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Stanhope Historical Essay,

1879.

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JOHN HUSS.

BY

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“Resistentia mandatis impiis est Obedientia.”

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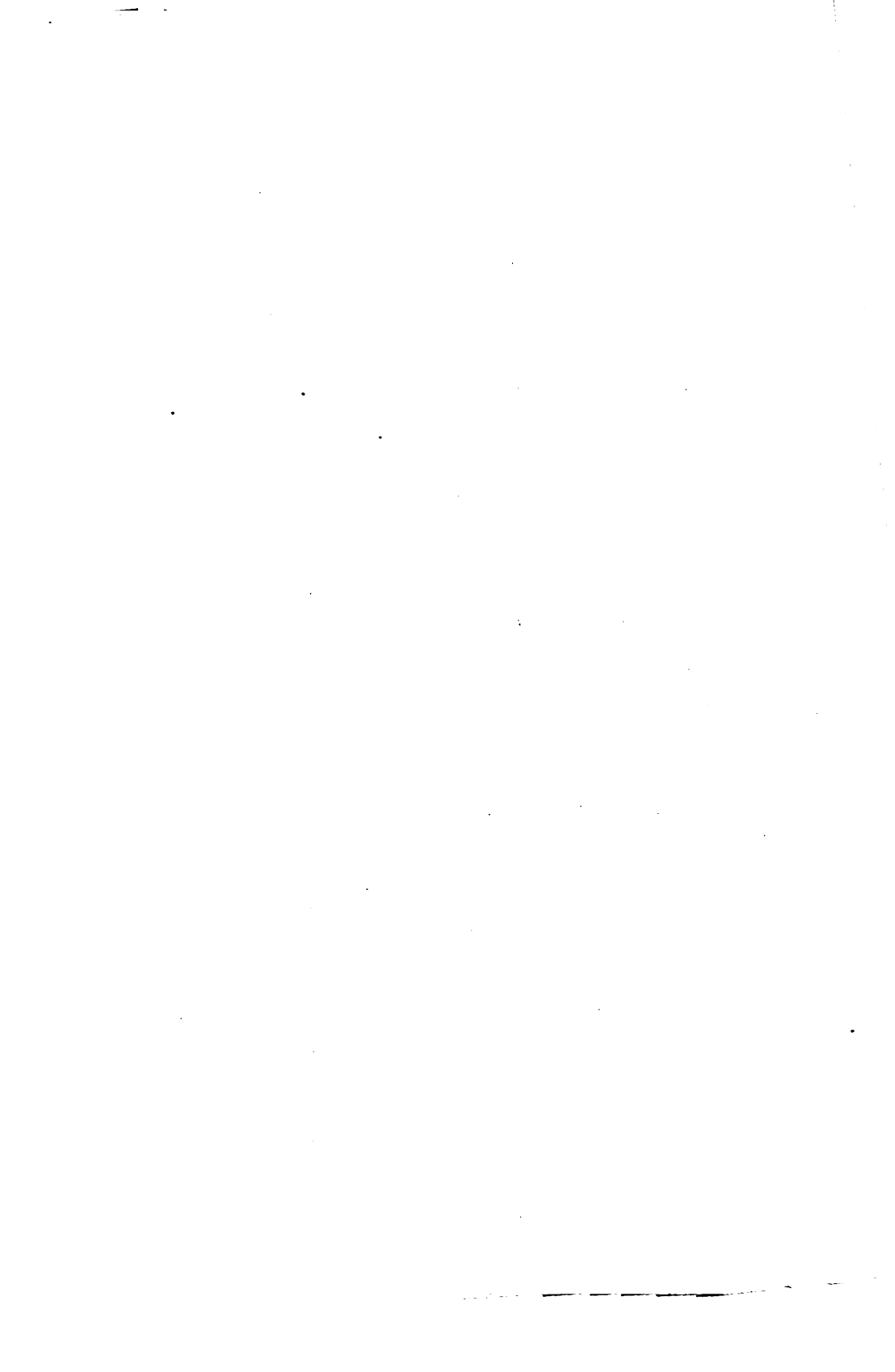
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## SECTION I.—INTRODUCTORY.

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ENDEAVOURS have been made by ingenious theorists to connect the religious revival which took place in Bohemia in the latter half of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, with the Greek origin of the Bohemian Church and the independent position which it continued to enjoy long after it had formally submitted to the Roman Pontiff. But, as a matter of historical fact, all traces of that independence had disappeared by the fourteenth century. By the reign of the Emperor Charles IV. the Slavonic language and the Greek ritual had everywhere fallen into disuse in the services of the Church, and the host was no longer administered to the laity dipped in the consecrated wine. The Bohemian reformers were, in fact, quite unconscious of the Greek parentage of their Church. Equally unfounded is the theory which traces the Bohemian movement to Waldensian, or (as far as the early part of the movement is concerned) to Wycliffite influence. Like all truly great religious revivals, it was of indigenous growth. It began before the rise of Wycliffism in England; and, like the movement which is connected with the name of the Oxford doctor, it was only one part of a many-sided outburst of national vitality. The latter half of the fourteenth century was characterised both in England and in Bohemia, not only by a most remarkable religious revival, but by great social and political improvement, by great scholastic activity, and by a vigorous growth of vernacular literature.

The position of the Bohemian nation at this period is thus described by Dean Milman. It was "a nation which spoke an unformed language, intelligible to themselves alone, and not more akin to German than to Latin; a nation, as it were, intruded into the Teutonic Empire, thought barbarian, and from late circumstances held in hostile jealousy by the Teutonic commonwealth."\* Before the reign of Charles IV., Bohemia was no doubt as much behind the rest of Germany in civilization, as Germany was behind Italy. It was to the Germans very much what Scotland was to our own ancestors. But in the course of the reign of the Bohemian Emperor, the Slavonic kingdom became rather an envied, than a

\* "Latin Christianity." Bk. xiii. ch. 8.

despised intruder into the Teutonic commonwealth. His vigorous administration established order amongst its wild and warlike nobles and knights\*: Churches, Monasteries, and Schools were built; the Capital became, to quote the description given by Æneas Sylvius in the next century, "a town as large and as noble as Etruscan Florence." Above all, the establishment in 1348 of the University of Prague at a time when no German University yet existed, made the Bohemian Capital in many respects the most important city in the Empire.

But while the Bohemian kingdom rose to a higher position than it had ever held before, the danger of Germanization, long the bugbear of Bohemian patriots, was proportionately increased. Thousands of German students flocked to Prague, where they far out-numbered those of Bohemian birth. The rivalry of nations put on the guise of an opposition of philosophies. The Bohemians became Realists; the Germans adopted the principles of Nominalism. At a later time this apparently irrelevant circumstance exercised an important influence upon the fortunes of the Bohemian reform-movement. For, while the liberal tendencies which soon began to develop themselves in the Bohemian "nation" at Prague were not unlike those of the anti-papal party which at the beginning of the fifteenth century succeeded in completely crushing the Franciscans and establishing its own supremacy in the University of Paris, a difference of philosophical creed prevented the smallest sympathy arising between the reform-parties in the two Universities. At Constance the nominalist Reformers of Paris were among the noisiest of those who clamoured for the condemnation of the realist Reformers of Prague.

The very period at which the danger of Germanization was at its height, at which the national language seemed in the eyes of the Bohemian nationalist to be in no small danger of actual extinction, was a most flourishing epoch in the history of Bohemian literature. The tone of the Bohemian literature of this period, like that of most of the vernacular literature of the Middle Ages, was decidedly anti-hierarchical. The Jesuits of later times assumed that everything that was Bohemian must necessarily be heretical; but enough has escaped the ravages of their Vandalism to enable those who have explored that unknown field of literature to pronounce that there were poets in Bohemia in the fourteenth century not unworthy of comparison with the father of English poetry. Satires on the Clergy must have lent some help to the Bohemian reformers; nor were there wanting writers of those vernacular hymns, the existence of which is a sure sign of the growth of religious feeling too deep to be satisfied by the

\* The constitution of the country was not feudal. The Bohemian Knights were a distinct inferior order of nobility, not the vassals of the Baronage.



mechanical repetition of Paters and Aves, or by listening to the unintelligible, if solemn and imposing, Psalmody of the Church. But incomparably the most important service which the Bohemian literature of this period rendered to religion was the translation of the whole of the Scriptures into Bohemian, which appeared towards the close of the fourteenth century; and if Mr. Wratislaw's account of the general diffusion of education among all classes of society during this period be not exaggerated,\* the Bohemian people must have been at least as capable of appreciating that translation as our own countrymen were of deriving benefit from Wyclif's Bible.

At about the same time,—soon after 1360,—two great preachers established themselves in Prague, the German Conrad of Waldhausen and the Moravian Milicz of Kremsia. Conrad preached in German to the German townspeople and the more educated classes among the Bohemians, and in Latin to the students: Milicz preached in their native language to the masses of the people. The preaching of these men was on the whole characterised by a sobriety which was too often wanting both in the orthodox and in the heretical religious movements of the Middle Ages. Milicz was, indeed, a more excitable man, and a more sensational preacher, than the quiet, earnest Augustinian, Conrad of Waldhausen. He had experienced the full force of that temptation, by yielding to which so much of the piety of the Middle Ages was lost to the world. He had felt a strong desire to enter a cloister: but the desire was resisted. Instead of shutting himself up in a monastery which would have made him useless to his generation, or founding a new religious order which would have been worse than useless to succeeding generations, he established a school in which he trained two or three hundred young men to become preachers, who were afterwards sent forth, like the "poor priests" of Wyclif, to become instructors of those whom the parochial clergy neglected, and the Friars made a gain of. The preaching of Conrad and Milicz changed the character of whole districts of the city. A part of the town called "Little Sodom" was so reformed as to acquire the name of "Little Jerusalem;" and it may be doubted whether any Mission was ever attended with more extraordinary success. And from the fact that the preachers were permanently stationed in one town, this success was more lasting than was often the case with those wild outbursts of enthusiasm which were awakened by the preaching of the itinerant revivalists of the Middle Ages.

The almost universal sympathy with which John Huss' protests against Sacerdotalism were greeted in the next generation, was due in no small measure to the discontent with the prevalent religion of form and ceremonies which was the inevitable result of the

\* "Native Literature of Bohemia in the Fourteenth Century," p. 3.

influence of really spiritually-minded teachers such as Milicz and Conrad of Waldhausen. They were indeed Revivalists rather than Reformers. But in one respect they could not help being Reformers: they were both of them enemies of the Mendicant Friars. It was hardly possible in that age for a secular priest to preach at all, without trenching on what the Friars Preachers and the Friars Minors regarded as a monopoly of their own; and it was quite impossible for any one to preach a spiritual religion without preaching a different religion from theirs. The religion which the Friars preached, at all events to the laity, was a religion of bought indulgences, bought dispensations, bought absolutions, bought sacraments. In their view religion was impossible for a layman: it was an impertinence in him to affect it; all that he could do was to compound for not being religious. Against this system Conrad of Waldhausen and Milicz spent their lives in protesting. And by their preaching the influence of the Mendicant Orders in Bohemia appears to have been well-nigh destroyed; so that in the time of Huss they do not appear to have been powerful enemies. Huss was in consequence brought less into collision with the Friars than most other Mediæval reformers.

Conrad and Milicz died before Huss was born. But there was another remarkable teacher, who was still living in Prague when Huss took his Bachelor's degree. Matthias of Janow was not a preacher, but a theologian or devotional writer. His great merit was the clearness with which he saw the necessity for a restitution to its original dignity of the office of Parish Priest. It was chiefly on account of their interference with the parochial system that he objected to religious orders and monastic institutions of every kind. And it is in respect of his emphatic condemnation of that mediæval distinction between the Evangelical "counsels\*" and the Evangelical "precepts" upon which the principle of Monasticism was based, that "it may be said," as Canon Robertson remarks, "that the later reformer Huss rather fell short of him . . . than exceeded him."† The general character of his aims is well shown by the following passage quoted from his principal work by Neander. "I have myself come," he says, "to a settled conclusion that it would be a salutary thing, and calculated to restore peace and union to Christendom, . . . to bring back the Christian Church to those sound and simple beginnings where it would be needful to retain but a few, and those only the Apostolical laws."‡

However, the intense strength of conviction with which John Huss adhered to tenets which he had once embraced, more than

\* Perfect obedience to the commands of our Lord was commonly held to involve the observance of the three "counsels of perfection," Chastity, Poverty, Obedience, which was attainable only by those who had embraced the "religious" life.

