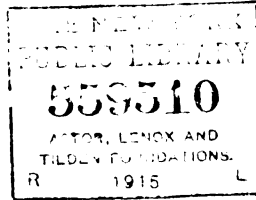


Papers
of the
American
Society of Church History
Second Series
Volume IV.

Reports and Papers of the Annual Meetings of the Society Held in
New York City Dec. 31, 1912, and
Dec. 30, 1913, Respectively

Edited by
William Walker Rockwell
Secretary

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press
1914



COPYRIGHT, 1914
BY
WILLIAM WALKER ROCKWELL

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

John Huss's Treatise on the Church

By

David Schley Schaff

JOHN HUSS'S TREATISE ON THE CHURCH

BY DAVID SCHLEY SCHAFF, PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY
IN THE WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, PITTSBURGH

THE approach of the 500th anniversary of John Huss's death and the interest taken at the present time in questions of ecclesiology have suggested the subject of this paper. The "Treatise on the Church," *De ecclesia*, was Huss's chief writing¹ and from it were drawn the charges for which he died at the stake, July 6, 1415.

The treatise as it appears in the Nürnberg-Frankfurt edition fills seventy-five folio pages which, if put into English, would demand four hundred pages of the *Papers* of this Society. It was prepared by Huss in the year 1413 as a defense of himself against the charges of heresy and ecclesiastical insubordination. He was at the time in semi-voluntary exile,—with the Council of Constance soon to convene. The contentions in the University of Prag over Wyclif's writings and Huss's preaching in the Bethlehem Chapel had brought upon him citation to Rome and excommunication, and the imposition of the interdict upon the city of Prag. The *De ecclesia* called forth attacks from his two former friends Stephen Paletz and Stanislaus of Znaim. To these he wrote replies, reaffirming the positions taken in the *De ecclesia* which, in English translation, would fill more than two hundred pages of this Society's publications.

¹ Loserth, *Wiclif and Hus*, p. 182, says: "Of all Hus' writings this has always been deemed the most important. Friends and foes alike have always regarded it with respect." I adopt the spelling *Huss* as more congenial to the English reader's eye. Loserth in the article "Huss" in the last edition of Herzog changes to this form, and Karl Müller also adopts it in his *Kirchen-geschichte*.

In this paper I propose to give an epitome of the contents of this treatise, summarize its leading tenets, and inquire how far, during the Middle Ages and especially during the fourteenth century, the way had been prepared for Huss's views.

I. The Contents.

Chap. I.—The Holy Catholic—that is, the Universal—Church is the totality of all the predestinate—*omnium predestinatorum universitas*—of the present, the past, and the future, or the number of the predestinate—*numerus predestinatorum*. The Greek word church means congregation, as when Christ said, Matthew xxv., 32, that all peoples should be congregated before him at the last day—*congregabuntur*. The sheep and the goats will then be assembled, each in a congregation by themselves. In the same manner, the church of the righteous is one thing and the church of the reprobate another. The church of the righteous is either the Holy Catholic Church or a particular church—*ecclesia particularis*.¹

Where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name and with Christ as the head, there is the church. Such was the church at Corinth to which Paul wrote. All the righteous living under the rule of Christ in the diocese of Prag, and more especially the predestinate, are the holy church of Prag.

The church is one—*unica*—as is the dove of the Canticles (vi., 9) and the strong woman of Proverbs (xxxii., 10). She has praised God from the beginning and will continue to praise Him to the end. She is the "Holy Church throughout all the world" which "doth acknowledge" Him, of the *Te Deum* of Augustine-Ambrose. She is to be discerned by faith and by faith to be honored as mother. The faithful should honor her not as God but as the house or dwelling-place

¹ This distinction was made in the Protestant confessions as in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, "Every particular or national church hath authority," etc., Article XXXIV.

of God, 1 Cor. xi., 22 *sqq.* She is the bride of Christ, incorrupt and chaste. She is his mystical body. Basing himself upon quotations from Scripture such as these and upon statements of Cyprian, Augustine, Gregory, and Bernard, Huss closes the first chapter with his most elaborate definition of the Holy Catholic Church as "the number of all the predestinate and the mystical body of Christ whose head he is and the bride whom, of his great love, he redeemed with his own blood."

