy, their lack of piety, their worldliness and
greed, their concern with things temporal rather than things
spiritual that he condemns in bitterest terms. These are
matters which he lamented most of all, and in his endeavor
to restore the purity of the early church he stands on the
ground that was occupied by those who had preceded him,
men such as St. Gregory VII, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and
St. Francis of Assisi, whom the church had been pleased to
canonize.

He is also to be reckoned with the precursors of the
Protestant Reformation in that his doctrinal teaching was
at times out of accord with the reformers of the mediaeval
church and at one with those who prepared for and were
themselves a part of the later and more successful attempt
to cleanse and reform the church of God. In his doctrine
concerning the church, in which he declared that she
was the community of the predestinated, he was present-
ing a conception of the church that was certainly not accept-
able to the hierarchy, and he was on the ground of Wyclif.
In his declaration that the seat of authority was the Word
of God, he stood on bed rock. This was the foundation
stone upon which Wyclif erected his system which had its
climax in the translation of the Scriptures, the condemnation
of all superstition, and the sending forth of the poor priests.
If Hus had been given more time, who knows to what
heights he might have attained?

Hus declared that he was true to the faith of the Church
and that he was not responsible for all that Wyclif had said.
He was, indeed, in a certain sense orthodox to the church of
his day in that he was ready to submit to her will, and he
certainly did not go as far as Wyclif. He said he was ready
to recant anything which was proved to him to be false.
This matter of proving doctrines was but a source of further
irritation for his examiners. Why should it be necessary
for the Church of Rome to prove what was its faith to this
the meanest of its ministers? When it declared that such and
such were its teachings he should accept them without ques-
tion. When it declared that he taught certain things which
were contrary to its doctrines, he should abjure and recant
without discussion. These were things which Hus could
not do.

He was also charged with teaching a Wyclifite interpreta-
tion of the sacraments, and gross doctrines concerning the
Trinity. He declared that he was innocent of these charges,
and innocent he was. What difference did it make whether
he held them or not? All that was required was the abjuring
and recanting. But this he would not do. He would not
abjure that which was not shown to him to be false nor
would he recant doctrines which he was charged with hold-
ing and which he had not taught. For this spirit which the-
church called obstinate, and Sigismund ridiculous, but
which the true Christian can find paralleled in the life of the
Master, he suffered at the stake.

Hus was not original. He was not a man of great genius.
He was not a man of profound thought. He was not, as
Wyclif, a Protestant born out of time. He was a path-
breaker in that he gave Wyclif to his people, in that he
sought to restore the fervent love of God and His Word to
the Church of Bohemia, and in that he started a movement
for reform which though persecuted, divided, perverted,
and practically destroyed realized itself eventually in the
later freedom.

The full light had not come to him. He was too far down
the valley, but he was climbing ever upward and the vision
was becoming more and more beautiful. They plucked him
off in his young manhood. Who knows what the years
might have revealed? But it was God's will. He died for
the truth and the truth makes free. He moved the people to
righteous living and his power in service was great. A
wonderful vision was the light of his soul, and he was never
disobedient unto it. Whence came his great power? Whence
his wonderful vision? Were not the vision and the power
from the Word of God, the source of Truth and Life, the.
fountain from which he drank and gave to the thirsting sheep?

Nothing reveals the man Hus more than the letter which he wrote two days after the trial in the Franciscan monastery, when the conviction was definitely established that death awaited him at the hands of the Council and that life was a matter of days, perhaps hours. It is in his letters that we come to know Hus best and this is one of the most precious. Here we see him the great good man that he was, so gentle, so tender, so forgetful of self, so great in courage, so truly filled with the Holy Spirit, so abounding in the love of God. And here we may well leave him.

"To the Bohemian nation,

Master John Hus in good hope a servant of God, hopes that the Lord God will grant to all true Bohemians that love and will love the Lord God to live and die in his grace and reside forever in celestial joy. Amen.

Faithful in God, men and women, rich and poor! I beg and entreat you to love the Lord God, praise his word, gladly hear it and live according to it. Cling I beg you to the divine truth which I have preached to you according to God's law. I also beg that if anyone has heard either in my sermons, or privately anything contrary to God's truth, or if I have written anything such—which I trust God is not the case—he should not retain it. . . . I beg you to love, praise, and honor those priests who lead a moral life, those in particular who work for the Word of God. I beg of you to beware of crafty people, particularly of unworthy priests of whom our Saviour has said that they are clothed like sheep, but are inwardly greedy wolves.

I beg the nobles to treat the poor people kindly and rule them justly. I beg the burghers to conduct their business honestly. I beg the artisans to perform their duties conscientiously and joyfully. I beg the servants to serve their mistresses and masters faithfully. I beg the teachers to live honestly, to instruct their pupils carefully, to love God above all. . . . I beg the students and other scholars to obey and
follow their masters in everything that is good and to study for the sake of the praise of God for their own salvation and that of others.

I write this letter to you in prison and in fetters, expecting to-morrow the sentence of death, full of hope in God, resolved not to recede from his divine truth, nor to recant the errors which false witnesses have invented and attributed to me. How God has acted toward me, how he has been with me during all my troubles—that you will only know when by the grace of God we shall meet again in heaven. Of Master Jerome, my beloved comrade, I hear nothing except that he is in prison, as I am, expecting death and that because of his faith, which he bravely expounded to the Bohemians. It was these Bohemians who are our bitterest enemies who delivered us up for imprisonment to our other enemies. I beg you to pray to God for these men. . . . I also beg you to love one another, not to allow good men to be oppressed, and to grant to all that which is due them.

Written on Monday, the night before the feast of St. Vitus, after the feast of good angels.”

Remsen Du Bois Bird.

Princeton.