† "History of the Church," book viii. chap. vii.

‡ Neander, "Ecl. Hist." vol. ix. p. 285 [Eng. Trans.]

compensated for the smaller range of the practical measures of reform which he advocated. To show the general inferiority of Janow to his disciple it is enough to mention one fact, that he recanted; although it is true that the subject of his recantation was not distinctly a matter of faith. He had advocated the frequent, if not daily, Communion of the laity; and by implication, if not explicitly, the Communion of the laity in both kinds. His language on this subject he was compelled to retract at a Synod held at Prague in 1389, when the laity were positively forbidden to communicate more frequently than once a month.\*

\* Gieseler contends that the assertion that Matthias of Janow advocated lay Communion in both kinds was based upon his use of the words "Communicatio corporis et sanguinis J. Christi" in reference to the laity—language which the doctrine of concomitance rendered perfectly orthodox. (Gieseler, Eng. Trans., vol. iv., p. 241-2. Note.) But it is impossible so to understand the language attributed to him by Neander without a very forced construction of the words: he held "that the whole multitude should taste the sweetness of the Sacrament that is hidden beneath the species of the bread and wine." (Neander, "General Church History," vol. ix. p. 313-4.)

## SECTION II.

### THE LIFE OF HUSS IN BOHEMIA.

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JOHN HUSS was the son of poor parents living at Hussinecz, a small town in the South of Bohemia. He was born on the 5th of July, 1373.\* He received his early education partly in the School of his native place and partly at Praschalicz, a large town three miles from Hussinecz. He afterwards proceeded to the University of Prague, where he took his B.A. degree in 1393.

But one anecdote of any interest is preserved of Huss' early life. The story is told by M. de Bonnechose,† who, however, does not mention his authority: there is certainly a remarkably apocryphal flavour about it. It is said that on a winter's evening the future martyr was sitting over the fire, reading the story of the sufferings of S. Lawrence. Suddenly he thrust his hand into the flames; and was only prevented by the forcible interposition of his companions from "trying what part of the sufferings of that holy man he was capable of enduring." The only vice with which he afterwards had to reproach himself was a fondness for chess-playing, over which most philosophical game he had (as he thought) before his ordination wasted his time and lost his temper. That excessive chess-playing should have been the only folly of his youth, is a sufficient testimony to the general strictness of his life: and that he gave up excessive chess-playing, if not chess-playing altogether, upon his ordination, shows that he must have entered upon his sacred calling in a spirit rare indeed at a time when the Church was the only means of worldly advancement open to the poor man, and when the average morality of the clergy was lower than the average morality of the laity.

In 1396 Huss proceeded to the degree of M.A., and, as was usual at a time when a degree was still mainly looked upon as a qualification to teach, began to give lectures, probably upon philo-

\* This is the year given by L'Enfant. Other historians give 1369. L'Enfant enjoys a great reputation for accuracy, and as 20 appears a more natural age for a B.A. degree than 24, I have retained his statement.

† "Réformateurs avant la Réforme," book I. chap. i.

sophy. He also became a Bachelor of Divinity, and in 1401 was Dean of that Faculty. Wyclif's philosophical works were then used as text-books in the Bohemian University; and Huss' tutor, Stanislaus of Znaim, was a prominent divine of the reforming party. He was thus brought up in an atmosphere favourable to the formation of liberal opinions. But at first he was hardly inclined to go so far as his seniors. When in 1402 Jerome Faulfisch brought with him from England the theological works of the great Oxford schoolman, Stanislaus of Znaim was more inclined than his pupil to look with favour upon the new doctrines, and especially upon the denial of Transubstantiation, which, in Wyclif's estimation, was a necessary deduction from metaphysical principles with which the students of Prague were already familiar. It is alleged that Huss was at one time so much disgusted with the heresies of Wyclif, that he said that his books ought to be cast into the Moldau. If this statement be true, the disgust soon wore off. He afterwards had the very highest reverence for the English Reformer; and, although the clear moral insight which inspired his protests against Sacerdotalism was essentially his own, every one of his distinct doctrinal opinions may be traced either to Wyclif or to Matthias of Janow. Even if (as some have contended) his opinions never crossed the line of orthodoxy, his obligations to Wyclif were great. Matthias of Janow and the Bohemian preachers of the fourteenth century had quarrelled with various ecclesiastical authorities; but they were not open rebels against the Church. The most advanced of them, Matthias of Janow, had retracted his heresies as soon as he was required to do so by his ecclesiastical superior. But in Wyclif's writings Huss was brought face to face with heresy, with doctrines which had been solemnly condemned by the Church, and which had not been retracted. After the study of Wyclif's works, although his timid and cautious intellect recoiled from some of his opinions, his moral nature no longer shrank from heresy as from a contamination. His chivalrous temper prompted him to go far greater lengths in defence of one whom he considered unjustly condemned, than was required by the strict exigences of his own theological position. The prevalent opinion was that a heretic was worse than a bad man. Huss had satisfied himself that a heretic might be a good man; and that books which the Church called heretical might contain more genuinely Christian teaching than books which the Church called orthodox. In the fifteenth century this was much.

John Huss soon became known as a prominent member of the national party in the University. The King was angry with the Pope of the Roman obedience because his predecessor, Boniface IX., had consented to his deposition from the Imperial throne; and, consequently, any movement of an anti-hierarchical tendency was likely to meet with some favour at Court. Huss was appointed Confessor to the Queen, who afterwards became an avowed

Hussite.\* To his position as one of the Royal Chaplains he no doubt owed not a little of the security which he enjoyed throughout the troubles of succeeding years.

In John Huss the liberal movement to which the study of Matthias of Janow and Wyclif had given rise in the University, formed a junction with the stream of popular religious life which had sprung from the teaching of Milicz and Conrad. A Bohemian knight, John of Mühlheim, and a merchant named Kreutz, had built a Chapel which was to be specially devoted to regular preaching in Bohemian on Sundays and holydays. Up to this time, in the words of the deed of foundation, "preachers, particularly preachers in the vulgar tongue, were compelled to wander about from one house or corner to another." The new Chapel was dedicated to the Holy Innocents in Bethlehem. Its foundation was authorised by "the confirmation of the Lord Archbishop John, who laid the first stones of it with his own hands, by the King's Charter (Libertatio), and by a grant of Privilege from Pope Gregory (Privilegiatio)."<sup>†</sup> The Chapel was thus possessed of a perfectly regular ecclesiastical status; but it was no doubt looked upon by the parochial clergy of Prague with the same kind of suspicion which the Proprietary Chapels of the early Evangelicals excited among the "high and dry" Churchmen of the last century. Two years after he had held the office of Rector of the University, Huss became one of the "preachers and rectors" of this chapel. The mantle of Milicz and Conrad had fallen upon Huss. The Chapel was crowded Sunday after Sunday with persons of every class of society. The Queen was often among his auditors: there were nobles, priests, students, as well as burghers and artizans. The chapel is said to have held at times as many as three thousand people.<sup>‡</sup> Universities have been in all ages the homes of great religious movements. They supply the preacher not only with congregations composed to a large extent of men of culture and education; but with congregations, a large part of which will in a few years be scattered over the length and breadth of the land. Luther at Wittemberg; Ridley, Latimer, and Simeon at Cambridge; Newman at Oxford; Huss at Prague, have thus taught the hundreds who should hereafter be the teachers of hundreds of thousands.

The popularity of Wyclif's writings and the consequent diffusion of his doctrines among the students now began to excite the alarm of the clergy. In 1403, the Archbishop's official and the Chapter of the Cathedral requested the University to examine forty-five propositions extracted from his books. The debate was a contest between the German and the Bohemian parties. The voting was

\* After her husband's death, Sigismund compelled her to retire to Presbourg. L'Enfant, "Council of Constance," vol. i. p. 25.

† Palacky's "Documenta Mag. Jo. Hus Vitam, etc., illustrantia," p. 169. (This work will be cited as "Doc.")

‡ "Articles of Michael de Causis," Doc. 169.

by nations. Two of the four nations, the Bavarian and Saxon, were wholly German : while of the Polish nation more than half were Germans. The Bohemians were consequently outvoted ; and the forty-five propositions were condemned. This condemnation of the great Realist raised the antagonism between German and Bohemian into a deadly feud. The clergy of Prague sided with the orthodox Germans ; the King favoured the Bohemians from motives of policy, the nation at large from feelings of patriotism. The contest raged furiously for six years. Theological, national, and philosophical differences were each of them held a sufficient excuse for a free use of bow and arrows in the streets of a mediæval University. In the present contest all these motives were combined : it was a struggle between German and Bohemian, between Nominalist and Realist, between a Church party and a Reforming party. At last, in 1409, the Bohemians succeeded in persuading the King to issue an edict\* which gave the combined Bavarian, Saxon, and Polish nations one vote, while the Bohemians were to enjoy three. The Germans had taken a solemn oath that if they were deprived of their privileges, they would leave Prague in a body. They kept their word.

The inhabitants of the once flourishing town soon found that they had been gratifying their patriotic instincts at the expense of their commercial interests. For a time Huss, who was elected Rector a second time by the victorious minority, incurred some odium, even among his countrymen, on account of the part which he had taken in obtaining the edict ; and in the Universities which were founded or largely augmented by the five thousand or more ejected Germans, hatred of Huss must have become a tradition. The national insult was wiped out at Constance.

During the first part of the struggle which ended in the withdrawal of the Germans, the personal orthodoxy of Huss does not appear to have been assailed. Zbynek of Hasenburg, the new Archbishop of Prague, showed as much reforming zeal as could be expected in an ecclesiastic in whose mind the interests of religion were subordinated to the interests of his order. At the beginning of his episcopate, he requested the reforming preacher to call his attention to any abuse in the diocese which fell under his notice. Shortly afterwards, Huss was one of a commission of three Masters appointed by the Archbishop to examine into the truth of one of those miracles for which the popular mind of the Middle Ages had an insatiable appetite. The church of Wilsnack had been destroyed by a robber knight in the preceding century : in a cavity of its ruined altar were found three wafers covered with a kind of red mould which often forms upon bread long exposed to the air. This redness was at once attributed to a miraculous manifestation of that blood, the "substance" of which was, according to the theo-

\* Doc. 347.

logy of the time, already present in the consecrated host. From far and near, from the most northern countries of Europe, as well as from all parts of Bohemia, crowds of pilgrims flocked to Wilsnack to adore the blood of their Redeemer: marvellous cures were said to have been effected. The Commission reported unfavourably to the alleged miracles; and an archiepiscopal mandate forbade the pilgrimage under pain of excommunication. Huss supported his opinions in a pamphlet, in which he expresses pretty plainly his opinion that miracles had long ceased in the Church. He goes to the root of the matter by questioning the spiritual utility of such portents, even if real, and condemns the unbelief which sought after signs no less than the avarice which invented them.

Huss enjoyed other proofs of his Diocesan's favour. Three times he preached before the Diocesan Synod assembled in the Archbishop's palace. In these discourses\* he attacked in strong language the worldliness and immorality of the Clergy; but language as strong was used by his judges at the Council of Constance. From Latin invectives the clergy had little to fear: and it was not till Huss began to transfer his denunciations of his brethren to the pulpit of Bethlehem Chapel that any attempt was made to silence the daring preacher. At a later period heresies were discovered in the last of these sermons, but not until offence had been given by his Bohemian discourses.

