

The Story of John Hus

Jan (John) Hus (1372? -1415) was a Bohemian religious reformer whose efforts to reform the church anticipated the Protestant Reformation.

Hus was born of nameless and unknown peasant parents in Husinec, in southern Bohemia, which is now the Czech Republic. His mother taught John to pray and, as he grew older encouraged him to peruse a career as a priest. John saw there was money and prestige to be found in the church.

Eventually he made his way to the University of Prague where he studied as a very poor student. Hus recounts his poverty while studying at the university in Prague. *“When I was a hungry young student, I used to make a spoon out of bread in order to eat peas with it. Then I ate the spoon as well.”* In 1396 he received his Master of Arts degree. Two years later in 1398 he became a lecturer in theology at the university and in 1401 was made dean of its philosophical faculty.

Ordained a priest in 1400, in 1402 Hus took up additional duties as preacher at the Bethlehem Chapel, where the sermons were given in Czech instead of the traditional Latin.

The nationalist and church reformist movement that had been initiated by the popular 15th-century Bohemian preacher Jan Milíč was prevalent at both the university and Bethlehem Chapel, and Hus quickly became involved in it. Before there was Jan Hus there was Jan Milic.

Born at Kremsier in Moravia, Jan Milic died 29 June 1374, at Avignon, France. Despite a distinguished career in the church and in the royal court of King Charles IV of Luxembourg (1316-1378), in 1363 Milic renounced all his dignities to begin a life of extreme austerity. He also began to fearlessly denounced the vices of the clergy and the laity— which he was able to do in three languages. A gifted linguist Jan Milic was able to preach in Latin, the Czech language and German.

In the spring of 1367 Jan Milic went to Rome where the Inquisition imprisoned him because he had declared that the end of the world was near and the Anti-Christ had arrived. Released from prison by Pope Urban V (1310-1370) he returned to Prague to establish a home for fallen women, which he called "*Jerusalem*".

In 1373 the mendicants (a friar or brother who begged) and the city clergy of Prague lodged twelve accusations against Jan Milic with Pope Gregory XI (1331-1378) at Avignon. Going to Avignon Milic was completely justified by the pope, and was even permitted to preach before the cardinals. Though he has been called the precursor to John Hus, Jan Milic remained within the orthodox faith of the

Catholic Church. But he did see abuses and he moved to correct them and in this way influenced John Hus.

Also influential on Hus at this time were the ideas of John Wycliffe. Shortly before the appointment of Hus to the Bethlehem Chapel the influence of the English reformer John Wycliffe came to Bohemia through Czech students who had studied at Oxford. Hus found in Wycliffe (1330-1384) an intellectual framework for the practical ideas of the Czech reform movement. “*Wycliffe, Wycliffe*” he wrote in the margin of a manuscript, “*you will turn many heads.*”

In the area of church practice, Hus, like Wycliffe vigorously condemned the sale of indulgences which gave individuals freedom to sin without guilt or shame. Hus declared it was wrong for the pope to pay for his war against the King of Naples in 1412 by selling pardon for sin. Pope John XXIII (b. 1239 d. 1334) claimed indulgences were a shortcut way into the kingdom of heaven. Hus said the practice-supported brothels, taverns and supplied girlfriends for the priests. He called for a boycott.

In the area of church doctrine both Wycliffe and Hus believed in

- predestination whereby God chooses who will come to faith so that it might be said, “*Salvation is of the Lord.*”
- They regarded the Bible as the ultimate religious authority in matters of faith and practice.
- And they maintained that Christ, rather than any corrupt ecclesiastical official is the true head of the church.

- Regarding the doctrine of transubstantiation Wycliffe and some of his Czech follower argued for remanence—the idea that the bread and wine remain unchanged after consecration. Hus never adopted this view though he was repeatedly accused of it later.

In 1408 the subject matter of some of Hus's sermons was made grounds of complaint to the archbishop. It is easy to see why for Hus railed against his fellow priests. In 1405 for example, he denounced alleged appearances of the blood of Christ on communion wafers as an elaborate hoax.

