

ARTICLE II.

JEROME OF PRAGUE AND THE FIVE HUNDREDTH
ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DEATH.

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Und ward och vertailt als ein kätzer . . . und ward och verbrennt an der statt, da der Huss verbrennet ward ("and he was also condemned as a heretic and burnt on the spot where Huss was burnt").¹ In this blunt way Ulrich of Richenthal, the racy chronicler of the Council of Constance, reports that Jerome followed Huss in being condemned as a heretic and burnt at the stake five hundred years ago, May 30, 1416. Where no notice was taken of John Huss on the semi-millenary of his death last year, July 6, 1415, this anniversary might be used as a fitting opportunity for presenting these two men, so closely bound together in life and in death. They were joined together by the friendship of youth, in the struggles for moral and religious reform which made Prague the cynosure of Europe for a generation, before the tribunal of the Council of Constance, and in a common death in the flames.

¹ The authorities for Jerome's career and death from which the facts of this article are drawn are as follows:—

1. Palacky, *Documenta Mag. J. Hus*, etc. (Prague, 1869), including two letters from Jerome's pen, letters bearing on him from the University of Prague, the bishop of Cracow, a canon of the bishop of Passau, etc., documents of the Council of Constance, and frequent notices in Huss' correspondence, pp. 90, 106, 117, 175, 282, 315, 336 ff., 416, 506, 512, 569, 582, 596, 624, 648, etc.

2. Official documents of Jerome's trial and sentence, including his recantation, the 107 charges made against him, the address of the bishop of Lodi, etc., in Van der Hardt, *Constantiensis concilii*

To-day a single boulder marks the spot where they died, bearing on one side the simple inscription, "Johannes Hus July 6, 1415," on the other the inscription, "Hieronymus of Prag, May 30, 1906." They agreed in advocating many of the opinions of John Wyclif, but Huss was much the superior in the native power of leadership and the impression he made upon his age. The emperor Sigismund was right in calling Huss the master and Jerome the disciple, at the same time assuring the Council that only a single day would be required to settle the case of Jerome and, his case being settled, it would then be easier to dispose of the principal, Huss. The Council's own judgment of the two men is shown clearly in its official documents. Here Huss and Jerome are frequently mentioned together and both are denominated the disciples of Wyclif. While Jerome is called a heretic, he is never called a heresiarch. Huss, on the other hand, and his English prede-

acta et decreta, etc. (Frankfort, 1698), vols. iii. pp. 54-64; iv. pp. 140-150, 497-514, 634-691, 748-772.

3. Ulrich von Richenthal, *Chronik d. Constanzer Concils*, edited by Buck (Tübingen, 1882).

4. A description in Bohemian of Jerome's trial and death, edited by Jaroslav Goll (Prague, 1878), found in Frelburg, Germany.

5. The description in Latin of an eyewitness in *Historia et Monumenta Hussii*, vol. ii. pp. 522-532. The account given by J. Foxe, *Book of Martyrs*, is for the most part a translation of this document.

6. Poggio Bracciolini's letter to Aretino on Jerome's address before the Council and his death, in *Van der Hardt*, vol. iii. pp. 64-71; Palacky, pp. 624-629; *Shepherd's Life of Poggio*; Whitcomb, *Lit. Source Book of the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 40-47, etc.

Recent accounts of Jerome are given in the *Lives of J. Huss* by Wratlslaw, pp. 376-408; Count Lützow, pp. 320-334; and Schaff (*Scribner's*, 1915), as well as in the Bohemian work *Mistr Jan Hus*, by Flajshans (Prague, 1904). An invective against the Wycliffite heretics in Bohemia is printed by Loserth in his *Wiclif and Hus*, pp. 348-353, in which a spiritual genealogy is given from Wyclif down to Jerome and Jessenicz.

cessor are joined together as "heresiarchs" or "archheretics." As for Huss' own feeling, he not only referred to Jerome in general terms of intimacy, but in two letters written within a few weeks of his death, June 10 and 27, 1415, he called Jerome now his "dear companion" (*socius carus*) and "dear brother" (*frater carus*).