In the year after the date of this sermon (1407), the good understanding between Huss and Zbynek came to an end. In 1405 Innocent VII. had addressed a bull to the Archbishop, directing him to suppress the heresies alleged to be rife in Bohemia. In a Synod held by him in the following year, ecclesiastical penalties were denounced against all who should presume to teach the doctrines of Wyclif. The part which Huss had taken in defending those doctrines could hardly have been regarded in a favourable light by the Archbishop. His generous interference in the trial of an heretical priest, Nicholas of Welesnowicz, before the Archbishop's Vicar-General, must have been still less acceptable to that prelate. When required to make answer upon oath, Nicholas refused to swear upon the crucifix or any other created thing. Huss defended his refusal on the authority of S. Chrysostom. The Vicar-General's reply was, "Ha! Master; you came here to listen, not to argue." Huss repeated his protest. "Is it just," he asked, "that you should condemn this priest, saying that he holds the errors of the Waldensians when he has sworn to you by God?" The priest was condemned, and after a short imprisonment, banished from the diocese. Huss sent an indignant remon-

\* L'Enfant notices that the last of these Sermons, unlike the former ones, has no Invocation of the Virgin and no Ave Maria. If this omission was really made in the Sermons as delivered, and if the custom of introducing them on such occasions was a universal one, the circumstance could hardly have escaped the observation of his accusers. L'Enfant, "Council of Constance," vol. i., p. 29.



strance to the Archbishop.\* The letter is characteristic. He declines altogether to enter into the merits of the theological question at issue, and confines himself to complaining that a good priest should be banished for preaching the gospel, while priests guilty of every imaginable crime went unpunished.

At a Synod held in June, 1408, decrees were published against persons propagating erroneous opinions touching the Sacrament of the Altar, against preaching "tending to the confusion of the Clergy," and against the use of all new Bohemian hymns (Cantilence) with four specified exceptions.† These last prohibitions were obviously directed against the vernacular preaching and the popular services of Bethlehem Chapel, which were emptying the parish churches and destroying the influence and the profits of the parochial clergy. This proceeding was followed by a direct attack upon the preacher. The articles of charge and Huss' answers to them are preserved.‡ They are three in number. The first alleges that he had taught that all "who received money from their parishioners, especially from the poor, for confession, by way of offertory, and for the sacraments of the Church, were guilty of heresy, not making any distinction whether the fees were taken before or after the administration of the said sacraments." In justification of this language Huss triumphantly quotes, among other authorities, a Papal bull in which the words "before or after" are expressly added to the prohibition of this kind of Simony. The second article alleges that after the death of a certain well-beneficed Master Peter Wzeruh, Huss had said in the pulpit, "I would not for all the world die in the possession of so many and such rich benefices," and also that he had wished that his soul might be where Wyclif's soul was. Both these charges are substantially admitted, although the words had, of course, been separated from their context. To the third charge of "excessive" preaching against the clergy, Huss pleaded that his preaching had been by no means excessive. It will be observed that the charges really brought home to the accused only amounted to breaches of ecclesiastical discipline, with the exception, perhaps, of the expression touching Wyclif's soul. It is characteristic of the man that as yet his only heresy is sympathy with heretics.

The prosecution of 1408 appears to have been dropped, but in the year following other Articles were exhibited, to which Huss was required to make answer upon oath before the Archbishop's Inquisitor.§ We find the old charges renewed and expanded. The accusation of stirring up the people is repeated in a variety of forms. One of the Articles on this head is amusingly hypothetical. It is alleged that on a certain occasion the people were so excited by Huss' preachings against the Archbishop and his clergy, that they went straight from the chapel "with great tumult and noise

\* Doc. 3.

† Doc. 333.

‡ Doc. 153.

§ Doc. 164.

before the Archbishop's Court with seditious words, and unless the Archbishop had taken care to have them removed, he (Huss) would *perchance* have brought it about that some one should have been maltreated." Another charge is that the accused had ventured some years back, in private conversation, to question the propriety of laying a whole town under interdict because the Archbishop\* of Prague had been ducked and his Dean "detained." There are two Articles of a more serious character, which show that during this year the germs of those strangely expressed anti-sacerdotal doctrines which were elaborated in the books condemned at Constance, had already taken shape in their author's mind. Huss is reported to have said, "What is the Roman Church? There it is that Anti-Christ has fixed his foot which cannot easily be moved:"—and again, "No prelate can excommunicate any one unless God excommunicate him first." Moreover now began a long series of unfounded attacks upon the orthodoxy of his Sacramental teaching. He is charged with having maintained that "a priest in mortal sin cannot make the true body of Christ." The important qualification "worthily" had been omitted: the fact that the unworthy priest effected the miraculous transformation was never, either now or at any later period, denied by John Huss.

From the Court of the Archbishop Huss appealed to the Pope, apparently before any trial had taken place: and before the close of the year (Dec. 1409) Zbynek was cited to Rome. Pending the appeal, proceedings were stayed. But events had now taken place which gave the Archbishop a fresh pretext for silencing the dangerous preacher.

The long Schism was gradually sapping the foundations of the Papal supremacy. For thirty years it had been uncertain which half of Christendom was ruled by the Vicar of Christ: nor was the spiritual vitality of either such as to warrant an experimental determination of the question. Under these circumstances there was no small ground for fearing that men might begin to ask themselves whether after all an earthly Head was necessary to the Church's well-being. But in the meantime all the abuses of the Roman Court flourished in two places at once: Christendom was preyed upon by two Pontiffs instead of one. The Schism was injurious alike to the material interests of Churchmen, and to the spiritual efficiency of the Church. On all hands it began to be felt that some amendment were required in a theory of Church Unity which unchurched one half—no man could say which half—of the Western commonwealth of nations. Under such circumstances the eyes of Europe were naturally turned to the theologians of that University which had long been known as the sworn foe of the sworn champions of the Papacy, the Mendicant Friars, if not

\* I presume that this is the personage meant by "the Lord John of pious memory." (Art. 4 of Articles of 1409). An Archbishop John was the predecessor of Zbynek.

of the Papacy itself. As far back as the year 1381 the University of Paris had resolved that they would use their utmost endeavours to induce the Princes and Prelates of Europe to consent to submit the claims of the rival Popes to the arbitration of a General Council, which the theologians of Paris had, even in the most flourishing days of the Papacy, maintained to be the sovereign power of the Catholic Church. Their efforts were at last so far successful that in 1408 the Church and realm of France definitively renounced its allegiance to Benedict XIII. It was fortunate that at such a crisis the College of Cardinals numbered among its members at least one avowed Gallican. Cardinal d'Ailly of Florence served as a connecting link between the Cardinals and the University of Paris. The Cardinals on either side were aroused to make a serious effort for the termination of the Schism. But each Pope preferred the certainty of the spoils of half Christendom to the chance of unquestioned sovereignty. Disgusted with the obstinacy of their masters, the Cardinals were at length driven to act for themselves. A majority of either section of the Sacred College determined to convoke a General Council at Pisa.

In March, 1408, there assembled in obedience to the summons of the Cardinals, besides twenty-two members of their own order, "four titular patriarchs, with archbishops, bishops, abots (including the heads of the chief religious orders), envoys of many sovereign princes, proctors from Cathedral chapters, and a host of Masters and Doctors who represented the new and powerful influence of the universities."\* The Council cited the rival Popes, and on their non-appearance declared them contumacious. Evidence was then taken, upon which Angelo Corario and Peter de Luna were condemned as "notorious schismatics, obstinate and incorrigible heretics, perjurers, and vow-breakers," and were solemnly declared to be deprived from the Pontificate and cut off from the Church. The Sacred College proceeded to a new election. Their choice fell upon the learned Franciscan theologian Peter Philargi, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, who took the title of Alexander V.

Among the secular princes who had sent envoys to the Council, and who now recognised the Pope of its election, was the King of Bohemia. The sympathies of the Bohemian party in the University were on the same side. Huss in particular had from the first warmly supported the attempt of the Cardinals to restore unity to the Church. But the Germans, the Archbishop, and the clergy of the diocese refused all compliance with the King's wishes. It was mainly to secure the assent of the University to his submission to Alexander V.† that Wenzel was prevailed upon to issue the Edict which transferred to the Bohemians the three votes formerly enjoyed by the Germans. Four days after the date of that Edict (Jan. 22, 1409), a Royal proclamation prohibited all obedience to

\* Robertson, vol. vii., p. 253.

† See Robertson, vol. vii., p. 316, note x.

Gregory XII.\* The Archbishop immediately suspended all the Masters of the University who recognised the new Pope from the exercise of priestly functions within his diocese; and with many of his clergy fled the country. The confiscation of the property of the exiles, and the almost universal acknowledgment of Alexander V., soon brought the Archbishop to reason. A sort of concordat was arranged. Zbynek and his obedient clergy abandoned Gregory XII., and were restored to their benefices. The suspension of the Masters was removed, and the disobedience of Huss and some others overlooked. In July, a Diocesan Synod gave further effect to the wishes of the King, who was anxious for the removal of suspicions which might be injurious to the success of his political schemes,† by determining that no heresy existed in Bohemia. The reconciliation of the spiritual and temporal powers was solemnly proclaimed at a great assembly of the spiritual and temporal lords of the realm.

No sooner was Zbynek restored to his temporalities than he transferred his complaints against Huss to the court of the new Pontiff. It appears that an order for the surrender of Wyclif's books for examination had already been promulgated, and that certain students of the University had appealed against the order on the ground that it was contrary to the privileges of the University. Zbynek now, in the year following that in which he had solemnly pronounced the realm free from heresy, procured a bull from Alexander V., by which the heresies of Wyclif, particularly his denial of Transubstantiation, were declared to be on the increase. It was, therefore, ordered that all the heresiarch's writings should be surrendered for examination by a Commission of four Doctors of Divinity and two of Canon Law, to be appointed by the Archbishop, who, after receiving the report of the Commission, was to proceed to a definitive sentence upon the matter, all appeals to the Apostolical See then pending or hereafter to be made being referred absolutely to his decision.‡ Moreover, all preaching in private Chapels was to cease.

The Archbishop proceeded to execute the bull, and on the 16th of June, 1410,§ all the writings of Wyclif which had been surrendered to the Commission, many of them works of a purely philosophical character, were condemned to the flames. On the 21st the University solemnly declared its dissent|| from the Archbishop's judgment. Indignant at an order which violated their privileges and destroyed their property, the Masters solicited and obtained the interference of the King. Zbynek promised that the sentence should not be executed without the royal permission: but on

\* Doc. 348.

† Wenzel had not given up his pretensions to the Imperial Crown: he still styles himself "Romanorum rex semper Augustus." He sent ambassadors to Pisa only on condition of their being received as the ambassadors of "the true King of the Romans." Doc. 343.

‡ Doc. 374.

§ Doc. 378.

|| Doc. 386.

the 16th of the following month this promise was broken. The Archbishop surrounded his palace with an armed guard; and in its court-yard two hundred volumes of Wyclif's writings, as well as works of Milicz and others, were solemnly committed to the flames. A great assembly of dignitaries and clergy shouted *Te Deums* round the bonfire; and the bells of the churches tolled "as if for the dead." This ridiculous proceeding excited the greatest indignation. Once more the popular feeling against the clergy sought expression in satire, ribald songs, threats, insults, and actual violence. The Archbishop found it expedient to retire to Rudnicz; whence, two days after the burning of the books, he fulminated his excommunication against Huss and his adherents.\* The news of the excommunication increased both the popular excitement and the royal displeasure. The King ordered the magistrates of the city to sequester the temporalities of the Archbishop and of those of his priests who published the excommunication in their churches. Some of the clergy were imprisoned. The Primate retaliated with a wholesale excommunication† of all the magistrates and officers who had been directly or indirectly concerned in executing the royal commands.