Chap. II.—The church is divided into three parts: militant, dormant in purgatory, and triumphant. The first two classes are on their way to the heavenly fatherland, the last has reached it and is resting in bliss. These three are one in the unity of predestination unto ultimate bliss and in the present time, in the unity of faith, Christian graces and love.

Chap. III.—All Christians are not of the Holy Catholic Church. It is one thing to be *in* the church and another thing to be *of* the church—*aliud est de ecclesia aliud in ecclesia*. There are elements in the body which are not of the body: phlegm, spittle, *stercus, apostema vel urina*. The antichrists whom John spoke of (1 John ii., 19) as having left the church were never of it. The reprobate—the *presciti*—are in the church but not of it; and no human election nor any locality can constitute them of the church. Like Judas, many may be appointed to present righteousness and even to be bishops—the name bishop being a word for an office—and yet not be partakers of eternal life.

Those who are predestinate cannot fall away. And there are some who do not come to present grace, who nevertheless are predestinate and of the church, for Christ said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, and these I must bring."

Chap. IV.—The Universal Church has but one head and always has had but one head, Christ, and from him it cannot fall away. Augustine, Gregory, and Thomas Aquinas speak of the church as a threshing-floor, on which chaff and

wheat are mixed, as a net which contains fishes of different sorts, and as a field sowed with wheat and tares. In doing this, they speak in an ambiguous fashion and have in mind the popular mode of talking,—*vocationem vulgarem et reputationem ecclesie militantis*. Many are called sons of God who are not of the Holy Catholic Church, for they are not predestinate, even as they were not true disciples who ceased to walk with Christ.

Chap. V.—As for knowing the predestinate, they cannot be known without revelation. Nominally and to all appearance, Judas was of the church, but he was not so by predestination unto glory. Huss repeats that we know our mother, the church, by faith even as we know Christ by faith. Faith is defined as the principle which is opposed to sight, Heb. xi.

Chaps. VI, VII. The question is now discussed whether the pope and the cardinals are the church and also the question whether these dignitaries are invariably of the church. Huss replies:

The pope and the cardinals are a part of the church but not the church.¹ The pope cannot be the head, for Christ is the head; and the cardinals cannot be the body, for the predestinate are the body. Boniface VIII's encyclical, *Unam sanctam*, is right in pronouncing the Holy Catholic Church to be one, but wrong in drawing the conclusion that Christ, in committing the sheep to Peter and his cure, committed all the sheep to him and that this fold is the Roman Church. The Holy Catholic Church is what Boniface had in mind when he affirmed that it is "altogether necessary to salvation to be subject to the Roman pontiff."

To show that this tremendous conclusion is false, Huss proceeds to an elaborate exposition of Matthew xvi., 18, and John xxi., 15 *sqq.*, passages which, it will be remembered, are emblazoned on the base of the dome of St. Peter's.

¹ A popular view in the later Middle Ages. So Wyclif: *Communitas intelligit per Romanam ecclesiam papam et cardinales, quibus est necessarium omnibus aliis obedire* (*De ecclesia*, p. 92).

The church referred to in Matthew xvi., 18, is the company of the saints—*convocatio predestinatorum*,—as is evident from Christ's statement that the "gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It is not the mixed company prefigured in the threshing-floor.

The rock on which the church is built is Christ. He is the foundation. Petra—the Rock—said to Petro, "I say unto thee that thou art Peter, that is the confessor of the true Rock, which is Christ, and on this Petra whom thou hast confessed—that is upon me—I will through strong faith and perfecting grace build my church—*super hanc Petram quam confessus es, id est super me, ædificabo, etc.* The foundation *with* which the church is built on the rock is faith,—faith rooted in love. This faith believes the Scriptures, which do not err or lead to error. Popes do both, *falli et fallere possunt*. Particular churches are parts of the Holy Catholic Church. The Roman Church is the company of the faithful under the obedience of the Roman pontiff as the Antiochian is the company of the faithful under the bishop of Antioch.

Chaps. IX, XI.—That Christ is the Rock is plain from Scripture. Paul and Peter call him the foundation, the rock, the corner-stone. Likewise Christ presented himself as the foundation which in time of storm will not be moved, Luke vi., 48. Our love and faith are in Christ, not in Peter. To Christ and not to Peter did the prophets look forward. As for Peter's own claims, the Apostle did not dare to assert that he was the head of the Holy Catholic Church. He did not rule over all. He was not the bridegroom. Christ alone is the head of the body, imparting life and sensation to its members.