In the proceedings of the Council of Constance, the trial and condemnation of the two Bohemians constituted more than an episode. The heresy of which Bohemia had become infamed gave to that land a singular notoriety throughout Western Christendom. Its eradication was one of the three chief acts that the most imposing of all assemblies ever held on European soil was expected to accomplish. The first, the healing of the papal schism, it accomplished by disposing of three popes and electing a fourth, — Martin V., 1417. The second, the inauguration of a program of church reform, discussed for more than half a century by the leading men and schools of Europe, proved too big a matter for it to grapple with. The third, the Bohemian heresy, was an issue in the minds of Sigismund and John XXIII. when they convened the Council, and of such leading churchmen as John Gerson, rector of the University of Paris.

So far as the kingdom and people of Bohemia go, Huss and Jerome are the only Bohemians whose names are extensively known throughout the world. The blind king John of Bohemia who fell at Crecy, Charles IV. whose munificence inaugurated the golden era of Bohemia's annals, and Comenius are well known to the special student, but not to the general reader. In their own land, Huss and Jerome are again coming to be honored as patriots, and July 6 is annually celebrated in honor of Huss by bonfires in the Catholic villages of southern Bohemia.

If we turn to Protestantism, these two men are found to have anticipated that movement at important points, and are properly called Reformers before the Reformation. In no sense did Luther draw from Huss as from an original spring, but, as I have shown in another place, Luther was forced by the memory of Huss' death to declare ecumenical councils fallible, and was afterward confirmed in his own doctrinal teachings by what he came to learn of Huss' work and writings.

In addition, it will not be forgotten that, in the annals of martyrdom for the sake of truth, these men have an immortal place. For what they regarded to be the truth they bore a horrible death with heroism. In his "Book of Martyrs" John Foxe, as we might expect, dwelt at length on their sufferings and steadfastness. But we have the unbiased testimony on this point of Æneas Sylvius, one of the leading men of letters of his day, who died as Pope Pius II. In his "History of Bohemia," he says: "By the decree of the fathers at Constance, sentence was pronounced upon those contumacious men, Huss and Jerome, that they should be burnt, men who spurned the teachings of the church. Both bore death with resolute and unwavering mind and hastened to the flames as though they had been invited to a feast, uttering no sound which could be interpreted as a sign of regret. When they began to burn, they sang a hymn which the flames and the crackling of the fire were scarcely able to interrupt. Of no one of the philosophers is it reported that he bore death with so brave a spirit as these men did the flames."

The sources of our knowledge of Huss are much more copious and varied than for his associate. Huss left many treatises, sermons, an elaborate work on theology, and a large correspondence. Nothing from Jerome's pen has sur-

vived but two letters. The contemporary documents, however, are ample to enable us to follow his career in its chief features.

Jerome was a humanist, with an Erasmian element in his veins. Huss was altogether a religious character, although, it is true, his literary work shows the influence of the new intellectual culture of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They were both erudite. Huss, whose studies were confined to Prague, rose to the highest position the University had in its power to confer, the rectorate, a distinction twice conferred upon him. Jerome studied not only in his own city, but in Paris, Cologne, Heidelberg, and Oxford, and in all but the last university was promoted to the degree of master of arts, a grade to which Huss did not attain. In the opinion of some of his contemporaries Jerome's literary attainments excelled his friend's. Richenthal reports that "learned people thought him much greater than Huss in the arts, yea, fourfold greater," and, describing the scene at the stake, says that "many learned people wept that Jerome had to die." Among the higher classes in Bohemia he had the distinction of being an eloquent man "who drew from the fresh springs of eloquence, a master in the seven arts, and an illustrious philosopher." This is the testimony borne by the 452 Bohemian noblemen in their letter to the Council of Constance while Jerome was in prison. On one occasion at least he stirred his audience as Huss did not. In their outward relations to the church they differed widely. Huss was a priest; Jerome a layman. The two men might be compared somewhat in the same way as Calvin and his coworker Farel. Huss was of the finer mold, deep in his convictions, sensitive in his feelings, a moving preacher and a popular leader by reason of the unclouded purity of his moral character fully

as much as by his clearness and warmth of utterance, and a skilled tractarian. Jerome was restless of disposition, somewhat given to moods, and adapted for prominence on spectacular occasions. He was a man of strong physical build, while Huss was delicate, as was also Calvin.