The Archbishop's exile lasted about a year. He was fond of affecting to pose as a *S. Thomas of Canterbury*; but he was not equal to the part, and could never sustain it for long together. He agreed that the questions in dispute between himself and the University should be referred to the arbitration of the King and his Council. The arbitrators determined‡ that there should be, to use diplomatic language, a return to the *status quo ante bellum*. The Archbishop was to take off all ecclesiastical censures pronounced by himself, and to procure the cancelling of those imposed by the Pope: he was to report to the Pope that no heresy existed in Bohemia, and to request that all proceedings pending in the Papal Courts might be stopped. On these conditions the Archbishop and those who had obeyed him were to be restored to their benefices, and the imprisoned clerks released. Neither side fulfilled its part of the agreement. The letter which the Archbishop was to have written to the Pope, was never despatched; while on his part, he complained that the clerical revenues were still intercepted, and the popular violence still unchecked. Again he left Prague; and proceeded to the Court of the King's brother Sigismund,

\* Doc. 397.

† Doc. 429, where there is nothing whatever to warrant the "*atque interdicti contra civitatem Pragensem amittuntque duorum milliariorum*" inserted by Palacky in the heading. The document contains nothing about an Interdict. Surely the Interdict spoken of in Doc. 432, and in the decision of the arbitration, p. 439 ("*eos D. Archiepiscopus excommunicatione liberare atque interdictum tollere debet*"), is that of Doc. 378, where the Archbishop "*interdicit ne verbum Dei in locis privatis civitatis Pragensis prædicetur.*"

‡ Doc. 437. The Archbishop afterwards pretended that he did not know that the King had authorised the sequestration.

where he died before he could obtain an opportunity of laying his grievances before the Emperor.\*

The Pope had referred Huss' appeal to the Cardinal Oddo of Colonna; and with it a further complaint which had been received from Bohemia, alleging that Huss had continued preaching in spite of the prohibition and had used language disrespectful to the Holy See. The Cardinal dismissed the appeal, and enjoined the Archbishop to "proceed to further measures according to the bull of Alexander V.," and to excommunicate Huss and his adherents. This, as we have seen, he had already done, the appeal being treated as *ab initio* null and void in accordance with the terms of the bull. Moreover, Huss was cited to appear personally before the Cardinal.†

Alexander V. had now been succeeded by a Pope who was generally believed to have procured by bribery his election to the throne which he had rendered vacant by poison. The official letter‡ of John XXIII., notifying his election, must have been received in Prague at about the time of the Archbishop's sentence upon Wyclif's books. Against that sentence§ Huss, together with one Master and five Bachelors of Arts, had, a month before the excommunication, made his appeal from the Pope "male informato" to the Pope "melius informato," from the delegate of Alexander V. to John XXIII. in person.

Meanwhile, the Preacher of Bethlehem Chapel remained excommunicated; but the services and sermons were continued as before. In the life of every reformer there comes a time when some of his disciples are offended at him, and walk no more with him. Hitherto, the quarrel of Huss had been the quarrel of the University. His old tutor Stanislaus of Znaim, and his intimate friend Palecz had been on his side throughout: Palecz had been one of the representatives of the University in the late arbitration. An occasional dispute with a ecclesiastical superior was no more incompatible with a mediæval ecclesiastic's notions of canonical obedience, than a "defiance" of his feudal suzerain with a mediæval layman's notions of feudal subordination. But now the affair was gradually drifting from the position of a dispute within the Church into that of a hostile movement from without. It was high time for those who did not intend to be heretics to beat a retreat.

Huss' next step separated him for ever from the leading Theologians of Prague. Zbynek was succeeded by the King's physician, Albic of Uniczow. The Legate entrusted with the

\* It is convenient to use this term, although Sigismund was legally only King of the Romans.

† Doc. 401.

‡ Doc. 376.

§ Doc. 387. The University was exempt "in all causes from all ordinary judges, even *legati nati*, or even delegates or sub-delegates appointed or to be appointed by the Apostolic See."

pallium of the new Primate, was also the bearer of a bull proclaiming a crusade against the Pope's rebellious vassal, Ladislaus King of Naples, who was now ravaging the Papal territories. Plenary indulgence was promised as the reward of assistance, personal or pecuniary, against the enemy of the Church. From every pulpit the virtues of the parchments were extolled. Much was said of the potency and certainty of the charm: little of the "true penitence and confession" which were formally announced as the conditions upon which its benefits were to be obtained. Huss announced that he would hold a public disputation against the Indulgences. This was perhaps a more direct defiance of ecclesiastical authority than any of which he had hitherto been guilty. Yet the difference between this step and his former proceedings is not sufficiently marked to account for a change so sudden and so complete as that which now took place in the relations between Huss and his former friends. From the time of Huss' opposition to the Pope's indulgences, the reforming Doctors became zealous champions of the Papacy, and bitter enemies of Huss; and the bitterest of all was his old friend Palecz. It is reasonable to suppose that Huss must now have begun in the pulpit and in private conversation to enunciate the doctrines afterwards defended in the "Quæstio de Indulgentiis." In that case the alarm of the most liberal Catholic is easily accounted for: for those doctrines amount to a virtual negation of the value of all Indulgences and priestly absolutions whatsoever.

Stanislaus and the rest of the Doctors of the Theological Faculty prohibited the disputation. But on the day appointed, the 17th of June, 1412, Huss appeared in his "Cathedra" in the Schools, and there boldly attacked the whole fabric of Sacerdotalism. At the conclusion of the lecture, Jerome of Prague, a far more brilliant orator than Huss, harangued the crowd of students and others who were assembled in the School, and awakened in his hearers an enthusiasm which showed that public feeling in Bohemia was already ripe for a revolt against Rome. In the evening the two Reformers were escorted home in triumph by their excited supporters.

The proceedings of this day seem to anticipate that open declaration of war against the Papacy which was inaugurated with more success a century afterwards by the burning of Leo X.'s bulls at Wittemberg. But there is a coarseness about the Bohemian demonstration which does not augur well for the future of the movement. A loose woman was placed in a chariot and carried round the town with the Papal bulls hung round her neck; a mob of armed townsmen and students followed the car and afterwards burned the lying parchments in revenge for the destruction of Wyclif's books.

Wenzel had consented to the publication of the bull, probably from fear of Sigismund. He now enjoined the magistrates to prohibit all insults to the Pope or resistance to his bulls under

pain of death. But the popular excitement was not to be suppressed by threats. When one of the indulgence-hawkers was discoursing in the accustomed strain upon the value of his wares, three young artizans in the crowd shouted out, "Thou liest! Master Huss has taught us better than that. We know it is all a lie." The culprits were seized, taken before the magistrates, and condemned to death. Huss immediately proceeded to the Council-chamber at the head of a crowd of two thousand students, and there demanded with all the eloquence of indignation the remission of the sentence. "I did it," he exclaimed, "and I will bear the penalty. I and all who are with me are ready to receive the same sentence." The Senate\* feared the people, and promised that the sentence should not be carried out. But no sooner had the mob dispersed, than the prisoners were hurried off to the place of execution. The affair got wind, and the officers were obliged to behead their prisoners on the road, just in time to anticipate a rescue. The criminals were treated as martyrs. Handkerchiefs were dipped in their blood; and their burial-place, the Chapel of Bethlehem, was named the Chapel of the Three Saints.

The dispute between Huss and the Doctors continued. The King, while he asserted his orthodoxy by prohibiting the teaching of the doctrines on the subject of Indulgences condemned by the Faculty, consulted his own inclinations and the safety of his throne by refusing to silence his Consort's popular chaplain. When told to refute the heretic instead of trying to shut his mouth, the Doctors complained that Huss would not commit his opinions to writing. Huss offered to accept their challenge, on condition that whichever party should be vanquished in the disputation, should suffer death at the stake. The eight Doctors having seriously debated the proposal, submitted that the forfeit on their side should be the death of only one of their number. Huss refused to assent to the unequal terms. Who was to be the umpire in this strange contest, is a question which does not appear to have suggested itself to either side.

The Theologians now sought to obtain from the Holy Father that redress, or rather vengeance, which their own sovereign refused them: they sent a paid agent to Rome, one Michael de Causis, who having fled from Bohemia with a considerable amount of the King's money in his pockets, had adopted the suitable profession of a "Proctor in matters of Faith" in the Papal Courts. It would be tedious to trace the history of the suit through all its mysterious transferences from one Cardinal to another. The upshot of the matter was that the Cardinal de S. Angelo refused to dispense with a personal appearance on the part of Huss, condemned him for contumacy, confirmed the sentence of excommunication previously pronounced against him and his adherents, and

\* The Senators of Old Prague, one of the three separate towns which composed the capital, were for the most part Germans, and therefore hostile to Huss and his party. It was, no doubt, this body which condemned the "three Saints."



added to it one of Interdict against the place of his abode. Huss' proctors, still remonstrating against the sentence, were imprisoned. One of them, however, the learned civilian and canonist Jesenic of Prague, managed to escape, and returned to Bohemia. There he published a treatise in which he attempted to demonstrate the canonical nullity of all the proceedings hitherto taken against Huss. But it was in vain to show that rules had been disregarded which owed their validity to the same authority which now set them aside; and Huss saw no reason to hope that he should obtain from an assembly of Cardinals and Bishops that justice which individual Cardinals and Bishops denied him. Accordingly, towards the close of 1412, he appealed not to a General Council, but to "the only just Judge, Jesus Christ." This appeal curiously illustrates a very marked characteristic of Huss' mind, the combination of great moral fearlessness with great intellectual or theological caution. The document by which he really declares his revolt from the whole system of Sacerdotal Christianity, is worded with all the precision and formality of a legal instrument. Great moral principles and the merest technicalities appear side by side. He enumerates the causes which prevented his personal appearance at Rome, shows that the principles of Canon Law and of natural justice had alike been violated in the proceedings of the Papal Courts, and in justification of his conduct appeals to our Lord's disobedience to the Jewish Sanhedrim, and to the authority of Chrysostom, of Bishop Andrew of Prague, and Robert Grosstête, Bishop of Lincoln, whom he imagines to have made similar appeals under similar circumstances.

There is one part of this document which must not be passed over. Huss states that his proctors had declared themselves "willing to oppose themselves with any one who should be willing to the punishment of fire and make themselves parties in the Roman Court:" L'Enfant\* sees in these words a proposal to submit the questions at issue to the decision of the Ordeal of Fire. But Huss nowhere shows any disposition to countenance popular superstitions: he believed that recent miracles were either impostures or due to the agency of evil spirits. Moreover, trials by Ordeal had long been condemned by the Church, and it is probable that they had by this time fallen into general disuse. It is far more probable that the offer of his proctors was only a repetition of the challenge which he had already made in person to the eight Doctors. At all events, it is quite inconceivable that one who on all other occasions showed himself rash only when others were in danger, should seriously have proposed to remain at home while his representatives offered to be burnt on his behalf. Both Huss and his proctors must have known perfectly well that the proposal

\* L'Enfant, vol. i., p. 34. He supports this view by a reference to the case of Savonarola. Huss' temperament was, however, the very opposite of Savonarola's: and the Ordeal proposed in his case does not seem to have been authorised by the Pope.

could not be accepted ; it was in fact a piece of grim and solemn irony.

Meanwhile, Sunday after Sunday, within the closed doors of the Churches\* the Apostolic cursings sounded, and the smouldering tapers were trampled under foot. While Huss remained in Prague, a cloud must hang over the city : no procession of joy or sorrow could thread its streets ; no sound of church-bell, no note of music could break the gloom. The King persuaded Huss for the sake of peace to leave Prague for a while. He retired to the Castle of the friendly Lord of his native village. For a year and a half he remained in the country, staying in the castles of the nobility, and preaching at times in the villages through which he passed. In this way nobles and knights, yeomen and serfs, became personally attached to the teacher, whose name they were hereafter to inscribe upon the banner of national independence.