The power of the keys was not conferred upon Peter alone but directly upon all of the Apostles by Christ himself. He bade them all administer the communion, Luke xxii., 19, and he commanded them all to go into all the world, teaching and baptizing, Matthew xxviii., 19. In fact, in giving the keys to Peter, Christ gave them in Peter's person to the

whole militant church—in *persona Petri toti ecclesie militanti*. This authority belongs to the church and is to be exercised by the church.

The priest can absolve only that which God has before absolved. He may make a mistake or have unclean hands, absolving for money. In such cases, the absolution is a form of words and nothing more. The authority to absolve as well as the Scriptures may be abused.

Chaps. XII–XV.—The Roman pontiff is indeed the head of a holy particular church,—*cujuscunque particularis ecclesie sancte*—but only as far as he is among the predestinate. If this be not a right statement, what will the doctors say about Agnes (*alias* Joan) who was pope for two years and five months, about Liberius the Arian, Boniface, Clement V, and other heretical or wicked popes? Were they among the predestinate? And it is not necessary to determine which of the two lines, Roman or Avignonese, was the genuine line? The pope may be a successor of Judas and the cardinals in the line of Gehazi.

As the tree is known by its fruits, so popes and cardinals must show by good lives and deeds that they are successors of the Apostles. For three hundred years and more, the church was without cardinals and it could well get along without them now. Augustine was worth more than many popes and cardinals, and, if he and Jerome, Ambrose and Gregory agree on any point of doctrine, no pope would dare to gainsay them.

Constantine made the pope and, until Constantine's donation, the pope was an associate with other pontiffs—*consocius aliis pontificibus*. Christ is able to restore the church to its primitive state without pope and cardinals. If the pope is a faithful minister, predestinated to the glory of Christ, then he is Christ's vicar and successor of Peter. Otherwise he is the vicar of Judas, who sold Christ.

Chap. XVI.—Huss now proceeds to emphasize the Scriptures—or the law of Christ as he likes to call them—as

the norm of all righteous ecclesiastical acts and judgments. The pope is not the judge of all cases. He has no authority to impose corporal death. On the contrary, with regard to certain offenses, Christ bade us tell them to the church. He refused to pronounce civil sentence. Nor did he wish to condemn to bodily death—*nec voluit civiliter judicare nec morte corporis condemnare voluit*. He did not call down fire from heaven. He came to heal not to destroy. The furthest limit to which he went was to bid the church treat obstinate offenders as heathen and publicans. The sanguinary corollary of the doctors is that, if spiritual sentences be disobeyed, the offender should be turned over to the magistrate for punishment. The *sedes apostolica* is not a final tribunal. How can it be in view of such a case as John XI who was put to death in the very commission of adultery? God's is the final tribunal and He is to be obeyed rather than man.

Chaps. XVII, XVIII.—Commands which are aside from the express teachings of Scripture are to be disobeyed—*praeter expressam auctoritatem Scripturæ*. Yea, mandates of popes and cardinals, which subvert the commands of Christ, must be openly resisted, lest by consent one become partaker of crime. In matters civil, one owes obedience to the prince, in matters spiritual to God, but in matters ecclesiastical, which involve things indifferent, one owes no obedience which is contrary to the almighty will of God.

Having laid down these principles and fortified them from Scripture and by quotations from the Fathers, Huss proceeds, in the last five chapters of the treatise, to deal with his own case of disobedience to the ecclesiastical authorities of Prag and Rome.

Chaps. XIX–XXIII.—“I myself,” he says, “appealed from the pope to his successor and, as that did not avail, to the head of the church, Jesus Christ, who cannot err. I also resisted the bull on Indulgences sent out by John XXIII, for to rebel against an erring pope is to obey Christ, the Lord.”

If launched at all, excommunication should be launched

for mortal sins, not for matters indifferent, matters neither bad nor good in themselves. The pope would have no right to impose a prohibition of marriage upon a nobleman or rustic nor to command either to sell all his goods. Christ recommended the young man to sell his goods. He did not command him to do so. The burdens Christ laid upon men were light, and he excused his disciples from fasting. Modern prelates impose many fasts and other burdens, themselves not observing the least of them.