Jerome was well born, though not of noble birth. It must be considered strange that his family name is utterly unknown, blended as it is with the capital city of his country, Prague, while the greater of the two, the one without whose activity the history of that city cannot be thought of, is known by the name of the little village in which he was born, Husinecz. In 1398 Jerome was promoted to the grade of B.A. in the University of Prague. From that date till 1407 he seems to have led a roaming life, studying at the universities already mentioned and going, as it would seem, as far as Jerusalem in his journeyings. So far as we know, Huss never overstepped the boundaries of his native land until he went to Constance.

In Paris he came in contact with Gerson, one of the two or three leading churchmen of his age. They met again at Constance, when Gerson accused Jerome of harboring heretical views. In public disputation at Paris, so he said, Jerome had asserted that God could not annihilate anything. The Bohemian followed Wyclif in upholding realism. In France realism had been prohibited among public teachers.

In Oxford, where we find him at two different periods, Jerome was in the atmosphere created by Wyclif. Two years before Wyclif's death, a bridge had been laid between Bohemia and England, by the marriage of Anne of Bohemia and Richard II., over which courtiers of both countries and Bohemian scholars passed. This close connection was also shown in the rule whereby the bachelors at the University of Prague

might, in their readings, use the notes of Oxford masters as well as the notes of Parisian masters. In the English town, Jerome copied with his own hand two of Wyclif's treatises, the "Dialogus" and the "Trialogus," and he carried these and other Wycliffian writings with him back to Bohemia, where the English reformer came to be known as the "fifth evangelist."

In 1407 Jerome was again in Prague, and threw himself with all his native vehemence into the three struggles of which the Bethlehem Chapel, with Huss as its rector, was the center. He publicly advised the students to examine the writings of Wyclif, — writings which, in 1403, the University faculties had forbidden to be read. He stood at Huss' side in the fierce controversy which resulted in the change of the University's charter, by which the stipulation, giving the foreign "nations" three votes and the Bohemian "nation" only one, was exactly reversed. The change called forth the opposition not only of two thirds of the student body, but also of the German population of Prague, whose influence in the affairs of the city was out of all proportion to its size. The Bohemian king, Wenzel IV., who at one stage of the controversy set himself against the reformers, was afterwards won for the change.

During the next two years Jerome journeyed about in Austria and Poland, where we find him involved in one trouble after another.

In 1410 he was at Ofen, where he made an address before the king of Hungary, Sigismund, heir of the throne of Bohemia and later emperor. The speaker denounced the worldliness of the clergy with such heat that, on charges sent by Zbynek, Archbishop of Prague, he was put under arrest. Presumably out of deference to the deep feeling in the pris-

oner's favor in Prague and its university circles, he was released. Going on to Vienna, he aroused a great commotion at the University by his addresses, and was arrested by the bishop of Passau, to whose diocese Vienna at that time belonged. Given his liberty on the promise of not leaving the city without permission, he broke the promise and escaped to Moravia. Under date of September 12, 1410, he wrote back to Vienna, making light of his promise and treating his escape as a joke. His promise, he said, had been "extorted" from him by the bishop. He had eluded his enemies like a bird escaping from the net. He bantered his enemies to carry his case to Prague, or, if they preferred, before the Roman curia itself. Jerome's strong hold upon the University of Prague was proved by a letter which the entire faculty body addressed to the magistrates of Vienna complaining of the treatment Jerome had received and appealing to them to protect him against further insults. Light is thrown upon Jerome's conduct and the treatment he received in Vienna by an official document addressed by Andrew of Grillemperg, one of the bishop of Passau's canons, to the Archbishop of Prague. From this communication it seems that the Prague magister had attempted to propagate the errors of Wyclif "condemned by the Apostolic see" and to pervert "weak souls" (*fragilium corda*). Forgetful of his own soul's salvation, Jerome had sowed these errors in Heidelberg, Prague, and Hungary. Summoned before the bishop, he had denied in a "loud and self-sufficient voice" (*alta et libera voce*) the charge of heretical opinions. In view of his promise not to depart from the city, the bishop had gone so far as to offer to provide for Jerome's entertainment, which Jerome, however, declined on the ground that he had never been in need of financial assistance. Finding the prisoner gone, the bishop