This was the period of Huss' literary activity. It will be more convenient to postpone the discussion of the doctrines put forward in the "De Ecclesia" and the other works written at this time, until we are able to discuss their author's theological position as a whole. For the present, we must return to the position of affairs in Prague. The efforts made by the King to effect a compromise between the parties came to nothing. The King punished the obstinacy of the Theologians by banishing four of their number, among whom were Palecz and Stanislaus.† Huss' exile was brought to a close by a summons to give a reason for the faith that was in him before the assembled powers of Western Christendom.

The Council of Pisa had, at the conclusion of its deliberations, determined that another General Council should assemble within five years to complete the work of reforming the Church "in its Head and Members." Sigismund demanded that the Pope should give effect to the decree of the Council. A Pontiff who owed his election to the reforming Cardinals, and who could only hope to regain his lost Italian dominions by the help of the reforming King of the Romans, could not positively refuse compliance. He tried to put off the evil day by prolonging the negotiations as to the place of meeting. At last, however, the firmness of Sigismund compelled him to agree to the convocation of a General Council, for the first time in the history of the Papacy, in a city of the Empire. Not least among the evils from which the Council was to deliver the Church, was the spread of heresy in Bohemia. Sigismund desired his brother Wenzel to send Huss to Constance. Five years before, Huss had refused to appear in Italy in obedience to the summons of the Pope. Had he now declined to appear before the fathers of Constance, the nobles of Bohemia would have been as ready to defend him in life as they were afterwards to avenge his death.

\* Divine offices were allowed to be celebrated without music and with closed doors, after all excommunicated persons had been excluded.

† Doc. 510. Stanislaus died before the Council of Constance.

On each occasion he debated the question of conscience presented to him with singular simplicity. He was willing to die; but his imagination was not excited by the prospect of the martyr's crown. Yet when the Imperial safe-conduct was offered him, it was clearly his duty to go: although from the fact that he left a letter behind him with directions that it should not be opened till the news of his death was received, it is clear that he was far from placing implicit confidence in the protection which was promised him.

For his own part, there was nothing which Huss desired more than an opportunity of clearing himself before such an assembly from accusations which he believed to be founded on nothing but misrepresentation. Innocent of many of the heresies laid to his charge, he imagined that all the opinions which he really held were conformable to the doctrine of the Church. He was aware that worldly men had denied the evangelical truths which he preached; and he was aware that, in these latter days, worldly men were predominant in the Church. But the Sacerdotalism which he denounced appeared to him so entirely opposed to those truths, that he could not understand how any spiritually-minded man could seriously believe in the teaching of Christ and in the teaching of the indulgence-hawkers also. He had, in short, no conception of the extent to which Sacerdotalism had imposed upon the minds of good and great men. And hence, although he was far from expecting a triumph at Constance, he did not despair of an acquittal. He hoped that at all events he should find some in that assembly who had not bowed the knee to Baal: he was confident that if he were only allowed an opportunity of preaching before the Council, a minority at least of its members would come over to his side. Even after his imprisonment at Constance, these hopes were never entirely laid aside until the final refusal of the Council to grant him such a hearing as he desired.

Before taking his departure for Constance, Huss appeared once more in Prague. Even those who from their position would have seemed the least likely to favour one accused of heresy, appear to have recognised that the character of the nation was to some extent involved in the character of John Huss: they felt that he was being betrayed by malicious enemies into the hands of foreigners who hated their nation. He was, indeed, refused admittance to the Synod then sitting: but the Synod which had opposed him so strenuously in former years, does not now seem to have taken any prominent part against him. The new Archbishop, Conrad of Vechta,\* who had been appointed to the see on account of his supposed zeal for orthodoxy, gave Huss a letter in which he stated that he had nothing to allege against him, but the fact of his excommunication. The "Inquisitor of heretical

\* Albic of Unicow had retired from a position the difficulties of which he had found too much for him. Conrad afterwards joined the Calistine section of the Hussites.

pravity," a member of the Court before which he had so boldly defended the heretic Nicholas of Welesnowicz, certified that having had many opportunities of conversing with him as to his theological opinions he had always found him perfectly orthodox.

He left Prague on the 11th of October, without the safe-conduct, which he did not receive till he had been three days in Constance.\* He was accompanied on his journey by two of his most ardent supporters, the Knights Wenzel of Duba and John of Chlum, to whose protection Sigismund had confided him. He was welcomed almost with enthusiasm by the magistrates and inhabitants of many of the German towns through which he passed; even the humble parish priests, who were unaffected by the broils of the Universities, wished the heretic God-speed. Some of them told him that they had always thought as he did. The unexpected kindness which he received from the hereditary enemies of his nation, did something to inspire him with the hope that he should not find himself absolutely without a friend among the hundreds of churchmen who were now wending their way towards the Imperial City of Constance.

\* This fact has been used by the apologists of the Council, among other equally sophistical excuses, to justify their breach of faith.

### SECTION III.

#### HUSS AT CONSTANCE.

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Huss reached Constance on the 3rd of November, 1414. The Pope, who had arrived three days before, sent to inform him that he had determined to relax the Interdict, the observance of which would have made the holding of the Council impossible, and the Excommunication which laymen were not likely to obey even in Constance. He was enjoined to keep away from the churches; but he continued to celebrate mass daily in a room adjoining his lodgings. He occupied himself in preparing the apologetic discourses which he hoped to be allowed to deliver before the Council. But soon after the arrival of his Bohemian enemies, headed by Palecz and Michael de Causis, his liberty came to an end. They had brought copies of his works with them; and accusations of heresy were posted on the doors of every church in Constance. Other Articles were drawn up by Gerson, the famous Chancellor of Paris. It was represented to the Cardinals that so dangerous a heretic should be deprived of a freedom which might lead to the dissemination of his errors. It was thought desirable that the contemplated violation of Sigismund's safe-conduct should take place before the arrival of that monarch. Accordingly, on Nov. 28, two Bishops appeared at Huss' lodgings and invited him to follow them to the Papal palace. Chlum remonstrated with his accustomed vehemence; but there were soldiers drawn up in the street, and Huss could only obey. On arriving at the palace, they found the Cardinals assembled. Being informed that he was accused of having propagated "capital and manifest errors in Bohemia against the Catholic Church," Huss replied in the formula which he was in the habit of employing on such occasions, that he would rather die than be convicted of any heresy; and that if he were convicted of any error, he would abjure it without hesitation. It is not easy to say whether it was from a grim kind of humour or from a want of humour, that he constantly spoke as if he did not know that the word "conviction" meant one thing in his mouth, and another in his opponents'. It is certain that such language often excited unfounded hopes in his enemies and unnecessary fears in his friends. In the afternoon, he was told that he was to be a prisoner in the house of the Precentor of the Cathedral.

Here Huss remained for eight days under an armed guard. Then he was removed to a pestilential dungeon close to a sewer, in a Dominican convent on the Rhine. Chlum hastened to inform Sigismund of the conduct of the Cardinals. The Emperor was at first extremely angry, and threatened to break open the doors of the prison if Huss were not released. But when he arrived in Constance, he was informed that the grant of a safe-conduct to a heretic was beyond the powers of any temporal prince. In that age, the Church claimed a coercive jurisdiction, at least over the clergy, as of right, and not as a concession of the temporal power: it was only when blood was to be shed that she became fastidious about wielding the secular sword. Though he was a man of honour, and his conscience long remained ill at ease on the subject, Sigismund was a devout Churchman; and if ever superstition can be pleaded in palliation of a breach of the moral law, surely it can be pleaded on behalf of one who yields to the express commands of an authority which he believes to be infallible. That faith must not be kept with heretics to the prejudice of the Catholic faith, was and is as much a doctrine of the Roman Church\* as the doctrine of Transubstantiation or of the Immaculate Conception. Had Sigismund delivered John Huss out of the hands of the Council, he would have deliberately proclaimed himself a heretic, and have brought about the dissolution of an assembly which was on the point of effecting that Reunion of Christendom which had been the noblest object and the most ambitious dream of his life.

Never, indeed, since the darkness closed in around the Church, had the prospects of Reform, to the superficial observer, appeared so fair. Never, in the whole history of the Middle Ages, was so formidable a blow aimed at the Papacy, as the deposition of a Pope by a General Council. And not only was the Papal authority declared to be inferior to the authority of the Council: it seemed as if doubts were beginning to arise in the minds of Churchmen as to the mysterious efficacy of Episcopal consecration. An assembly which attempted to go back to the traditions of the Undivided Church, listened with approval while the Cardinal of Florence declared that "an ignorant Bishop was a mitred ass." A crowd of courtiers whom the Pope had made Bishops of Italian villages or Eastern cities which they had never seen, had come to Constance to support their patron, by sheer force of numbers, against the attacks of Archbishops who were the equals of Princes, and Bishops who ruled in the Council-chambers of Kings. They were now told that the representatives of culture and learning were to be on a level with the descendants of the Apostles. Generals of Orders, Doctors of Divinity and of Civil and Canon Law, Proctors of absent Bishops and Proctors of Chapters, were to have equal voices with Cardinals, Bishops, and Abbots. Even lay Princes or their representatives voted on all matters not "de fide." Moreover, the Council was to be divided

\* L'Enfant, vol i, p. 514.

into four nations, and every question was to be decided by a majority of nations. Thus the seven representatives of England enjoyed a voting power equal to that of the whole herd of Italian Prelates and Papal Chamberlains. It was determined that every matter to be brought before the Council should be discussed first by each nation separately, and then by an assembly of all the nations together. The solemn Sessions in the Cathedral, with their elaborate introductory ceremonial, merely ratified what had been already determined upon in the informal Congregations.

The Council of Constance represents the fleeting triumph of Gallicanism. But in spite of the facility which it showed in breaking with the traditions of the past, it soon became apparent that a Reform of the Church, or even such a reform of the morals of the clergy as the Church of Rome did succeed in effecting in the seventeenth century, was as little to be expected, without strong pressure from without, of a priestly Democracy or a priestly Aristocracy, as of a priestly Absolutism. The theologians of Constance might alter the distribution of sacerdotal authority; but they were as firmly attached to the maintenance of that authority, they were as little disposed to favour any questioning of the power of the priesthood over the souls of men, as the Franciscans of that day or the Jesuits of this. John Huss stood as small a chance of obtaining fair treatment from the Reformers who asserted the superiority of Councils over Popes and the legislative equality of Bishops and Priests, as he would have done in the Court of a Cardinal who lived upon simony and judicial bribery in his Palace at Avignon or at Rome. Various efforts were, indeed, made to induce Huss to agree to some kind of compromise. But they were prompted by a conviction that Huss' submission in any form would have been a greater triumph for the Council than his execution. Huss never showed the smallest disposition for compromise, even where many honest men would have had no scruples in yielding. He refused to abjure even those opinions which he had never held: and he was probably not wrong in thinking that such an abjuration would have been construed into an admission that he had held them.

While Huss was a prisoner in the Dominican dungeon, the effluvia from the sewer had brought on a severe attack of fever and vomiting. It was feared that the victim might die before his time; the Pope sent his own physician to attend him, and he was moved to a less noisome cell. But the misfortunes of the Pope altered his position for the worse: with the rest of the Papal retinue, the gaolers followed their master in his ignominious flight. The Emperor transferred Huss to the custody of the Bishop of the diocese, who sent him to his castle of Gottleben, three miles from the town. The Papal "Clerks of the Chamber" had shown their prisoner some kindness: now he was kept in chains day and night; and the hemorrhage and racking headache which the close

confinement brought on, procured no relaxation in the rigour of his imprisonment.

Before his trial came on, news arrived from Prague which seriously aggravated the prejudice already existing against Huss. A zealous disciple of his, one Jacobel of Misa, Parish Priest of S. Michael's, had put himself at the head of an agitation for the restoration of lay communion in both kinds, and had actually administered the Chalice to laymen in his own church. Opinion among the Hussites was divided upon the subject; and the advice of their leader was sought for. Huss declared himself in favour of the practice in a treatise\* which he sent to Prague. And from henceforward, the right of the laity to the Chalice became the watchword of the Bohemian Reformation. The refusal of the Cup to the laity asserted in a more ostentatious manner than any other practice of the Roman Church the spiritual inferiority of the laity to the clergy, as well as the right of the Church, not to interpret or to supplement, but to repeal the commands of Our Lord Himself. Resistance to this innovation was, therefore, peculiarly exasperating to the sacerdotal mind. Upon Huss naturally fell the odium of all that had been done by his disciples in Prague, and of much which they had not done. The most exaggerated reports were industriously circulated: it was said that the blood of Christ was carried about in flasks; that laymen administered the Sacrament to one another; that cobblers heard confessions and gave absolution.