Preaching is a function to which the priest is called in ordination. A papal mandate, forbidding a priest to preach, is no more to be regarded than would be a command to cease giving alms.

As for the citation to Rome, he had disobeyed it, because his own diocese was the proper place for his case to be investigated, if at all. By his long absence in Rome the Word of God would have been kept from the people in Prag, and the way of citation is not the way prescribed by Christ as is shown by Matthew xviii., 15. For reasons such as these, he had committed himself to Christ and to his care, whether it was appointed for him to die a natural death or a death by violence.

As for the interdict, it, like excommunication, is used to terrorize and enslave the people. The pope has no right to order divine rites stopped in any locality simply because one man may be disobedient or bad. Christ went on distributing the Last Supper, even though Judas was present. "I was excommunicated," Huss said, "because I preached Christ and was seeking to turn the clergy to a life according to God's law. Then came the citation and the interdict."

Boniface VIII and Clement V make every rational creature, man or angel, subject to the Roman pontiff. By these edicts, if I were to get to heaven, that locality itself would be under the interdict but, thanks be to God, heaven is not subject to the pope's jurisdiction. People went to heaven when there were no popes. They went to heaven during the

more than two years' rule of Agnes and they have continued to go there in the interims following a pope's death and before the election of his successor. But in all times, Christ and he alone is the head of the church. The church is never *mortua* or *decapitata*. It is never dead or without a head. Christ lives perpetually. As for all the articles charged against him, no doctor, Huss declares, had proved a single one of them to be unscriptural or scandalous.

Such is an epitome of the contents of Huss's book.

II. The leading teachings set forth in the *De ecclesia* may be summarized as follows. I will state them in the light of Huss's replies to Paletz and Stanislaus and his trial in June, 1415, before d'Ailli and the commission of the Council of Constance.

I. The Holy Catholic Church is made up of the elect. It is a concession to popular mode of speech and thought when we apply the term "church" without discrimination to all calling themselves Christians. Judas Iscariot was *in* the church but not *of* the church. Huss, on trial before d'Ailli, insisted that the church was called only by concession the Lord's threshing-floor, a mixed body of the elect and reprobate.¹ In his sermons, Huss was accustomed to call the church the body of the elect.²

He nowhere applies to the church the terms "visible" and "invisible" though, in fact, he asserts what these terms are intended to convey.³

The church is there where two or three are gathered together with Christ as the head. This statement he elaborates in his reply to Paletz. If the faithful in India, Greece, or Spain, or any other province of the world are gathered together in Christ's name, they are an integral part of the church militant. And these parts, being united

¹ Palacky, *Documenta Mag. J. Hus*, p. 288.

² *Sermones de sanctis*, p. 242, *totus numerus predestinatorum*.

³ Schwane, *Dogmengeschichte der mittleren Zeit*, p. 510, says: "Huss rejected the definition that the church is a visible community of believers in Christ."

in faith, hope, and charity, are one in Christ, even though there should be three or four popes contending for the papacy.¹

2. The Holy Catholic Church has only one head, Christ. It is of pride to claim the title "universal pontiff" and of more pride to claim the fullness of universal power. The pope's authority is partial and particular, *partialis et particularis*.²

In the exposition of Matthew xvi., 18, Huss is strictly evangelical in method, interpreting Scripture by Scripture. Christ is the Rock. Peter is content to call himself a fellow elder, 1 Peter v., 1. In this interpretation he remained steadfast at his hearing before d'Ailli.³

3. The authority of the keys was shared equally by the thirteen Apostles. Paul received his apostleship not from man. Thomas went to India not by Peter's appointment. James presided at the Jerusalem conclave. John was sent to Samaria equally with Peter.⁴ Christ called upon Peter to pasture the sheep but only a portion of the sheep, those in Antioch and Rome. All the sheep and all the nations he committed to all of the Apostles. All bishops and priests who observe the law of the Gospel are their successors, "to pasture with the word of the Gospel." The thirteen Apostles were thirteen prelates—*principes*—invested with equal authority over all the earth. They taught and pastured, and ordained bishops and presbyters without recourse to Peter.⁵

Not only so. Peter, in receiving the keys, received them for the church. The power of binding and loosing inheres in the church, for Christ said: "Go tell it to the church." Agnes was the example to whom Huss returned again and again. "Where were the keys under Agnes?" he exclaims. In his reply to Stanislaus he emphasized the assertion that the power of the keys is with the whole militant church of Christ.⁶

¹ Huss, *Opera* i., 325 sq.