His sermons condemned the sins of the priests. He mocked the authority that some priests claimed for themselves when they called their *parishioners* “*knaves*” and declared, “We can give you the Holy Ghost or send you to hell.”

“These priests deserve hanging in hell,” shouted Hus, for they are “fornicators”, “parasites”, “money misers” and “fat swine.” “They are drunks whose bellies growl with great drinking and are gluttons whose stomachs are overfilled until their double chins hang down.” The other clerics began to become bitter against Hus but he was not through.

Hus spoke against simony, the practice of buying spiritual offices. He condemned Prague’s wealthiest clergy—“*the Lord’s fat ones*” as he called them. The priests charged fees for providing the sacraments.

Finally, enough was enough. Archbishop Zbynek moved against Hus. The Archbishop was really a military man who, in 1402 at the age of 25 had outbid other contenders and bought the archbishopric of Prague (for 2, 800 gulden). A man without true spiritual sensitivity Zbynek was embarrassed by Hus and so took steps to silence him by moving against the supporters of Hus who began to preach without church permission.

Hus objected and confronted the Archbishop. *“How is it that fornicating and other wise criminal priests walk about freely...while humble priests.... are jailed as heretics and suffer exile for the very proclamation of the Gospel?”*

More embarrassed than ever Zbynek sought for a religious ally against Hus in the person of the pope. He begged help from Alexander V, one of the three rival popes then contending for authority in the church as part of the Great Schism (1378-1417).

The pope responded. Hus was forbidden to exercise his priestly functions in the diocese while his case was being considered. Meanwhile a bull was issued condemning the teachings of John Wycliffe and ordering his books burned which was done on 16 July 1410.

Hus spoke out against the book burning saying, *“I call it a poor business. Such bonfires never yet removed a single sin from the hearts of men. Fire does not consume truth. It is always the mark of a little mind that it vents its anger on*

inanimate objects. The books which have been burned are a loss to the whole people.”

Unmoved and unrepentant Zbynek excommunicated Hus on 2 May 1411. When this news reached the public domain riots broke out in Prague on his behalf. Backed by popular demonstrations, Hus continued to preach, until the city was laid under interdict in 1412. Where an indict has been imposed

all churches are to be closed

and all religious services suspended.

No masses are to be said,

no communion served,

no last rites given.

and no baptisms or marriages performed.

Once placed under the indict the common people became alarmed. Many of the influential supporters fell from power and Hus felt compelled to leave Prague, which he did on 15 October 1412. Hus was able to find refuge in the castles of several friendly noblemen. During this time he wrote his principal work, *De Ecclesia (The Church)*.

In 1414 John Hus was summoned to appear at the Council of Constance [Germany] which had been convened to resolve the schism in the church and to suppress heresy.

Having been promised a safe conduct from Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund (1368-1437) Hus thought he might manage successfully to defend his beliefs. His friends warned Hus not to go to the meeting but Hus was determined. Writing to a friend he joked, "*the goose is not yet cooked and is not afraid of being cooked.*" The word "*Hus*" means goose in the Czech language. It was a tragic mistake.

On his arrival his enemies had him imprisoned. The date was 28 November 1415. Hus was formally arrested and placed in a cold dungeon cell in the basement of a Dominican monastery in Lake Constance. His cell was next to a sewage system. Sickened by the stench and circumstances in which he was placed Hus appealed to be relocated while he awaited trial for heresy.

For many months Hus lingered in prison.

He asked to appear before a council.

He was denied. Attempts to argue his case resulted in shouts from the conciliar fathers that Hus was arrogant and stubborn.

Slowly the realization dawned, Hus was a doomed man.

No witnesses were formally to be presented against him but neither would anyone be allowed to come to his defense. Even the emperor would not help him. Sigismund acknowledged in private that "*The case of Jan Hus ought not to interfere with the reform of the church and empire, which is the principle purpose*

for which the Council has been convened. For myself, I wish to stand by the holy church, I do not incline to like new ideas.”

On 6 July during the final session of his long trial thirty charges against John Hus listed the doctrines he had preached and the statements which the church found objectionable. Many of the concerns of the church focused upon the hostility of Hus to ungodly spiritual leadership. The voice of Hus cried out against immorality.