All through his imprisonment, Huss had manifested the greatest anxiety to obtain a full and free hearing before the whole Council, and especially before the Emperor. It was with the greatest difficulty that he succeeded in obtaining a hearing at all. Two commissions† were successively appointed for the preliminary investigation of the case. At first, indeed, it was intended that the Council should act solely on the report of the last of these commissions; but, though he explained what his opinions were, Huss declined to defend them except before the Council itself; and the Bohemian nobles induced the Emperor to promise that he should not be condemned unheard. Accordingly, on the 6th of June, he was brought back to the city, and confined in a Franciscan Convent. In the refectory of this Convent, on three successive days, he appeared before "an assembly of all the nations."

The first of these congregations was on the 6th of June, 1415. The Fathers were proceeding with the case in the absence of the prisoner; but Huss' friends hastened to inform Sigismund, who sent orders that he should be allowed to appear. He was accord-

\* This treatise is full of quotations from the Fathers, Decretals, Acts of Councils, &c. If it was written, as is most probable, without reference to books, the retentiveness of Huss' memory, or (as some have thought) of his common-place books, must have been extraordinary.

† One appointed by the Pope, the other by the Council, after his flight.



ingly brought up from his cell. Copies of his books were placed on a table before him, and he admitted the authorship of them. Then the reading of the Articles began. What followed may be told in the quaint language of L'Enfant's translator: "They had scarce made an end of the first with the Evidences supporting it, when so terrible a noise arose, that the Fathers could not hear one another, much less the answers of John Huss. When the clamour was a little over, John Huss, offering to defend himself by the authority of the Scriptures and the Fathers, was interrupted as if he had spoke nothing to the purpose, and they set upon him with reproach and banter.\* The behaviour of this congregation was so disgraceful that its more moderate members interfered, and succeeded in carrying an adjournment till the next day.

At the second hearing, a certain amount of decency was ensured by the presence of the King of the Romans, who had been prevailed upon to attend by the Bohemian nobles. The first charge examined was the alleged denial of Transubstantiation. Huss could with justice maintain that he fully believed in Transubstantiation: and he believed it on the strength of that realistic dogma of the *accidens sine substantia*, which had once been almost as much a part of the orthodox creed as the doctrine itself. But now Gallicanism, and consequently Nominalism—the doctrine of the once suspected Abelard, was completely in the ascendant. To the Cardinal d'Ailly and his friends it seemed that a Realist could not consistently believe a doctrine which as a formal Article of Faith owed its existence to an extravagance of Realism. He began to browbeat the Bohemian Master with questions about his views on the *universale a parte rei* and similar scholastic pedantries. The good sense of an Englishman put a stop to this irrelevant discussion: he declared that the Council ought to be satisfied with Huss' assurances on the subject. L'Enfant thinks that his advice was taken, and that this was one of the two Articles which were expunged from the accusation. Then he was questioned about his defence of the forty-five Articles of Wyclif; his views as to the voluntary character of tithes; his Appeal to Christ; his sympathy with Wyclif; the part he had taken against the Germans in the matter of the three votes, and the part he was supposed to have taken in procuring the banishment of the four Bohemian Doctors. Lastly, he was reproached with having asserted that he had come to Constance voluntarily. This brought up the honest Knight of Chlum. "Though I am one of the meanest Lords in Bohemia," he exclaimed, "I would undertake to defend him for a twelvemonth against the forces of the Emperor and the King." The session concluded with a speech from Sigismund, who acknowledged that Huss had come voluntarily,

\* L'Enfant. "Council of Constance." Vol. I., p. 323.

thanked the Council for answering so well his intentions in the matter of the safe-conduct,—he had apparently persuaded himself that the safe-conduct promised nothing more than protection on the way and a fair hearing,—and urged Huss to recant.

At the third congregation, Huss was for the first time allowed something which might be called a hearing. On the former occasions he had merely been exposed to a running fire of questions or reproaches from any member of the Council who chose to insult the accused. But even now he could not make a connected speech: he was permitted to state, but not to defend, his opinions. The Articles extracted from his books were read; and he was allowed to explain, correct, or disown them. But not the slightest attention was paid to his explanations: the charges were not amended, even when proved to be garbled by actual reference to the books from which they were alleged to be extracted. So much, indeed, was his condemnation a foregone conclusion, that the Articles of Charge were framed with incredible carelessness. Well might Cardinal d'Ailly exclaim that the "De Ecclesia" contained heresies far worse than those which appeared in the extracts which had been made from it. In some cases passages to which exception might reasonably be taken, appear in a form in which it is difficult to understand how any one could possibly find fault with them. For instance, Huss had maintained that "if a man be virtuous, whatever he doth, he doth it virtuously; whereas, if he be vicious, whatever he doth, he doth it viciously." In Article XII. of the accusation, this passage becomes, "A vicious man acts viciously, and a virtuous man acts virtuously."\* Although worn out with prolonged suffering, Huss showed his habitual anxiety to let the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth be known about him and his opinions. He corrected the extracts even when the corrections were more damaging than the original Articles. All the Articles, however, whether heretical or orthodox, whether truisms or paradoxes, were alike condemned. It was determined that if the heretic recanted, he should be suffered to live in perpetual imprisonment; that if he remained obstinate, he must die.

A month elapsed between the last appearance of Huss before the congregation, and the day of his formal sentence and its execution. Repeated attempts were made both by secret friends and open enemies to induce him to recant: both alike were in vain. The efforts of the advocates of authority were directed not to proving the truth of the determinations of the Council, but to proving the duty of submitting to them without asking whether they were true or false. In the Middle Ages far more stress was laid upon the duty of blind submission to the Church, than upon

\* *L'Enfant*, vol. 1., p. 343.

the doctrine of its infallibility. The great Gallican champion of Councils, Cardinal d'Ailly, admitted that General Councils may err and have erred even in matters of Faith\* : but that concession did not in his view interfere in the smallest degree with the duty of submission on the part of individuals to the decisions of those Councils. It was this exaltation of a humility falsely so called into the position of the crowning virtue of the religious life, which converted not a few of the most strenuous opponents of the moral corruptions of the Mediæval Church into zealous champions of its doctrinal corruptions. Huss was, however, not for one moment to be persuaded that it was his duty to smother, or by the use of forced interpretations and ambiguous language to make the smallest effort to smother, the dictates either of his reason or of his conscience.

Physical exhaustion has often proved a severer trial to the constancy of brave men than the prospect of a cruel death. To the illness from which Huss had been suffering all through his trial in consequence of the closeness of his confinement, there had now been added the torture of the stone. His last days were further darkened by the brutality which his enemies showed on their visits to his prison. On one occasion he heard Michael de Causis say to the gaolers, "By the grace of God we shall shortly burn this heretic, who has cost me many florins."† Palecz came to him "at the time of his greatest weakness," and said in his hearing that "since the birth of Christ there had not arisen a more dangerous heretic than Wyclif and he," and that all who had attended his sermons were affected with this heresy : "The substance of the material bread remaineth in the Sacrament of the Altar."‡ Ill at ease in his conscience at the reflection which could not have failed to suggest itself to him, that he was bringing to the stake one whose opinions he had once to a large extent shared, Palecz seems to have felt it necessary to persuade himself that in spite of all denials Huss must be heretical on this cardinal doctrine of the Theology of the time ; though it is difficult to understand how he could suppose that one who was ready to die rather than recant one heresy, should so obstinately repudiate another, had he really held it. But, at last, even Palecz was touched by Huss' gentleness and unmistakable sincerity. Huss asked him to put himself in his place. "What would you do," he asked, "if you were sure that you had not held the errors attributed to you? Would you abjure them?" "It is a hard case," said Palecz, and he began to weep.§ A few days before his end, Huss asked that Palecz might be his confessor. "Palecz," he said to the commissaries, "is my greatest enemy ; I should like to confess to him : or send me some other

\* *Enfant*, vol. i., p. 74.  
fol. lxix. a.

† *Hussi Opera*, fol. lxxvii., Ep. 30.  
§ *Op.*, fol. lxxvii., Ep. 30.

suitable man, I pray you for God's sake." A confessor was allowed him, but not Palecz; and from him he received absolution. Palecz afterwards "came," says Huss in the letter already quoted, "and wept much with me, when I asked him to forgive me if I had spoken bitterly against him, and especially for calling him a fabricator\* in my writings." In spite of his tears, however, Palecz did not consider that he had any cause to ask for the forgiveness of his former friend.

On the 6th of July, a solemn Session of the Council was held in the Cathedral. While mass was being celebrated, the heretic was not suffered to enter the Church, lest the mysteries should be profaned by his presence. Then he was brought in, and a sermon was preached at him by the Bishop of Lodi. This discourse concluded with words very expressive of the spirit of the times. "Destroy," said the Bishop, "all heresies and errors, but particularly (pointing at Huss) that obstinate heretic." Sixty Articles from Wyclif's works were then read, and condemned; then thirty Articles from the works of his Bohemian follower. When the first Article was read, he attempted to explain himself, but was silenced. Some of the charges he apparently heard now for the first time. Among them was the ridiculous accusation of having asserted that he should himself become a fourth person of the Trinity. At various parts of the reading, he tried to get in a word of protest. When he was accused of slighting the Pope's excommunication, he maintained that the treatment his proctors had received at Rome justified his disobedience; and it was that, he added, which had induced him to come to Constance "of his own accord under the public faith of the Emperor here present." Here he looked Sigismund full in the face, and the Emperor was seen to blush deeply. Then the books were condemned to the flames, and their author to degradation. For the last time he was arrayed in the eucharistic vestments; and then, one by one, the insignia of the seven orders were taken from him, each with an appropriate malediction. Finally, a paper cap inscribed with the word "Heresiarcha" and painted with devils, was placed upon his head, with the Church's parting curse, "We devote thy soul to the infernal devils." It has been said that the logic of persecution is perfect, that the body is burned to save the soul: if so, the logic of persecution was not yet invented.

The degraded heretic was now delivered over to the secular arm. The Elector Palatine, Vicar of the Empire, and his officers conducted him to the place of execution between the city walls and the moat. A guard of eight hundred armed men was thought necessary for the security of the executioners or the dignity of the occasion: an immense crowd followed the procession. On the road he declared to the people that he had been guilty of no heresy,

\* "Quod vocavi eum Fictorem in scripto."

that he had been unjustly condemned, that his enemies had been unable to convict him of any error. When he came within sight of the stake, he knelt down and said several of the penitential Psalms, and constantly repeated the words, "Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." "What this man may have done before," said some of the bystanders, "we know not; we only know that he hath made excellent prayers to God." A confessor was allowed him, in spite of the protest of a "priest on horse-back, in a green jacket lined with red," who said that heretics must not be allowed confessors: but as he would not recant, absolution was refused. Huss replied that he had no need of a confessor, for he was not conscious of any mortal sin. As the fire was kindled, an old woman was seen busily engaged in heaping up the wood round the heretic. "What holy simplicity!" said Huss: and then, as the flames leapt up, he again commended his soul to God, and prayed for the forgiveness of his enemies. As he spoke, the hideous cap fell off his head. Later tradition said that the flames had no power over it.\* A soldier picked it up and replaced it, saying, "He shall be burned with all his devils." Long after the flames had choked his utterance, his lips were seen to move as if in prayer. His ashes were thrown into the Rhine, lest his disciples should make relics of them. But their pious devotion was not to be so thwarted; they carried away the very earth on which he had suffered, to the land which was already preparing to avenge the patriot's death in arms.