² Reply to Stanislaus, Huss, *Opera* i., 345, etc.

³ Palacky, p. 289.

⁴ Huss, *Opera* i., 326, 342, 344.

⁵ Huss, *Opera* i., 353, 356, etc.

⁶ Huss, *Opera* i., 352.

4. The pope himself may be a reprobate and in this case is not a member of the Holy Catholic Church. He is neither infallible nor impeccable. Some of the popes, though elected legitimately by the human rite, were not of Christ's election.¹ Lists of bad or heretical popes are given who could not have held the keys. As well might Judas himself have claimed this power and the title *sanctissimus* as they. The Donation of Constantine created the papacy and spends its poison to this day. This statement Huss, on his trial, explained to mean that the pope received from Constantine external pomp and temporal good.² His spiritual function came from Christ. All these positions Huss reaffirmed again and again and they were charged against him on his trial. Pope and priests are to be approved by their lives.³

5. The fifth main point in Huss's contention was that the Scriptures are the supreme rule of conduct and the norm which the priest is obligated to follow above every mandate of pope or prelate. The priest who preaches the true Gospel must disobey a prelatical mandate to desist from preaching, lest he incur damnation.⁴ The *De ecclesia* is full of quotations from the Scriptures, as are his replies to Paletz and Stanislaus. On his trial he constantly protested that this and that sentence, charged against him, was taken from the Scriptures. In his reply to Paletz, he declared, that he hoped at the bar of Christ to be found not to have denied a single iota of them.⁵ To the charge that he followed Wyclif, Huss replied that he accepted Wyclif's statements not because they were made by Wyclif, but because they were drawn from the Scriptures.⁶

6. To these fundamental positions one more contention should be added, which, though not of equal importance,

¹ Reply to Paletz Huss, *Opera* i., 324.

² Palacky, p. 291.

³ *Opera* i., 282, 322 sq.

⁴ Palacky, p. 297.

⁵ *Opera* i., 325. In the Cathedral of Constance, Huss insisted upon proof from Scripture and declared there was no appeal so safe as the appeal to Jesus Christ. Palacky, pp. 293, 319.

⁶ Reply to Paletz, *Opera* i., 330.

553510

bears upon the theory and practice of the mediæval church. The *De ecclesia* positively denies the right of the church to demand the death penalty as a punishment for heresy. It is true that, in the presence of d'Ailli and the conciliar commission, he modified this statement, declaring that the suspected heretic should be labored with and instructed, and only then, if necessary, punished corporally. The statement of the *De ecclesia*, even as thus modified, started a great tumult among the judges. And, when Huss went on to say that the priest and scribes who delivered Christ to Pilate had the greater sin, the tumult was repeated.¹

In general, it may be said that Huss's treatise, if pressed, would necessarily lead to the assertion of the principle of the full rights of the individual conscience, just as does the expression of the Westminster divines, "God is alone Lord of the conscience," though these divines were unconscious of its full application. Huss appealed from all human tribunals and interpretations directly to the law of Christ and to Christ himself. Here belongs the statement he made in his Reply to Stanislaus, that not the pope but the Holy Spirit is the teacher of the church and its safest refuge, *refugium securissimum ecclesiæ sanctæ*.²

III. How far had the way been prepared for Huss and his assertions? The fourteenth century was a fertile seed plot for the free discussion of the subject of the church. This discussion was precipitated by Boniface's bull *Unam sanctam*, and more especially its most ominous clause that it is "wholly necessary to salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman pontiff," *subesse Romano pontifici omni humanæ creaturæ . . . omnino est de necessitate salutis*.

The Schoolmen, up to that date, 1302, gave scant or no attention at all to the definition of the church. Leaning upon

¹ Palacky, p. 294. Gerson also made the charge against Huss that he denied the church's right to demand the infliction of the death penalty upon heretics: Palacky, 185 sq.

