

# Jan Hus

## Biography / Overview

Jan Hus (around 1372–1415) was a Czech preacher, thinker, and early reformer whose ideas helped shape the path toward the Protestant Reformation. He was born in the small town of Husinec (in today's Czech Republic) and studied at the University of Prague, where he later became a professor and eventually the rector.

Hus was deeply influenced by the writings of English reformer John Wycliffe and started speaking out against corruption in the Catholic Church—especially the sale of indulgences and the bad behavior of some priests. From Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, he preached fiery sermons calling for the Church to return to the values of the Bible and the simple, honest faith of early Christianity. He believed the Bible—not the Church hierarchy—should be the highest authority in matters of faith.

His outspoken views didn't go unnoticed. In 1415, he was summoned to the Council of Constance, where he was put on trial for heresy. Hus stood by what he believed and refused to take back his words. He was sentenced to death and burned at the stake. His execution lit the spark for the Hussite movement and a wave of religious conflict across Central Europe. To this day, Jan Hus is remembered as a courageous voice for truth and justice—and a national hero in Czech history.

## Sources:

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jan-Hus>

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hus/>

<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07584b.htm>

## Bibliography / Primary Sources

### Major Works:

*De Ecclesia* (On the Church): Hus's most influential theological text, arguing that Christ—not the pope—is the true head of the Church and condemning institutional corruption.

*Postilla*: A collection of sermons in Czech, aimed at educating and uplifting lay believers through Scripture.

*Super IV Sententiarum*: A scholastic commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, produced during Hus's academic career.

*Letters from Constance*: Written during his imprisonment, these letters express Hus's unwavering commitment to truth and spiritual integrity.

### Birth Date / Death Date

Born: Around 1372 CE, in Husinec, Bohemia (present-day Czech Republic)

Died: July 6, 1415 CE, in Constance (modern-day Germany); executed by burning

**Sources:**

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jan-Hus>

<https://husitstvi.cz>

**Notable / Best-Known For**

Spearheading the pre-Reformation movement in Bohemia

Translating and promoting the ideas of John Wycliffe in the Czech context

Authoring *De Ecclesia*, which challenged the papal structure and advocated for Christ's supremacy

Emphasizing Scripture as the foundation of Christian life and teaching

Becoming a martyr whose death fueled religious reform and national resistance in Bohemia

**Famous Quotes**

“Seek the truth, hear the truth, learn the truth, love the truth, speak the truth, hold the truth, and defend the truth unto death.”

“I would not, for a chapel full of gold, recede from the truth.”

“I am ready to die for the truth.”

**Major Works / Textual Contents**

De Ecclesia (On the Church):

Rejects papal infallibility and declares that Christ alone leads the true Church.

Describes the Church not as an institution but as the body of the faithful.

Denounces indulgences, simony, and other abuses of spiritual power.

Letters from Constance:

Composed during his captivity and trial.

Reveal Hus's inner strength, spiritual conviction, and refusal to renounce his beliefs.

Serve as powerful reflections on persecution, martyrdom, and justice.

**Influences / Intellectual Context**

Jan Hus was deeply shaped by John Wycliffe, whose ideas on Scripture and Church reform he expanded and contextualized for Bohemian society. At the time, the University of Prague was a dynamic center for theological debate, and Hus became one of its leading voices.

Hus's reformist zeal took shape amid growing anger over ecclesiastical corruption, the Western Schism, and papal political entanglements. His sermons and writings connected with both academics and the Czech populace, giving rise to a popular reform movement.

**Legacy and Modern Significance**

National Symbol: Hus is honored as a Czech national hero and a symbol of the fight for religious freedom and moral courage.

Reformation Influence: Hus's teachings inspired Martin Luther, who considered him a precursor to Protestant reform.

Moravian Roots: His followers founded the Unity of the Brethren, later known as the Moravian Church.

Spiritual Icon: Hus's principled stand has made him a lasting symbol of faith, conscience, and resistance against spiritual tyranny.

### **Modern Moments / Impact on 21st Century Society**

National Commemoration: July 6 is observed as Hus Day, a public holiday in the Czech Republic.

Ecumenical Recognition: Modern Protestant and Catholic scholars alike acknowledge Hus's role in church reform.

Human Rights Resonance: Hus's insistence on speaking truth to power echoes in today's struggles for justice and freedom of conscience.

Cultural Memory: Films, memorials, and educational institutions preserve his story for modern audiences.

Institutional Legacy: Churches, schools, and civic organizations bear his name in tribute to his enduring impact.

### **Suggested Reading and Resources**

#### **A. Secondary Literature**

Spinka, Matthew. *John Hus: A Biography*. Princeton University Press, 1968.

Fudge, Thomas A. *Jan Hus: Religious Reform and Social Revolution in Bohemia*. I.B. Tauris, 2010.

Kaminsky, Howard. *A History of the Hussite Revolution*. University of California Press, 1967.

#### **B. Archival and Online Resources**

*The Works of John Hus (Tracts and Letters)*, trans. David S. Schaff –

<https://archive.org/details/worksofjohnhuss00huss>

*Jan Hus Foundation* – <https://www.husitstvi.cz>

*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* – <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hus/>

*Czech National Museum – Jan Hus Collection* – <https://www.nm.cz/en>