That the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, is sound doctrine, though liable to exaggeration. But it was not merely as one of that noble army that Huss prepared the way for the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Hundreds of men and women whose names have perished, had testified against the corrupt doctrine and the more corrupt lives of the mediæval Priesthood; and had sealed their testimony with their deaths. And the death of the most obscure Waldensian who suffered at Toulouse was in itself not less heroic than the death of John Huss. They did not perish in vain. But the circumstances which attended the condemnation of Huss were such as to appeal with peculiar force to the conscience of Christendom. A great Council had assembled for the Reformation of the Church: all the Churchmen of the age most eminent for their piety or their learning were among its members; it enjoyed the hearty support of the Emperor and all the great Potentates of Europe. Yet neither the piety of its members nor the strength of its supporters effected the smallest improvement even in the external morality of the Clergy of that or of the succeeding age. Simony never flourished more vigorously

\* Perhaps the most interesting circumstance connected with this tradition is that Luther seems to have implicitly believed it. (See his Preface to Huss' Works.) According to his account, the cap was not replaced, but torn away by a soldier when it would not burn on the martyr's head, and thrown into the fire separately.

than among the Reformers of Constance; the morals of the town suffered from the presence of the Council, as they would have suffered from the neighbourhood of an English race-course. Neither the advocacy of the King of France nor the authority of the University of Paris was sufficient to procure the unqualified condemnation of one who had unblushingly defended assassination. Those who deposed one Pope, failed to put any effectual check upon the despotism of the next. The most considerable achievement of the deliberations of three years and six months was the burning of two heretics, one of whom had been promised freedom to return to his own country by the Emperor and by the Pope. Such a termination of a Council from which such magnificent results were promised, could not but shake the faith of mankind in the wisdom of such assemblies, and their confidence in the religion which represented either such assemblies, or the Popes whom they could depose, as mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit "in matters of Faith and of *Morals*."

To inveigh against the Fathers of Constance for sending a heretic to the stake, would indeed be to judge of the conduct of one age by the standard of another. But that is not the crime which has fixed upon the memory of the Council, and of the Church which it represented, a stain which can never be wiped off so long as that Church calls herself infallible. Huss was condemned for heresies certainly, but also for opinions which do not affect religious belief at all, for opinions which he had never held, for opinions which no one could seriously have believed that he had held. Implicit credence was given to the testimony of his bitterest enemies: he was not allowed to cross-examine the witnesses; he had no opportunity of fully explaining and defending his opinions. Above all, the safe-conduct which the Emperor had granted, and which the Pope had promised to observe, was violated by his arrest even more shamelessly than by his execution. The Council of Constance pronounced a formal divorce between Religion and Morality. Christendom was now made aware that her infallible guides were not bound by that respect for plighted faith which forms the basis of all social life, which places some restraint even upon the actions of savages in their dealings with their enemies, and of brigands in their dealings with their captives.

## SECTION IV.

### THE CHARACTER OF JOHN HUSS, AND HIS POSITION AS A REFORMER.

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"ON Transubstantiation," says Dean Milman, "(notwithstanding the subtleties of his adversaries), the Communion in one kind, worship of the Saints and of the Virgin Mary, Huss was scrupulously, unimpeachably orthodox."\* Thus far Dean Milman's judgment upon Huss' theological position may be upon the whole accepted, though perhaps not without some reservation.†

As to the Communion in one kind, it is true that Huss was orthodox, if by that is meant that he accepted the doctrine of Concomitance.‡ But he distinctly supports the practice of lay communion in both kinds, as desirable if not obligatory.§ To speak of the "Worship of the Saints and of the Virgin," is to use language which few Romanists would recognise as a correct description of the practices of their Church. The intercession of Saints and of the Virgin, Huss firmly believed in:¶ and in his

\* "Latin Christianity," book xiii., chap. ix.

† Huss accepted the orthodox formula as to Transubstantiation on the strength of the dogma of the *accidens sine substantia*. The Realists held that there was a "substance" in every class of things represented by a generic name which made that thing what it was, apart from the qualities perceived by the senses, which were called "accidents" of the thing. After consecration, the "substance" of the host was the "substance" of the Body and Blood of Christ, but the "accidents"—powers of affecting the taste, touch and sight—remained those of the bread and wine. Huss adhered rigidly to this doctrine, and hence disapproved of many of the popular expressions which were used with regard to the consecrated bread. He objected to its being said that the Body of Christ was tasted or handled or seen. He refused, though required to do so by his Diocesan, to give up applying the term "bread" to the host after consecration, on the ground that the word "this" in the words of institution could only mean "this bread." In his assertions of the dogma, he constantly uses such qualifications as these: "Sufficit multis sanctis credere et sufficit indoctis et simplicibus Christianis informatione carentibus ampliori," "sacramentaliter," "mysterialiter," "in sacramenti mysterio."—*De Cæna Domini*, Opera, vol. i., fol. 39. All these expressions show that his views were far removed from the grossness of the popular view of Transubstantiation. He dwelt little upon the miraculous aspect of the Sacrament, which to his adversaries was everything,—far less than many Anglican upholders of the doctrine of the Real Presence; much upon its commemorative value.

‡ In this respect he was once able to retaliate the charge of heresy upon his Diocesan, who had directed his clergy to preach that after consecration "nothing but the body of the Lord remains in the bread, and nothing but the blood of the Lord in the wine."—See the "Ordo Procedendi" drawn up by Huss, in Palacky's "Documenta."

§ Fol. 42.

¶ Fol. 148, 149. The Virgin is there called the "reparatrix humani generis et porta cæli . . . sine cujus suffragio impossibile est salvari aliquam peccatorem."—Quoted by L'Enfant, vol. i., p. 434.

letters he prays for that intercession.\* He attached considerable importance to the doctrine of a Treasury of Merits, though he denied the power of Pope or Bishop to make any one a participator in those merits. He held that it was better to help the "sleeping church" in Purgatory by adding to the sum of the good works of the Church (which in his view meant holiness of life, and not Masses or "whole Psalters"), than to pray for its deliverance. The most important practical measure of Reform which Huss urged upon the clergy of his day, was the abolition of the thirty Requiems and other lucrative superstitions with which the obsequies of all but the very poor were celebrated. His teaching as to prayers for the dead is, if anything, rather in advance of Wyclif's position than behind it. He declares that "neither the Prophets, nor Christ and his Apostles, nor the saints who lived just after their time, explicitly taught men to pray for the dead; but they taught the people very earnestly that he who lived without fault was a holy man."† At the same time Huss did not absolutely condemn prayers for the dead, although he thought it better that they should be offered on behalf of all the dead than for any particular person. He held that every Mass was "a sacrifice for the living and the dead;" but he unequivocally condemned all the mediæval superstitions which had gathered about this undeniably ancient, although post-apostolical, doctrine. He held that no Masses should be said specially for one dead person; he attached no value to the mere number of Masses said, and he held that it was simoniacal for a priest to take money for saying them. It is curious to observe how in his hands a belief in Purgatory becomes positively an argument against Sacerdotal pretensions: he condemned the Indulgences granted in favour of the dead as well as of the living by John XXIII., on the ground that such Indulgences would dispense with the necessity of purgatorial probation.‡ In this as in other cases he rejects Romish doctrines just where they favour Sacerdotal pretensions, or, at all events, just where Sacerdotal pretensions become immoral.

He was, indeed, completely under the thralldom of the theory which erects an eternal, impassable barrier between the Priest and the layman. He adhered to the traditional distinction between the Evangelical Precepts and the Evangelical Counsels. Matthias of Janow had, however, taught him that the calling of the Parish Priest was higher than that of the Monk or the Friar. Yet he shrank from the assertion of Wyclif and of Nicholas of Welesnowicz, that it was lawful for all men to preach the Gospel, because he imagined that that would imply that it was obligatory upon all men to preach the Gospel. He contented himself with placing the Priesthood in the position which the popular Theology of the day assigned to the Regulars: for them the Evangelical

\* *L'Enfant*, vol. i., p. 434.

† *Opera*, vol. ii., fol. lii., b.

‡ *Op.*, vol. i., fol. 185 a.



counsels were precepts; they were bound, others were only encouraged, to aim at "perfection."

His view of the obligation of the Priesthood to obey the Evangelical counsels in all the strictness of the letter, led him into a kind of Quakerism. He taught that the clergy might not under any circumstances engage in war, or in litigation for temporal matters, or take an oath.\* We have alluded to his defence of Nicholas of Welesnowicz, who refused to take an oath before the Inquisition. And he acted upon the same principle himself by refusing to make answer upon oath, though required to do so by the Archbishop, to the Articles exhibited against him in 1409.†

But the very point on which Huss is most sacerdotal,—his doctrine as to the obligation of the Clergy, and of them only, to obey the Law of Christ in all its strictness,—was the foundation of his anti-hierarchical doctrines. The powers and rights of the Priest were, as he held, so indefinitely theirs that a Priest "living according to the law of Christ, and having a knowledge of the Scripture," might not lawfully cease from preaching or administering the Sacraments, in obedience to the commands of any ecclesiastical authority whatsoever. He ascribes the origin of the Papacy solely to the supposed donation of Constantine:‡ he declares that at some future time the Church may be ruled without a Pope or Cardinals, as was actually the case during the first three hundred years of its existence. He denies, in short, as an historical fact, the Primacy of S. Peter, and the *jus divinum* of the primacy of his successors. The commands of the Pope are only to be obeyed when in the judgment of the person commanded they are in accordance with the law of Christ. "The faithful disciple of Christ," he says, "is bound to consider whence a command given by the Pope is derived (quomodo emanat),—whether it is expressly the command of any Apostle, or of the law of Christ, or has its foundation in the law of Christ; and when he has satisfied himself of that, he is bound reverently and humbly to obey a command of this kind. If, however, he truly satisfies himself that the command of the Pope is contrary to a command of Christ, or tends in any way to the hurt of the Church, then he is bound boldly to resist it, lest he be a participator in the crime by consent."§

The power of Bishops Huss does seem to place upon a some-

\* *Quæstio de Indulgentiis*, cap. ii., fol. 188-9, a.

† "Ad quos respondi . . . sine juramento."—These answers, according to Palacky, were made just before his departure for Constance.

‡ 221 a., 225 a.—Huss does sometimes appear to recognise the divine origin of the Papacy, but he does so merely in the sense in which he would have said that secular authorities derive their power from God. He followed Wyclif in holding that secular as well as ecclesiastical authorities had no power when in mortal sin.

§ Fol. 236 a.

what higher footing than that of the Pope. - But the Apostolical succession would seem in his estimation to confer upon them no power whatsoever except that of conveying Orders. He sets exactly the same limits to the duty of canonical obedience in the case of Bishops as he does to the Papal supremacy. A Bishop in mortal sin is no Bishop. His commands are only to be obeyed when they are in accordance with the law of Christ, and the inferior is bound to examine them before he obeys them.\*

Huss entirely denies both to Bishops and Clergy what may be called destructive powers. That excommunication which shuts a man off "from participation in the favour of God, from a worthy participation of the Sacraments, and from a participation in the prayers which prepare for eternal life" can only be pronounced when the Bishop knows by special revelation† that the offender is already excommunicated by God. And he nowhere implies that such revelations were to be expected. Practically, the only excommunication which he recognises is "the public exclusion from the conversation of Christians by the sentence of a spiritual or *secular* judge;" and this is only to be pronounced as a punishment for mortal sin. In short, he makes excommunication a purely temporal penalty, and it is to be disregarded when unjustly imposed.

