

Published by the Czechoslovak Hussite Church
Prague 6, Wuchterlova 5, edition Blahoslav
www.ccsch.cz

Translated from the original Czech text

“Seznámení s Mistrem Janem.

Pohledy na českého reformátora Jana Husa a úryvky z jeho spisů”

by Tomáš Butta.

English Translation: Dalibor Vik

Proofreading & Language Advisory: Samuel Huber

Graphics Editor: Radana Dedková

Printed by Astron Print

106 pages

1st Edition

Prague 2015

Tato publikace vychází za podpory Jihočeského kraje
v rámci projektu Jižní Čechy husitské 2015.

*The book has been published with financial aid
of the South Bohemian Region as a part of the project
Hussite South Bohemia 2015.*



Jihočeský kraj



Jižní Čechy

Husitské 2015

Copyright © CČSH 2014. All rights reserved.

Copyright © ThDr. Tomáš Butta, Th.D.

Translation © Mgr. Dalibor Vik

ISBN 978-80-7000-114-1

Contents:

I. Introduction.....	5
II. Hus's Life Journey and Struggle for the Truth of the Gospel	8
III. A University Scholar	30
University Speech (an excerpt, 1409)	32
IV. A Renowned Preacher	37
Sermon on the 13th Sunday after Trinity (an excerpt, 6 th September 1411)	39
V. A Teacher of the People	46
The Heart of Christian Teaching	49
VI. An Author of Christian Hymns.....	56
Jesus Christ, Our Generous Lord	60
VII. A Theologian and Reformer of the Church.....	62
The Church (an excerpt)	65
VIII. A Pastor and the Timeless Letter to the Bohemian Nation.....	71
To All the People of Bohemia	75
IX. A Messenger of Christ's Peace	79
Sermon On Peace (an excerpt)	83
X. Hus's Living Legacy in History and Today	89
List of Primary Resources (and their English names).....	100
List of Selected Secondary Literature (in Czech)	103
Translator's Note.....	105

List of Artworks:

Hus's house in Husinec	9
Procession of priests (a medieval portrayal)	9
Building of Carolinum (Charles University) in Prague	12
Chess players (from an illuminated manuscript)	12
Bethlehem Chapel in Prague	14
Castle ruin of Kozí Hrádek	14
Crucifixion of Christ	16
Castle ruin of Krakovec	17
Courtyard of Krakovec (drawing from 19 th century by J. Mařák)	17
Constance (wood engraving from Schedel's chronicle)	22
Hus at the stake (from Riechenthal's chronicle)	22
Chalice and host with "Veritas vincit" inscription	55
Hus's Hymn "Jesus Christ, Our Generous Lord" (from the Jistebnice Hymnal)	55
Hus preaching	70
Hus between the martyrs St. Lawrence and St. Stephen	99
Front cover: Hus's portrait according to the drawing in the Czech Brethren hymnal (end of the 16 th Century).	
Rear cover: detail of the utraquist altar from Chrudim with a painting of Master Jan Hus (around 1500).	

I. Introduction

Dear readers,

the year 2015 represents a jubilee of highest importance both for Christian churches, and for the general public in the Czech Republic. On 6th July we are celebrating the 600th anniversary of the martyr's death of Master John Hus, a renowned and highly-regarded religious thinker and one of the most prominent figures of the Bohemian Reformation, whose death at the stake at the Council of Constance in 1415 started a new chapter not only in Bohemian history, but also foreshadowed many events of the Protestant Reformation in Europe, which were still yet to come.

This jubilee is, first and foremost, a great opportunity for us to get further acquainted with Master John Hus, his life and his work. He was an epic and prophetic figure, but also a very human and very humble one. Thus it is not only a quest for historians, theologians, philosophers and other scholars to get to know him, but also for Christian churches which acknowledge his legacy, as well as for the widest public. In order to succeed in this quest, it is absolutely necessary – in my opinion – to let Hus speak for himself through his works. In fact, the main focus of this book, in which I have tried to gather and carefully select various excerpts from Hus's works, is to offer the readers a closer look into the thought, attitudes and uneasy decision-making processes of this Bohemian man of deep and honest faith.