had cited the fugitive to appear before him. But, inasmuch as the citation was unanswered, the prelate launched against him the major excommunication as being guilty of perjury, furtive flight, and as one seriously suspected of the Wyclifian heresy. The Archbishop of Prague was begged "by the bowels of the mercy of Jesus Christ" to have the sentence announced in all public places and Jerome treated as excommunicate till, perchance, he should receive the blessing of absolution.

It would be ungracious to call in question the pastoral zeal of the Vienna prelate and, on the other hand, we do not feel tempted to palliate Jerome's guilt in breaking his oath.

Excommunicate though he was, Jerome appeared openly in Prague and supported Huss in a third crisis, his opposition to the bulls of John XXIII. calling for support in the crusade that pontiff had proclaimed against Ladislaus of Naples and ordering the sale of indulgences in Prague and Bohemia. It was perhaps to this period Huss was referring when he praised the strenuous zeal which Jerome had shown in upholding the faith in Bohemia. Huss denied the right of the supreme pontiff to call upon Christian to take up arms against Christian, and also any inherent power in his office to absolve from sin. Jerome, as it appears from the charges brought on his trial, made addresses in Bethlehem Chapel, criticized the worship of images, and encouraged a layman in throwing mud on a statue in front of a church building and mutilating it. He also took a prominent part in the procession led by Wok of Waldstein in which the students paraded through the streets of the city following a wagon carrying one of their number dressed as a harlot and with bulls at his feet, which were afterwards burnt. At an assemblage of the students in the university hall where Huss and Jerome spoke,

Jerome's eloquence won the more applause and carried all before it.

Early in 1412 Huss left the city for his term of semi-voluntary exile, and it is probable Jerome did not remain long after him. We find him next in Poland, whither, so it was afterwards charged, he went with the purpose of making perverts of the Polish king and his brother. In a letter of excommunication issued by the bishop of Cracow April 2, 1413, the bishop stated that the first day of his arrival in Cracow Jerome wore a beard, but the next day, in presenting himself before the king and queen and Polish nobles, he appeared shaven and highly costumed in boots and red mantle. In Cracow Jerome also stirred up commotion at the University, such as had not been heard of in the memory of the living.

The great crisis was now come in the affairs of Huss when he started for Constance, October, 1414. Jerome, whether by word of mouth or letter, we do not know, was among those who counseled him not to expose himself to the justice or grace of the Council. As the months wore away, Jerome was unable to bear longer the uncertainty of his friend's position in this synodal city, and he himself appeared in Constance, April 4. This risk was run in the face of Huss' entreaty that neither he nor any of his other friends should venture to go to Constance.

His position in the city must have been very hazardous, for he spent but a single night within its walls. An indication that his departure was precipitate was, as Richenthal reports, that he left his sword behind him. Stopping at Ueberlingen, he addressed a petition to Sigismund and the Council asking for a safe-conduct, which should assure him freedom in going to Constance and in leaving the city. The emperor was mind-

ed to refuse the request altogether, but the deputies of the "nations" whom he called to his presence, decided to grant a "safe-conduct to enter the city, but nothing more" (*salvum conductum veniendi sed non recedendi*). On getting this reply, Jerome issued a poster, which was affixed to the doors of the cathedral and the residences occupied by the cardinals, to the effect that he was ready to stand trial and, if convicted of the heresies alleged against him, to suffer the penalty due. At the same time, he appealed for "safe and secure access," by which he meant exemption from arrest and imprisonment during the progress of his trial. Sigismund had gotten himself into trouble enough by the safe-conduct he had issued to Huss. But Jerome still had hope of him, and wrote that a Jew or a Saracen ought to be free to go, stay, depart, and speak as his will dictated — a liberty which the king's passport to Huss implied. The Council was soon to put itself on record that faith is not to be kept with a heretic, the principle which Ferdinand of Spain had clearly set forth in a letter to Sigismund, calling upon him to make quick work with Huss. Should his own wife turn heretic, the king went on, he himself would be the first to apply the fire. In Huss' mind there was no doubt of the fate awaiting Jerome. He expected him, as he wrote to John of Chlum, June 6, 1415, also to suffer death like himself.