² Huss, *Opera* p. 354 sq.

Augustine they took the constitution of the church for granted, though Augustine's conception was nowhere clearly comprised in a single statement.¹ The Schoolman who came nearest to entering upon a discussion was Hugo of St. Victor. He calls the Holy Catholic Church the body of Christ, vivified by one spirit, united by one faith, and sanctified. What is the church therefore but the totality of the faithful—the totality of Christians.² As the earthly authority, he goes on, is exercised by a king, so spiritual authority is exercised by the supreme pontiff. Peter the Lombard nowhere takes up the definition, and Thomas Aquinas, with whom begins the special treatment of the papacy in systems of theology, also practically ignores it except as he devoted himself to the pope's absolute supremacy.

The Fourth Lateran Council had defined the church as the one universal church of the faithful, outside of which no one can at all be saved—*una vero est fidelium universalis ecclesia extra quam nullus omnino salvatur*. This definition was narrowed to the Roman Church in the profession demanded of the Waldenses, namely "we believe with the heart and confess that the one church is not of the heretics but the Holy Roman Catholic Church, outside of which no one can be saved."³

This statement and the theory of Innocent III, claiming for the pope fullness of power—*potestatis plenitudo*—received the great weight of Thomas Aquinas' assent. In his *Rule of Princes and Errors of the Greeks*, the angelic doctor not only declared that obedience was due to the Roman Church as to the Lord Jesus himself,—*cui obediendum est tanquam Domino Deo, Jesu*⁴; but he used the very words that Boniface afterwards employed: "Subjection to the Roman Pontiff is of necessity to salvation," *Romano pontifici est de necessitate salutis*.

¹ See Loofs, *Dogmengeschichte*, 4th ed., 1906, p. 370.

² *De sacramentis*, i., 2.

³ Schwane, *Dogmengeschichte*, p. 504.

⁴ Reusch, p. 9, and Mirbt, *Quellen*, 3d edition, p. 157.

Boniface's audacious deliverance, therefore, not only breathed the proud hierarchical spirit of Innocent III but had behind it the very words of the great pope and of the great doctor, Thomas. Had it not been for his personality, Boniface's deliverance might have been relegated to the papal archives without making much stir. But with the thirteenth century, the age of Innocent and Gregory IX was passing away. The times of Boniface were such that, though Louis the Fair was by no means so notable an antagonist of the temporal claims of the papacy as Frederick II had been, his protest against papal absolutism gathered the French nation around him.¹ In fact, Boniface's bull proved to be a bomb in the century following its issuance. It would not be easy to point to a document which aroused so violent a disturbance. A keen body of pamphleteers, such as the church had not witnessed before, arose within its pale, attacking the citadel of the mediæval papacy and subjecting anew the constitution of the church to scrutiny and definition—for the first time since Augustine had controversy with the Donatists.² The expatriation of the papacy to French soil, soon after Boniface's death, and the papal schism, with which the fourteenth century closed, forced the mind of Christendom to discuss the question of church authority. Boniface's bull was the text as well as the original provocation of this discussion, which lasted more than a century.

In the early half of the fourteenth century, the temporal claims of the pope were attacked by Dante, John of Paris, and Peter Dubois and others who denied Constantine's right to confer secular authority upon the earthly head of the church. The second group of pamphleteers, of whom Ockam and Marsiglius of Padua were the leaders, went further and

¹ Schaff, *Church History*, v., Part 1, pp. 674, 777.

² See Riezler, *Die literarischen Widersacher der Päpste zur Zeit Ludwig des Baiers*. Finke, *Aus den Tagen Bonifaz VIII*. Haller, *Papstthum und Kirchenreform*. Scholz, *Die Publizistik zur Zeit Philipps des Schönen und Bonifaz VIII*.

attacked the claim of supreme spiritual supremacy made by the Roman pontiff.¹ As the Frenchmen among these pamphleteers were stirred with sympathy for Louis the Fair, so Ockam and Marsiglius were stirred by the decision of John XXII against the Spiritual Franciscans and by John's fulminations and the atrocious bulls of his successor pronounced against Lewis the Bavarian. The government of the church, so Ockam affirmed, Christ left to the community of the faithful. He denied that Christ had appointed a primacy in Rome. The church is the community of the faithful, comprehending clerics and laymen — *congregatio fidelium quæ clericos et laicos comprehendit*. It may be reduced to one person and that a woman, as was the case with Mary, who remained true when all the disciples fled. The church cannot err, but the pope may err and has erred. He is not essential to the church, but is of human appointment, *ex ordinatione humana*.²

Marsiglius, who went much further than Ockam or any of his predecessors in assailing the then order of things, was anathematized by John XXII for asserting that Peter was not the head of the church, that the church may depose popes, that the distinction between bishops and priests is unscriptural, and that the church has no authority to coerce by physical measures.