“Priests who live in vice in any way pollute the power of the priesthood, and like unfaithful sons are untrustworthy in their thinking about the church's seven sacraments, about the keys, offices, censures, customs, ceremonies and sacred things of the church, about the veneration of relics, and about indulgences and orders”

“The pope is not the manifest and true successor of the prince of the apostles, Peter, if he lives in a way contrary to Peter's. If he seeks avarice, he is the vicar of Judas Iscariot. Likewise, cardinals are not the manifest and true successors of the college of Christ's other apostles unless they live after the manner of the apostles, keeping the commandments and counsels of our lord Jesus Christ.”

Called upon to recant and to promise not to teach his doctrines, Hus refused categorically. He was condemned by the council and then mocked.

Hus was sentenced to be burned at the stake.

Two weeks before his death Hus wrote the following letter.

“Oh most kind Christ, draw us weaklings after Thyself, for unless Thou draw us, we cannot follow Thee! Give us a courageous spirit that it may be ready; and if the flesh is weak, may Thy grace go before, now as well as subsequently. For without Thee, we can do nothing, and particularly not go to a cruel death for Thy sake. Give us a valiant spirit, a fearless heart, the right faith, a firm hope, and perfect love, that we may offer our lives for Thy sake with the greatest patience and joy. Amen.”

The prayer of Hus was answered. He died heroically though with much public shame. Hus was crowned with a paper miter upon which were three demons and the inscription,

“This is a here-siarch.”

Accompanied by a multitude Hus was pushed through the streets of Constance to the place of death. He was bound to the stake with a sooty chain wrapped around his neck. Wood was piled to the chain. While being prepared for burning he was given one last chance to recant. The crowd waited in silence and then Hus spoke.

“God is my witness ...the principle intention of my preaching and all of my other acts or writings were solely that I might turn men from sin. And in that truth of the Gospel that I wrote, taught, and preached in accordance with the sayings and expositions of the holy doctors, I am willing gladly to die today.”

The crowd gasped in amazement at the holy boldness. The signal was given. The executioner stepped forward and put a torch to the pilings. As the flames leaped upward Hus died singing,

“Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me.”

“Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me.”

“Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me.”

On 6 July 1415 his goose was cooked but John Hus died singing.

The message of Hus,

The meaning of his life

And the manner of his death must not be forgotten.

The Four Articles

The cruel and senseless death of John Hus did not extinguish the seed thoughts he had given his life for. Rather, the example of his courage and holy life inspired others to take up the effort to bring doctrinal purity and holiness of life to the people. One such person was Jakoubek of Stribo who became the successor to Hus in Prague's Bethlehem Chapel. In 1420 Jakoubek drew up a document with Four Articles which demanded the following.

- First, the freedom of priests to preach from the *Scriptures*;
- Second Holy Communion for the laity in both kinds, the cup (or chalice) as well as the bread (or host).
- Third, there was to be a mandatory poverty of the clergy and the return of most church lands to secular owners.
- Fourth, prostitution was to be forbidden and serious sins punished.

The Four Articles of Prague were a serious attempt to bring sanctification back to the people of God.

A Lasting Legacy

An emphasis on holiness of life and true spirituality would become part of the lasting legacy of John Hus upon his followers through one group known as The Bohemian Brethren and later as The Moravians. They became the first Protestant group in Europe to publish a hymnbook. Their influence one-day touched the life of a young missionary to the American colonies named John Wesley. Returning to England after ministering in Georgia and feeling like a failure, Wesley was amazed by the Moravians. They sang while their ship was almost broken up in a storm. His desire to know more of their faith led him to one of their meetings at Aldersgate where he was converted to Christ.

If there is a lesson to be learned it is that sometimes what we say and do in time has far reaching repercussions after our lives are over. Only eternity will reveal how much good has been done in life and how far reaching our legacy will be. Without John Hus the life of John Wesley would have been far different.