Jerome's only safety was in getting back to his native land, and, after remaining in Ueberlingen five days, he hurried on the way thither. He had gotten as far as Hirschau when imprudent remarks led to his arrest. He was heard to call the Council "a school of the devil," "a synagogue of unrighteous folk." He was sent back to the duke palatine, John, at Sulzbach. In the meantime, April 17, the Council had issued a citation to Jerome, alleging that it was its busi-

ness to spy out the little foxes which spoil the vine of the Lord of Hosts. It offered him all safe-conduct from violence as might lie in its power and the "orthodox faith permitted."

A month later, May 23, the alleged heretic was led into the city, his hands manacled, a long chain held by a guard being fastened to the manacle. Taken to the refectory of the Franciscans, to whose convent-dungeon Huss was removed two weeks later, the prisoner was subjected to a preliminary examination. Many charges were made against him. Among the accusers were Gerson and teachers from Cologne and Heidelberg, all of whom had heard Jerome in public disputations. According to Gerson, Jerome at Paris had arrogated to himself the eloquence of an angel and put the University into commotion by his errors, especially by his treatment of universals and ideas. Jerome's reply was that what he had set forth he had set forth from a philosophical standpoint, "as a philosopher and master of that school." The professor from Cologne also alleged that the prisoner had propounded errors; but, when called upon to state them, remarked that none of them occurred to him at that moment, but that they would be forthcoming at the proper time. The third professor announced that at Heidelberg Jerome, in dilating upon the Trinity, had pictured a triangular shield and compared the three persons to water, ice, and snow. These interrogatories were interrupted from time to time by cries, "Burn him! Let him be burnt!" To these Jerome replied, "If you want my death, in God's name let it be so." "No," interjected the bishop of Salisbury, "no, Jerome; for it is written, I do not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he may live and be converted." The prisoner was then given over to the city police, but not removed from the refectory till evening. In the meantime Peter Mladenowicz, Huss'

faithful companion, whispered through the window, bidding Jerome be steadfast, not afraid to undergo death for the truth, which, as a free man, he had often preached well. In reply, Jerome is reported to have said, "Truly, brother, I do not fear death; and, as we have known how to speak many things about the truth in the past, so let us see to it that it now works its effect in deeds." Truth, through Wyclif's influence, had almost become a new word, and stood for finality in opposition to the dogma of the church. Peter was pushed aside by the guards. Another person, Vitus, John of Chlum's servant, attempted to speak to the prisoner, but was rushed off to the bishop of Riga, who berated him soundly for daring to have communication with a heretic.

Jerome was confined in the tower in St. Paul's Cemetery, his hands bound with chains to a pillar. For two days his fare was restricted to bread and water, when Peter Mladenowicz intervened, and furnished him with sufficient food. His strength, however, was greatly reduced during his confinement, which was made doubly bitter by the obscurity of the place. So far as we know, no communication passed between him and Huss during the seven weeks they were together in Constance. No doubt when Huss, early in July, was led through the city on his way to the stake, he had a glimmering hope he might get a sight of his friend, as Latimer and Ridley, passing Bocardo Jail, hoped to have a sight of Cranmer. Huss had written that he expected his friend would be strong to endure while his own strength might give way; but the very contrary turned out to be true. Moved by the fear of the torments of the flames, Jerome yielded to the arguments of members of the Council, and made abjuration. At a public session, September 11, he denied all heresy, especially that form of heresy that had been taught by Wy-

clif and Huss. When the official documents in Huss' case were placed under his eye, he declared he found to his surprise that Huss had held heretical opinions he had not associated with him. Huss and Wyclif, he went on, had been canonically condemned, and he himself followed the Council in repudiating them. Submitting himself unconditionally to the Council, he also promised to communicate to the king and queen of Bohemia, and noblemen, the substance of his recantation.