We can divide this book into three parts. The first part contains texts which John Hus wrote about

himself and his life. Here you will mostly find interesting texts which can clarify for us his inner motivations: the background of his decision-making processes in the key situations of his dramatic life journey. From this perspective, Hus's letters to his friends, the faithful, colleagues and prominent figures of the political and church life offer an authentic and remarkable testimony of the time and represent the most reliable source to aid in our understanding. The second part consists of Hus's theological works. Hus is introduced here not only as an academic scholar and apt rhetorician, but also as a preacher of the Gospel, teacher of people, author of Christian hymns which are popular among Christian churches even today, critical theologian well-grounded in Scripture and Church tradition, and as a pastor caring for individuals and for the society. The third part contains several brief reflections on Hus's legacy on Christian thought throughout history and today. As Hus's thoughts and attitudes are deeply rooted in the Holy Scripture and Christian values, you will soon find out you cannot completely comprehend his works without at least elementary knowledge of the Scripture.

This book intends to provoke questions, dialogues, reflection, as well as an interest in a more profound study of Hus's legacy. To fulfil this task, the best option is always to consult directly the original writings, primary resources, and also both older and newer critical secondary literature. John Hus addresses the Czech nation in a timeless way, at the same time significantly transcending its region and history. Getting to

know Master John Hus means travelling to the distant past and finding there a human being who is close to us in a special way.

Tomáš Butta
Patriarch of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church

Translator's Note

Among the dozens of titles, both popular and scholarly, on the topic of John Hus and the Hussite Movement which are available not only in Czech but in many world languages, this book provides a good resource, both for those who already know something of Hus and those who are new to the topic. Tomáš Butta is able to speak to the reader clearly and simply without oversimplifying and to share his humble admiration for the reformer without descending into cheap lionization. Moreover, the author lets John Hus to speak for himself through short excerpts of his own works to give the reader a lively portrayal of the character and inner growth of the reformer. The Czech original of the book was published a year ago, in 2014, and now we have decided to make it available in English translation to the widest public in the churches in the world which acknowledge the legacy of John Hus and his undeniable contribution to the Protestant Reformation.

The English version is slightly different from the Czech original. (1) Some names, places, and terms which are usually well-known to a Czech native reader were provided with translator's explanatory notes in order to make it more accessible to the English-speaking reader. (2) The essential part of the book consists of direct quotations from Hus's works. Some of them were originally written in Latin and quite recently translated into contemporary Czech language. Some of them were originally written and quoted in Old

Bohemian language, which is just as different from the modern Czech as the English of Shakespeare is from modern English. In order to make it more accessible to the contemporary reader, the Old-Bohemian texts were translated into modern English. (3) Where needed, direct quotations are provided with brief translator's explanatory notes, which are always marked with [square brackets]. (4) Most of Hus's original texts in this book are probably here appearing English for the first time. However, older English translations are also sometimes used, namely: David Schaff's translation of John Hus's "The Church" (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915) and Herbert Workman's and Martin Pope's edition of collection of Hus's letters from 1408-1415 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904). Both books are available online through The Online Library of Liberty, run by the Liberty Fund, Inc. (5) Names of all works have been translated into English. The original Czech names can be found in the list of primary resources (last section of the book).

I would like to give thanks to my dearest friend Jiří for ceaseless care and support of my work. I would especially like to give thanks to Samuel Huber, proof-reader of this book, who has spent a lot of time over the texts. His work on the English translation was invaluable and his language advice is highly appreciated. Without his help this book would never have come out.

On Pentecost, 24th May 2015
Dalibor Vik

II. Hus's Life Journey and Struggle for the Truth of the Gospel

The majority of modern historians share the opinion that John Hus was born at Husinec, a small village in South Bohemia, around 1371. Today, visitors can find a village house there with its famous “Hus room”, a small room with an ancient open fire kitchen in the back, which can be entered through an old wooden staircase in the passageway of the house. According to tradition, the room is believed to be Hus's birthplace and where he spent his childhood. There is also a legend that he preached to his fellow countrymen from the window of the room when he returned to Husinec during his exile. In 17th century, there was reportedly such esteem for the reformer among the populace that people were carrying away wooden pieces from his house as relics or souvenirs. The house and the memorial room are evidence that John Hus grew up in a village family of simple and modest means. This agrees with the testimony of Hus's 15th-century biographer, the Utraquist priest Jiřík Heremita:

“Master John Hus, a faithful and holy man, was born in a village called Husinec, a poor child of poor parents and a simple child of simple parents... From his early childhood Hus was entrusted to the Lord by his mother – much like the prophet Samuel. When his mother was taking him to school in Prachatice [a nearby town], carrying a loaf of bread as a gift for the schoolteacher, she knelt down seven times on the