As a theologian, Hus helped restore a biblical vision of the church, one that focused on Christ's teachings and example of purity. Moreover, his stress on preaching and the universal priesthood of believers became hallmarks of the later Protestant Reformation. He also encouraged congregational hymn singing, writing many songs himself. For Czechs, Hus was not only a spiritual leader but also a focal point of national inspiration in the centuries following his death.

Divisions

Unfortunately it would not be easy to bring reform to the people for as the Hussite movement continued it divided into moderate and radical factions. The moderates, called Utraquists (from the Latin word for “*both*,” referring to Communion in both kinds), or Calixtines (from the Latin word for “*chalice*”), essentially limited their demands to reform along the lines of the Four Articles.

The radical faction, drawn mostly from the rural peasantry and poor, became known as Taborites after Mount Tabor, their meeting place near Prague, which they named for the place of Christ's transfiguration.

The Taborites called for

the abolition of clerical vestments and the Latin liturgy

and also attacked monarchy

and the feudal system.

Inspired by their millennialist beliefs, the Taborites and a similar group named the Horebites after the biblical Mount Horeb considered themselves invincible in battle. War there would be Pope Martin V (1417-1431), with Sigismund's support, declared a crusade against them.

Surprisingly enough, the Hussites gave their enemies several stunning defeats though vastly outnumbered. One of their secrets was the creation of the war wagon, a mobile fortress loaded with bowsmen and gunners. The wagons would slam into enemy lines to disrupt organization and create panic.

The Hussites at first fought only defensive battles under a charismatic but ruthless leader named John Zizka. Attempting to unify and solidify his position, Zizka suppressed dissidence throughout Bohemia and expelled thousands of anti-Hussite Germans from the country.

After Zizka's death, his followers called themselves the Brotherhood of Orphans. Under Procopius the Great (circa 1380-1434), Zizka's successor, the Bohemians won several more important defensive victories and then took the offensive, attacking Catholic strongholds in Slovakia, Silesia, and Lusatia.

The Hussite Church

In 1431 the Council of Basel was called to bring an end to armed conflict and settle the religious disputes. The Catholics, as a concession to the Hussites, agreed to allow the celebration of Communion in both kinds in Bohemia. This concession largely satisfied the Utraquists.

The Taborites, however, refused to compromise, and they were eventually defeated by a combined force of Utraquists and Catholics at the Battle of Lipany in 1434, at which Procopius was killed.

Under John Rokycana, the leader of the majority of Hussites after Procopius's death, the Hussites achieved virtual autonomy within the Catholic church, becoming the national church of Bohemia. Rokycana was made archbishop of the Bohemian church in 1435, and in 1436 he signed the *Compactata of Prague*, the agreement that ratified its status. Many Hussites became Lutherans in the 16th century, but the Catholic Hussites retained their autonomy until 1620, when orthodox Roman Catholicism was re-imposed.

Matter of Authority

This excerpt from the decree issued by the Council of Constance in 1415 emphasizes the power of church councils within the Roman Catholic Church. The declaration came in response to abuses of papal power and the schism, or deep division, within the western church as three popes tried to claim sole authority. The Council determined the papal succession and attempted to reform Church government, but its decisions proved highly controversial.

Sacrosancta, 1415

“This holy synod of Constance, constituting a general council for the extirpation of the present schism and the union and reformation of the Church of God in head and members, legitimately assembled in the Holy Ghost, to the praise of omnipotent God, in order that it may the more easily, safely, effectively, and freely bring about the union and reformation of the Church of God, hereby determines, decrees, ordains, and declares what follows:

It first declares that this same council, legitimately assembled in the Holy Ghost, forming a general council and representing the Catholic Church militant, has its power immediately from Christ, and every one, whatever his position or rank, even if it be the papal dignity itself, is bound to obey it in all those things which pertain to the faith, to the healing of the schism, and to the general reformation of the Church of God in head and members.

It further declares that any one, whatever his position, station, or rank, even if it be the papal, who shall ... refuse to obey the mandates, decrees, ordinances, or instructions which have been, or shall be, issued by this holy council, or by any other general council legitimately summoned, which concern, or in any way relate to, the above mentioned objects, shall, unless he repudiate his conduct, be subjected to condign penance and be suitably punished, having recourse, if necessary, to the resources of the law ...