No public abjuration could have been more humiliating, no triumph of the Council in overcoming heresy apparently more complete. A letter, written to Laczek of Krawar and dated September 12, 1415, is still extant, and bears witness to Jerome's fulfillment of his promise. Huss, he wrote, was justly put to death for real heresy. This communication Count Lützow feels justified in pronouncing "a mean and Judas-like letter." We do not regard Jerome's recantation with the same severity, and are inclined to make allowance for human infirmity. The Council was an imposing body. Death deliberately imposed is a terrible ordeal, and death amid the agonies of burning is enough to make the strongest shrink. Many in the ancient church lapsed in time of persecution, and the Roman church received them again to its communion. Peter's denial did not prevent his being received to honor. Fear of the flames, as Jerome was soon to declare, induced him to recant. But the Council for the time being had its man, and, in order to intensify the impression the recantation might be expected to produce, had Jerome appear before it the second time, September 23, to repeat his abjuration and amplify it.

Now that Jerome had recanted, a party, headed by cardinals D'Ailly and Zabarella, argued for his release or at any

rate a relaxation of his imprisonment, but the plea was successfully opposed by Gerson, who a short time before had delivered an address before the Council on Confession and Recantation in matters of the faith. Whispers began to be heard that, after all, Jerome had recanted only with his lips: his heart was unchanged. Huss' inveterate prosecutors, Stephen Palecz and Michael de Causis, were active in circulating the report and, joined by Carmelite monks of Maria Schnee, Prague, presented to the Council a new list of charges. Again the prisoner was arraigned, and 107 charges brought against him,—among them that he had kept a picture of Wyclif hanging in his room, had carried Wyclif's books to Bohemia, and in Poland not only consorted with the Greeks and Ruthenians, but pronounced them "good Christians." Jerome denied any departure from the dogma of transubstantiation. But, to follow the old chronicler, the "budget of charges was a snare of death that the prisoner might not be able to escape." When the noon hour struck, the case was not yet through, and adjournment was taken to May 30.

At these two sessions Jerome was nobly true to his friend and to himself. His abjuration, so ran his address, was a lie which he had made out of fear of fiery death, and which grieved him more than any other offense of his life. He professed all the articles of the Creed. He went over in review his career in Prague, Paris, Cologne, Heidelberg, Hungary, Vienna, Poland, and Constance. He adduced the prophets and other innocent men who had been put to death for the truth's sake. He magnified Wyclif and Huss as holy men, and pronounced their condemnation a wicked act. Huss he had known from his youth, and he was no fornicator, nor winebibber, but chaste, sober, and a righteous preacher of the holy gospel. At the conclusion of his address, the bishop

of Lodi again, as in the case of Huss' trial, ascended the pulpit, choosing as his text Mark xvi. 14, "And he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart." Jerome, he said, was guilty of "a labyrinth of errors." Not Arius, not Sabellius, not Nestorius, nor any other heretic had been so defamed during his life for heresy as the prisoner. The ill-fame of heresy had spread through France, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Italy, England, and all Germany, as well as through Bohemia. "O kingdom of Bohemia," he exclaimed, "happy if that man had not been born [*O beatum regnum Bohemiæ si natus non fuisset homo ille*]! Would that thou hadst been put to torture that thou mightest have eructated all thy errors. That punishment would have opened thy eyes, eyes which guilt has closed. Thou hast said John Huss was not a fornicator. Oh! that thou hadst said he was not a heretic. Now, the Council, whose duty it is to prepare a people perfect for the Lord, will judge thee according to the principles of equity and righteousness." The prelate went so far as to lay down the principle that, in the holy cause of ridding the church of heretics, even the testimony of thieves and harlots was to be received.

Again Jerome addressed the synod, concluding with the memorable words, "You are condemning me wickedly and unjustly, and, as for me, I will leave a sting in your conscience after my death and a nail in your hearts, and I cite you all to appear and reply to me a hundred years hence in the presence of the most high and righteous Judge." It would seem that, in view of Luther's appearance just a century later, the note of time must have been inserted into the prisoner's address. However, the words have come down as the report of one who claimed to have heard with his own ears.