On Absolution his doctrine is much the same. No priest ought to pronounce unconditional absolution, unless he knows by special revelation that the penitent is absolved by God. "Wherefore," he says, "the wise priests of Christ do not assert simply that the person confessing is loosed from his sins, but only under the condition, 'If he is sorry, and will sin no more, or has faith in the mercy of God, and will henceforward observe the commandments of God.'"‡

We hope that we have already shown sufficient grounds for rejecting the conclusion of Dean Milman, that the heresy of John Huss "has never been clearly defined,"§ and that it did not consist in "any of those tenets of belief rejected afterwards by the German and English Reformers." It is perfectly true that "he was the martyr to the power of the hierarchy," but that was because he had denied the powers of the hierarchy; and a belief in those powers was as essential a part, as it was, in our estimation, by far the most dangerous part of the Roman Creed.

But whatever may have been his opinions upon other points, there is one matter in which he is absolutely, unhesitatingly, a Protestant: in which he is as opposed to the teaching of one half of the Anglican Church as to the teaching of the whole of the Roman Church. He denies the claim of any man, or any body of men, to Infallibility. He will own no authority in matters of Faith but

\* Fol. 239.

† De Ecclesia, cap. xxii.

‡ Fol. clxxv. 6 ad fin., and clxxvi. a.

§ "Latin Christianity," book xiii., chap. 9. [Vol. viii., p. 297, Cabinet Edition.]

Holy Scripture : neither Fathers, nor Popes, nor General Councils. In so far as the Reformation was an assertion of the right of Private Judgment, Huss asserted it as fully and as clearly as any of the German Reformers, and far more clearly than our English Reformers. He expressly denies that any man, or any body of men, has a right to tell another what he is to believe : and he denies that it is lawful for any man thus to believe a doctrine upon the authority of another, or to say that he believes it when he does not. If this be not Protestantism, the word has no meaning.

But in spite of the clearness with which he asserts the right and the duty of Private Judgment, he certainly believed that his doctrinal system was as a matter of fact in perfect harmony with the teaching of the Fathers, and of the Popes and Councils of the Western Church until within a comparatively recent period. His Patristic learning was vast. But in reading the Fathers, his attention was fixed exclusively upon the Evangelical side of their writings : he entirely ignores that side of their teaching which supports the claims of authority. It is difficult to fix the exact period from which he would have dated the corruption of the Church's doctrine. For he was a consummate debater ; and his knowledge of ecclesiastical history was very remarkable for those times. He was thus constantly able to quote the decretals of earlier Popes against those of their successors, of earlier Councils against later Councils : he delighted in refuting the claims of the Popes out of their own mouths. The Decretals, the Extravagants, the Canon Law, all furnish him with weapons against the claims of the authority which they were intended to support. But although in some of these citations he is certainly ironical, although sometimes he uses his authorities merely as *argumenta ad hominem*, he does not seem to have been aware to what an extent the right of Private Judgment had been denied, or how indissolubly the whole Church-system of the Middle Ages was bound up with those views of Hierarchical authority and of the Infallibility of the Church which he rejected. He does not seem to have realised that Doctors for whom he had the greatest respect, such as S. Cyprian, or Pope Gregory, or S. Bernard, would have rejected with indignation the claim of an individual priest to interpret Scripture for himself. Those writers who, apparently with a view of aggravating the guilt of his judges in putting him to death, have pronounced that Huss was an orthodox Catholic according to the notions of his time, seem to have been content to accept his undoubted belief in his own orthodoxy as a sufficient refutation of the charge of heresy. But the very fact that he should have maintained that he was orthodox and the Council unorthodox, shows that his mind was so wholly uncatholic in its bent, that he really did not know what orthodoxy meant.

From the point of view of the individual conscience, Huss was, as we have said, quite clear in his assertion of the right and even

the duty of private judgment. And to a very considerable extent he maintained also what we may call the political right of Liberty of Conscience. The whole tenour of his protests against the ill-treatment of good and hard-working priests on account of opinions which in some cases he admitted to be erroneous, leaves upon the mind the impression that he means to condemn all persecution on account of opinion. He constantly urges that those who accuse others of error, should refute and convince, instead of trying to suppress them. But when asked at Constance what was to be done with heretics who were deaf to all argument, he admitted that they must be punished in the body,—he does not say burned to death.\* If an answer made under such circumstances is to be taken as representing the settled opinion of the speaker, we may at all events feel sure that he would have interpreted the term "Heretic" liberally. Although he could not quite get rid of the mediæval notion which made Heresy a crime or worse than a crime; yet in his own works the term is more often applied to unlawful and immoral practices, such as Simony, than to diversities of doctrine. The fact is that the toleration which he demanded was a toleration by the Church as well as by the State. He would have been beyond his age indeed if he had seen that it might be right for the State to allow the public preaching of one whom the Church might rightly condemn. His advocacy of Toleration sprang not from any abstract conclusion of political science, not from what is called in modern times liberality of mind, but from the breadth of his Christian sympathies. He wished not that those whom he denounced as heretics should be suffered to live, but that the Christian Church should include all whose lives were the lives of Christians. In this respect he shows a largeness of heart which contrasts very favourably with the temper of most of the Reformers of the Sixteenth Century.

The great work of John Huss was to make a protest on behalf of the rights of Conscience. The most marked characteristic of his mind and of his character was an intense, an unsurpassed conscientiousness. This conscientiousness, this scrupulous sincerity, was the source of all his Protestantism. The key-note of his Theology and of his life is sounded in the title of one of his works, the treatise "On the sufficiency of the *law* of Christ." The Gospel was to him primarily a law, a rule of life; his great aim was to find out what was the will of Christ upon the smallest details of his own life and of the lives of his flock. On their purely contemplative or speculative side he was ready to accept the traditional beliefs of his age, or those beliefs modified by that Augustinism which was as the life-blood of the sound part of the Mediæval Church. With doctrines which did not directly affect practice, such as Transubstantiation and Purgatory, he had no quarrel. The power of

\* L'Enfant, vol. i., p. 342.

binding and loosing, the power of giving and withholding the body of Christ, he did not in the abstract deny to the Clergy; but the moment such doctrines were so understood as to involve—and in an age in which Balthasar Cossa could be a Pope and Albert of Uniczow an Archbishop, they inevitably did involve at every turn—the calling of evil good and good evil, Huss was at war with them. This practical, pastoral bent of his mind saved him at once from the mediæval danger of Mysticism, and from the Protestant danger of Dogmatism. It constituted his great excellence as a religious teacher; but it constituted also the weakness of his position as a Reformer.

John Huss was indeed a Protestant before Protestantism, rather than a Reformer before the Reformation. He viewed the corruptions of the Church too much from the point of view of the pulpit,—it may almost be said of the confessional. It was in this respect that he most conspicuously fell behind Wyclif. The abolition of the Papal supremacy, of religious orders, of monasteries, of the enforced celibacy of the clergy, of Latin services, of Chantries and endowments for Masses,—all these measures Wyclif saw to be necessary conditions of any permanent Reform. Huss denounced the abuses and the erroneous doctrines connected with these institutions, instead of demanding the abolition of the institutions with which they were indissolubly bound up. From the want of a definite plan of Reform, such as he might have bequeathed to them, the Bohemian nation, agreeing in nothing but in reverence for his name, speedily became split up into two factions; one of which demanded reforms too moderate to be effectual, and too moderate to be lasting; while the other drifted into extravagances almost as wild, if not as immoral, as those of the Anabaptists of the succeeding century. When we consider the enormous influence which he wielded during his lifetime and the devotion which his memory inspired after his death, we cannot help feeling that had Huss possessed something of the political common-sense of Wyclif or of our Edwardian Reformers, the result of the Bohemian Reformation might have been very different to what it was. It is melancholy to reflect that a nation which has perhaps suffered more in defence of religious and political liberty than any other in Europe, should now be a province of the Austrian Empire, covered with the hideous Pagan temples which attest the triumph of Jesuitism,\* the most immoral development of that religion against the immorality of which Huss protested. They have laboured, and others have entered into their labours.

Wyclif was, as we have seen, a more thorough, a more violent but also a more statesmanlike reformer than John Huss. He was more conscious than Huss of the antagonism in which his principles

\* Almost every Gothic Church in Bohemia was destroyed in the troubles of the Hussite Wars.

stood to those of the Mediæval Church, and saw more clearly the necessity for vigorous legislative reform as well as for a revival of religious life. But in one important matter, both of them belonged to the age which was passing away, and not to the generation which was to prepare the way for the movement which was to carry out what Huss had begun. At the Council of Constance the disciples of the Angelical Doctor and the Master of the Sentences sat side by side with men who are still celebrated for the elegance of their Latinity or for the re-discovery of forgotten Classics. Huss and Wyclif were schoolmen. Both of them, indeed, are still remembered as champions of their native languages; and both of them preached and wrote powerfully in them, when they were addressing themselves to the populace. But their minds were thoroughly in bondage to Scholasticism: when they wrote for the learned, they wrote in syllogisms. Wyclif's more logical mind saw through the absurdity of the *accidens sine substantia*, with which Huss was perfectly satisfied: but both Huss' defence and Wyclif's denial of Transubstantiation were alike based upon scholastic grounds. A rebellion against Philosophy, as it was then understood, was as necessary for the emancipation of human thought as a rebellion against Sacerdotalism. When the Reformation came, Philosophy was its foe; Literature was its friend. The sympathies of Wyclif, Huss, and Jerome of Prague were with the decaying Scholasticism of the Middle Ages, and not with the dawning Revival of Letters.

There were standing by the fires in which Huss and Jerome perished, men who most unconsciously were to do something to set forward the cause for which they died. Poggio and Æneas Sylvius have left us accounts of the constancy of their deaths. The tone in which they write shows how very cold Faith was to become in the age which was yet an indispensable preparation for the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. Æneas Sylvius says: "We don't find that any of the philosophers ever suffered death with so much courage as they endured the fire.\*" Poggio is similarly reminded, not of the saints of Christianity, but of the heroes of Paganism. He calls the account of Jerome's death "a History so much like to those of Antiquity. Mutius Scævola did not express more constancy when he saw his arm burnt than Jerome did at the sight of his whole body in the flames."† The South of Europe had to go through a period of revived Paganism before the North could produce men who should unite the enthusiasm of Huss and Jerome with the scholarship and literary culture of Æneas Sylvius and Poggio.

The deficiencies of John Huss as a Reformer were the noblest testimony to the beauty of his character as a man. He was unconscious of the fact that he was playing a great part in history. He possessed an extraordinary gift of inspiring strong personal affec-

\* L'Enfant, vol. i., p. 593.

† L'Enfant, vol. i., p. 599.

tion in those with whom he was brought into contact; yet he knew not what power he wielded. He possessed few of those qualities which are generally necessary to secure the applause of multitudes. He was eloquent, but less so than his far less respected associate Jerome of Prague. He possessed none of Wyclif's bitter, keen satirical power, or of the rough, hearty humour of Luther; he was, we should gather, habitually serious, though not stern.\*

There was in him nothing of the braggadocio of the Puritan: nothing, on the other hand, of the ostentatious humility of the Mediæval Saint. Few men who have enjoyed so much popularity, and that the dangerous popularity of a religious leader, have been so absolutely free from affectation. His life was devoted to the assertion of a great principle which had been obscured for centuries: he thought that he was asserting a principle in defence of which good men of all ages would have gladly died. He behaved at Constance as one who was falling a victim to the malice of personal enemies, as one who grieved at being misunderstood; not as one who rejoiced, with a lawful pride, at being accounted worthy to die for a great cause. Few Reformers have been less violent even in words: hardly was he betrayed, even by a righteous indignation, into a single word or action which his maturer judgment would have condemned; yet he became the national hero of a people whose ferocity in religious warfare stands unexampled in the history of Christendom. No man was ever less of a demagogue, no man was ever more gentle or more humble; yet it may be doubted whether a whole people ever conceived such an enthusiastic affection for one who was so worthy of it.

\* The following character is given of him by the Jesuit Balbinus:—"He was more subtil than eloquent; but the modesty and severity of his manners, his unpolished, austere, and entirely blameless life, his pale thin visage, his good nature and affability to all, even to the meanest persons, were more persuasive than the greatest eloquence." *L'Enfant*, vol. 1., p. 24.

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