Sentence against John Hus

The most holy general council of Constance, divinely assembled and representing the catholic church, for an everlasting record. Since a bad tree is wont to bear bad fruit, as truth itself testifies, so it is that John Wyclif, of cursed memory, by his deadly teaching, like a poisonous root, has brought forth many noxious sons, not in Christ Jesus through the gospel, as once the holy fathers brought forth faithful sons, but rather contrary to the saving faith of Christ, and he has left these sons as successors to his perverse teaching.

This holy synod of Constance is compelled to act against these men as against spurious and illegitimate sons, and to cut away their errors from the Lord's field as if they were harmful briars, by means of vigilant care and the knife of ecclesiastical authority, lest they spread as a cancer to destroy others. Although, therefore, it was decreed at the sacred general council recently held at Rome that the teaching of John Wyclif, of cursed memory, should be condemned and the books of his containing this teaching should be burnt as heretical; although his teaching was in fact condemned and his books burnt as containing false and dangerous doctrine; and although a decree of this kind was approved by the authority of this present sacred council; nevertheless a certain **John Hus**, here present in person at this sacred council, who is a disciple not of Christ but rather of the heresiarch John Wyclif, boldly and rashly contravening the condemnation and

the decree after their enactment, has taught, asserted and preached many errors and heresies of John Wyclif which have been condemned both by God's church and by other reverend fathers in Christ, lord archbishops and bishops of various kingdoms, and masters in theology at many places of study. He has done this especially by publicly resisting in the schools and in sermons, together with his accomplices, the condemnation in scholastic form of the said articles of John Wyclif which has been made many times at the university of Prague, and he has declared the said John Wyclif to be a catholic man and an evangelical doctor, thus supporting his teaching, before a multitude of clergy and people.

He has asserted and published certain articles listed below and many others, which are condemned and which are, as is well known, contained in the books and pamphlets of the said John Hus.

Full information has been obtained about the aforesaid matters, and there has been careful deliberation by the most reverend fathers in Christ, lord cardinals of the holy Roman church, patriarchs archbishops, bishops and other prelates and doctors of holy scripture and of both laws, in large numbers.

This most holy synod of Constance therefore declares and **defines** that the articles listed below, which have been found on examination, by many masters in sacred scripture, to be contained in his books and pamphlets written in his own hand, and which the same John Hus at a public hearing, before the fathers and

prelates of this sacred council, has confessed to be contained in his books and pamphlets, are not catholic and should not be taught to be such but rather many of them are erroneous, others scandalous, others offensive to the ears of the devout, many of them are rash and seditious, and some of them are notoriously heretical and have long ago been rejected and condemned by holy fathers and by general councils, and it strictly forbids them to be preached, taught or in any way approved.

Moreover, since the articles listed below are explicitly contained in his books or treatises, namely in the book entitled **De ecclesia** and in his other pamphlets, this most holy synod therefore reproveth and condemns the aforesaid books and his teaching, as well as the other treatises and pamphlets written by him in Latin or in Czech, or translated by one or more other persons into any other language, and it decrees and determines that they should be publicly and solemnly burnt in the presence of the clergy and people in the city of Constance and elsewhere.

On account of the above, moreover, all his teaching is and shall be deservedly suspect regarding the faith and is to be avoided by all of Christ's faithful. In order that this pernicious teaching may be eliminated from the midst of the church, this holy synod also orders that local ordinaries make careful inquiry about treatises and pamphlets of this kind, using the church's censures and even if

necessary the punishment due for supporting heresy, and that they be publicly burnt when they have been found. This same holy synod decrees that local ordinaries and inquisitors of heresy are to proceed against any who violate or defy this sentence and decree as if they were persons suspected of heresy.