These discussions of the early half of the fourteenth century were followed by the discussions which ultimately led to the calling of the Council of Constance. They were opened by Konrad of Gelnhausen and Henry of Langenstein and were participated in by the University of Paris and by Wyclif. The Englishman went much further than any of his contemporaries in displaying the doctrinal and ritual errors of the church and, in this, was nearest to the Italian, Marsiglius. Wyclif was a doctrinal reformer, indeed.

¹ See Schaff, *Church History*, v., Part 2.

² See David E. Culley, *Konrad von Gelnhausen, seine Lehre, seine Werke und seine Quellen*. Halle, 1913, p. 84 sqq.

In the interest of healing the papal schism by the aid of a general council, Konrad of Gelnhausen adopted Ockam's definition of the church, adding, however, Bernard's clause, "in the unity of the sacraments." He followed Ockam in asserting that outside the Roman Church, which is a particular church, there may be salvation.¹ The pope and the cardinals, whom he affirmed "many" called the church, may err and commit mortal sin. To the body of the faithful belongs spiritual authority. It has the right even to depose popes.

These views of Peter Dubois, Ockam, Marsiglius of Padua, Konrad of Gelnhausen, and other writers, were for thinking Europe a matter of general knowledge in the fourteenth century. Huss was heir to these views though he does not quote these writers by name. The denial of the claim made in the last clause of Boniface's bull was a part of this heritage. Savonarola partook of these views, in part at least. He appealed from Alexander VI to a general council and, in his dying moments, when the Bishop of Verona declared him separate from the church militant and triumphant, the Florentine monk replied: "Not from the church triumphant."

There was one man who stood behind Huss in the shadow and whose writings were to Huss as daily bread—John Wyclif. Wyclif he boldly avows as his teacher and he quotes entire paragraphs from Wyclif's writings with little modification. For, in Bohemia, the Englishman was as the fifth evangelist. Huss's views on the church are Wyclif's views. His Scriptural proofs are largely Wyclif's proofs. His restriction of the authority of the Roman pontiff, his definition of absolution, his interpretation of Christ as the rock, his assertion of the supreme authority of the law of Christ, his denial of validity to acts of pope or priest, living in mortal sin—these are all found in Wyclif. For Wyclif's views Huss went to the stake.

¹ Haller, p. 87. Culley, pp. 60, 86.

Loserth's contention that Huss drew directly from the letter of Wyclif's *De ecclesia* is easily proved.¹ This, however, is also to be said in defense of assigning to Huss's work a high place in the history of ecclesiological definition and church reformation.

1. Huss absorbed Wyclif's spirit. He was no formal imitator. He was no plagiarist, seeking in the garments of another to secure for himself position or fame. His soul burned with passion for the truths Wyclif had asserted. He was ready to die for his convictions and he did die for them.

2. Huss's treatise seems to me to be upon the whole the more consequential of the two. Both men were under grave charges, but Huss writes, having, as it were, constantly in his eye, the definite fulminations against him. His treatment proceeds by gradual steps and culminates in the justification of himself against the ecclesiastical sentences.

3. Huss is much less severe in his judgment upon individuals and always more moderate in his language than Wyclif. Wyclif uses a sharp blade. The Bohemian preacher carries to his writing desk the homiletic instinct of the preacher addressing a popular audience. He never applies to a pope the epithet which Wyclif applies to Gregory XI—*horrendus diabolus*.² He never calls the pope "the vicar of the fiend," although he does illustrate the maladministration of his office by that of Judas. He nowhere directly denies the authority of accredited church teachers as Wyclif denies the authority of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura.³ In a word, Huss's work is that of a man who is thoroughly convinced of his positions, but lacking the polemical sharpness

¹ In his *Wyclif and Hus* and his edition of Wyclif's *Tractatus de ecclesia*, Introduction. Since the discovery of Huss's *Super IV libros Sententiarum*, a larger measure of originality has been again claimed for the Bohemian.

² Wyclif, *De ecclesia*, p. 366.

³ Wyclif, p. 507.

of his great English forerunner as well as his scholastic subtlety.¹

In conclusion, then, we may say that Huss's *De ecclesia* does not occupy a place of foremost importance in the history of ecclesiology by the originality of its teachings. It has, however, a right to a place in the forefront of writings on the church, from the fact that it proceeded from a man popular with his people, that its positions were taken up at the great assembly at Constance and that its author, because of them, suffered the death penalty, a death penalty which, in the history of religious progress and humane opinion, stands for as much as any martyrdom, except that of Calvary, and probably for more than any except that one.

Huss's opinions on the church drew forth the condemning vote of those two most enlightened men, d'Ailli and John Gerson. His writings were known to Luther. As a student at Erfurt, Luther read in them and he wondered how it was that their author had been burnt. At Leipzig, at great personal hazard, he took Huss's part against the Council of Constance and in later years he wrote Prefaces to Huss's Works. In one of these he declared that, if "John Huss is to be held as a heretic, then there is hardly a single person upon whom the sun has looked down who can honestly be called a Christian." Huss directly influenced the Reformation; Wyclif not at all, except as he spoke through writings to the soul of the Bohemian Reformer. It is the high merit of Huss's memory that through his *De ecclesia* and his treatment at Constance, the question of the church was kept prominently before Europe. At the close of the fifteenth century, Wessel exclaimed: "The church cannot err, but what is the church? It is the communion of the saints to which all true

¹ Wyclif speaks of the *monstrousa superbia ecclesie occidentalis*, p. 362, and says that if the pope had inherent right to forgive sins and did not absolve all men, he would be most guilty, pp. 549, 551, 556. 561, etc. Baptism, he says, does not delete all original sin, and the defect of final perseverance is the most grave defect of sin, p. 467. The last clause of Boniface's bull is to be detested, p. 38. See also Schaff, *Church History*, V., Part 2, p. 322 sqq.

believers belong who are bound together by one faith, one love, one hope." The nature and prerogatives of the church constituted the fundamental question which was waiting for settlement. To Boniface's proud assertion which Ockam, Marsiglius of Padua, Wyclif, and Huss, in the light of Scripture and history, declared to be without foundation, it remained for the Reformation to give a staggering blow.

True to the mediæval conception, Leo X confirmed Boniface's *Unam sanctam*, and Prierias declared the church to be in essence the community of believers but virtually the Roman Church and the Roman pontiff—*ecclesia universalis essentialiter est convocatio credentium virtualiter ecclesia Romana et pontifex maximus*.¹ The Catholic polemic of the seventeenth century, with Bellarmine at its head, made the rule of the papacy of the essence of the definition of the church. In 1873, Pius IX declared to the Emperor William, that all the baptized are in some sense subject to the Roman pontiff.²

On the other hand, the Augsburg Confession,—first of Protestant confessions,—defined the church to be "the body of the saints in which the sacraments are rightly administered and Christ is truly preached." The Thirty-nine Articles virtually repeated this definition, except that they use the term "visible" of the church and substitute the more mediæval expression "faithful men" for saints. Again, will the distinction represented by these two classes of documents and writers be brought clearly to the attention of the Christian world by the fifth centenary of Huss's death in 1915. That anniversary will afford a memorable opportunity for the re-examination of the whole question of the authority of the church. Would that the Christian world in

¹ John of Turrecremata gave up one hundred of the chapters of his *Theology* to the discussion of the church.

² *Jeder welcher die Taufe empfangen hat, gehört in irgend einer Art und in irgend einer Weise . . . dem Papste an.* Mirbt, *Quellen*, p. 371.

108 John Huss's Treatise on the Church

giving it fresh study might do so with Huss's words as a motto: "Not by custom should we be bound but by the example of Christ and his truth"—*non debemus consuetudinem sequi, sed Christi exemplum et veritatem.*¹

¹ Huss's letter to Hawlik, written from Constance. See Palacky, *Documenta*, p. 128.