Sentence of degradation against J. Hus

Moreover, the acts and deliberations of the inquiry into heresy against the aforesaid John Hus have been examined. There was first a faithful and full account made by the commissioners deputed for the case and by other masters of theology and doctors of both laws, concerning the acts and deliberations and the depositions of very many trustworthy witnesses. These depositions were openly and publicly read out to the said John Hus before the fathers and prelates of this sacred council. It is very clearly established from the depositions of these witnesses that the said John has taught many evil, scandalous and seditious things, and dangerous heresies, and has publicly preached them during many years. This most holy synod of Constance, invoking Christ's name and having God alone before its eyes, therefore pronounces, decrees and **defines** by this definitive sentence, which is here written down, that the said John Hus was and is a true and manifest heretic and has taught and publicly preached, to the great offence of the divine Majesty, to the scandal of the universal church and to the detriment of the catholic faith, errors and heresies that have long ago been condemned by God's church and many things

that are scandalous, offensive to the ears of the devout, rash and seditious, and that he has even despised *the keys* of the church and ecclesiastical censures. He has persisted in these things for many years with a hardened heart.

He has greatly scandalised Christ's faithful by his obstinacy since, bypassing the church's intermediaries, he has made appeal directly to our lord Jesus Christ, as to the supreme judge, in which he has introduced many false, harmful and scandalous things to the contempt of the apostolic see, ecclesiastical censures and the keys. This holy synod therefore pronounces the said John Hus, on account of the aforesaid and many other matters, to have been a heretic and it judges him to be considered and condemned as a heretic, and it hereby condemns him. It rejects the said appeal of his as harmful and scandalous and offensive to the church's jurisdiction. It declares that the said John Hus seduced the christian people, especially in the kingdom of Bohemia, in his public sermons and in his writings; and that he was not a true preacher of Christ's gospel to the same christian people, according to the exposition of the holy doctors, but rather was a seducer. Since this most holy synod has learnt from what it has seen and heard, that the said John Hus is obstinate and incorrigible and as such does not desire to return to the bosom of holy mother the church, and is unwilling to abjure the heresies and errors which he has publicly defended and preached, this holy synod of Constance therefore declares and decrees that the same John Hus is to be deposed and degraded from

the order of the priesthood and from the other orders held by him. It charges the reverend fathers in Christ, the archbishop of Milan and the bishops of Feltre Asti, Alessandria, Bangor and Lavour with duly carrying out the degradation in the presence of this most holy synod, in accordance with the procedure required by law.

Sentence Condemning John Hus to the Stake

This holy synod of Constance, seeing that God's church has nothing more that it can do, relinquishes John Hus to the judgment of the secular authority and decrees that he is to be relinquished to the secular court.

Condemned articles of John Hus

1. There is only one holy universal church, which is the total number of those predestined to salvation. It therefore follows that the universal holy church is only one, inasmuch as there is only one number of all those who are predestined to salvation.
2. Paul was never a member of the devil, even though he did certain acts which are similar to the acts of the church's enemies.
3. Those foreknown as damned are not parts of the church, for no part of the church can finally fall away from it, since the predestinating love that binds the church together does not fail.
4. The two natures, the divinity and the humanity, are one Christ.
5. A person foreknown to damnation is never part of the holy church, even if he is in a state of grace according to present justice; a person predestined to salvation always remains a member of the church, even though he may fall away for a time from adventitious grace, for he keeps the grace of predestination.
6. The church is an article of faith in the following sense: to regard it as the convocation of those predestined to salvation, whether or not it be in a state of grace according to present justice.
7. Peter neither was nor is the head of the holy catholic church.
8. Priests who live in vice in any way pollute the power of the priesthood, and like unfaithful sons are untrustworthy in their thinking about the church's seven sacraments, about the keys, offices, censures, customs, ceremonies and sacred things of the church, about the veneration of relics, and about indulgences and orders.
9. The papal dignity originated with the emperor, and the primacy and institution of the pope emanated from imperial power.
10. Nobody would reasonably assert of himself or of another, without revelation, that he was the head of a particular holy church; nor is the Roman pontiff the head of the Roman church.

11. It is not necessary to believe that any particular Roman pontiff is the head of any particular holy church, unless God has predestined him to salvation.
12. Nobody holds the place of Christ or of Peter unless he follows his way of life, since there is no other discipleship that is more appropriate nor is there another way to receive delegated power from God, since there is required for this office of vicar a similar way of life as well as the authority of the one instituting.
13. The pope is not the manifest and true successor of the prince of the apostles, Peter, if he lives in a way contrary to Peter's. If he seeks avarice, he is the vicar of Judas Iscariot. Likewise, cardinals are not the manifest and true successors of the college of Christ's other apostles unless they live after the manner of the apostles, keeping the commandments and counsels of our lord Jesus Christ.
14. Doctors who state that anybody subjected to ecclesiastical censure, if he refuses to be corrected, should be handed over to the judgment of the secular authority, are undoubtedly following in this the chief priests, the scribes and the pharisees who handed over to the secular authority Christ himself, since he was unwilling to obey them in all things, saying, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death; these gave him to the civil judge, so that such men are even greater murderers than Pilate.
15. Ecclesiastical obedience was invented by the church's priests, without the express authority of scripture.
16. The immediate division of human actions is between those that are virtuous and those that are wicked. Therefore, if a man is wicked and does something, he acts wickedly; if he is virtuous and does something, he acts virtuously. For just as wickedness, which is called crime or mortal sin, infects all the acts of a wicked man, so virtue gives life to all the acts of a virtuous man.
17. A priest of Christ who lives according to his law, knows scripture and has a desire to edify the people, ought to preach, notwithstanding a pretended excommunication. And further on: if the pope or any superior orders a priest so disposed not to preach, the subordinate ought not to obey.
18. Whoever enters the priesthood receives a binding duty to preach; and this mandate ought to be carried out, notwithstanding a pretended excommunication.

19. By the church's censures of excommunication, suspension and interdict the clergy subdue the laity, for the sake of their own exaltation, multiply avarice protect wickedness and prepare the way for antichrist. The clear sign of this is the fact that these censures come from antichrist. In the legal proceedings of the clergy they are called fulminations, which are the principal means whereby the clergy proceed against those who uncover antichrist's wickedness, which the clergy has for the most part usurped for itself.
20. If the pope is wicked, and especially if he is foreknown to damnation, then he is a devil like Judas the apostle, a thief and a son of perdition and is not the head of the holy church militant since he is not even a member of it.
21. The grace of predestination is the bond whereby the body of the church and each of its members is indissolubly joined with the head.
22. The pope or a prelate who is wicked and foreknown to damnation is a pastor only in an equivocal sense, and truly is a thief and a robber.
23. The pope ought not to be called "most holy" even by reason of his office, for otherwise even a king ought to be called "most holy" by reason of his office and executioners and heralds ought to be called "holy", indeed even the devil would be called "holy" since he is an official of God.
24. If a pope lives contrary to Christ, even if he has risen through a right and legitimate election according to the established human constitution, he would have risen by a way other than through Christ, even granted that he entered upon office by an election that had been made principally by God. For, Judas Iscariot was rightly and legitimately elected to be an apostle by Jesus Christ who is God, yet he climbed into the sheepfold by another way.
25. The condemnation of the forty-five articles of John Wyclif, decreed by the doctors, is irrational and unjust and badly done and the reason alleged by them is feigned, namely that none of them is catholic but each one is either heretical or erroneous or scandalous.

26. The viva voce agreement upon some person, made according to human custom by the electors or by the greater part of them, does not mean by itself that the person has been legitimately elected or that by this very fact he is the true and manifest successor or vicar of the apostle Peter or of another apostle in an ecclesiastical office. For, it is to the works of the one elected that we should look irrespective of whether the manner of the election was good or bad. For, the more plentifully a person acts meritoriously towards building up the church, the more copiously does he thereby have power from God for this.
27. There is not the least proof that there must be one head ruling the church in spiritual matters who always lives with the church militant.
28. Christ would govern his church better by his true disciples scattered throughout the world, without these monstrous heads.
29. The apostles and faithful priests of the Lord strenuously governed the church in matters necessary for salvation before the office of pope was introduced, and they would continue to do this until the day of judgment if--which is very possible--there is no pope.
30. Nobody is a civil lord, a prelate or a bishop while he is in mortal sin.