As in Huss' case, a paper cap painted over with demons

was given to the prisoner. Throwing away his master's cap, he put it on with his own hands. The ceremony of unrobing and degrading was unnecessary, for Jerome, it is distinctly said, was a laic. And the word "heresiarch" was wanting which was inscribed on Huss' cap. The sentence read that Jerome had subscribed with his own hand a formula of abjuration, and now had returned like a dog to his vomit which was poison. It declared him a heretic and turned him over to the secular power, to receive the penalty due an offense like his, at the same time interceding that the judge might mitigate his sentence this side of the death penalty. The saving formula was omitted in the case of Huss' sentence. It was little more than a formula. In cases of heresy the death penalty was made sure by the ecclesiastical decision. The civil authority was threatened by the church with all the spiritual punishments within its reach in case it hesitated to carry out the civil penalty, which was death. Sigismund was absent from the city, making the journey to Spain for the purpose of inducing Benedict XIII. to resign, and his representative, receiving the prisoner, ordered him taken to the place of execution.

His hands bound, Jerome was led out through the same portal through which Huss had been led; but, as Richenthal informs us, the number of the military and the throng accompanying him was not as great as in Huss' case. The reason given was the absence of many nobles with Sigismund. Nor was there any pile of burning books to arrest Jerome's attention as when Huss was led forth. As the procession passed on, he sang the Creed with a "loud and cheerful voice" (*alta voce . . . hilariter*), his eyes lifted to heaven, and then the Litany from beginning to end. The Creed seems to have been the Nicene symbol, beginning, "I believe in one

God the Father Almighty." As the procession passed through the gate looking towards Gottlieben, in whose tower Huss had been held for two months, Jerome sang, "Happy art thou, O Holy Virgin." Arrived at the spot where Huss had suffered, he greeted the stake and, bowing before it, engaged in prayer. His executioners, lifting him from his kneeling posture, stripped him of his garments, putting a cloth around his loins. Then binding him to the wood by an iron chain and ropes, they piled up the fagots to his chin, and threw Jerome's garments on the heap. According to Poggio Bracciolini, they were about to light the fire behind his back, when Jerome bade them apply it under his eye, for, so he said, he was not afraid to die. He sang the resurrection hymn of Prudentius, "Hail, holy day" (*salva festa dies*), and again the Nicene Creed. Then, addressing the bystanders in German, he declared that he fully accepted the venerable symbol, and that he was being put to death for having held John Huss to be a "good man and a true preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ."

As the flames were beginning to burn fiercely, he said in the Bohemian tongue, "O Lord and Father Almighty, have pity upon me, and be merciful to my sins, because thou knowest that I have loved thy truth sincerely." After his voice was suffocated, so a bystander reports, his lips still continued to move as though he were praying within himself. The flames were a full quarter of an hour in doing their work, much longer than in the case of the other confessor who had suffered on that spot ten months before. The reason given by Richenthal is that Jerome was a strong and well-built man. The chronicler was also particular to note that he had a heavy beard. When the body was reduced to ashes, the bedding the dead man had used in prison, his boots, and

other articles were also thrown into the fire, and what remained after the holocaust was taken off in carts and cast upon the waters of the Rhine.

Thus, to compare him with one who has a much more distinguished place in religious history, Jerome, like Cranmer, atoned for his temporary abjuration by heroic endurance at the last hour. Of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop Hooper, himself a martyr, had written to Bullinger that "he was too fearful of what might happen to him." So it was for a season that the fear of the agony of the stake unmanned the Bohemian confessor. It is going too far when Wratisslaw calls him the "most brilliant man and scholar of his day," appealing for this judgment to the sensation he had made at the universities. However, among the great company of the martyrs, Jerome certainly has a place. He died confessing Christ. He died for holding it true that John Huss was both a good man and a preacher of the gospel.

In pronouncing favorable judgment upon Jerome, we are not required to utter a curse upon the Council of Constance. John Foxe spoke for his own day when he called the martyr's judges "that barbarous council of popish murderers." The Council was acting upon the principle which, through the progress of many centuries, had been worked into the canon law, that the church is the last tribunal for a mortal man in this world, and that heresy as a cancer eats into the vitals of the Christian body and is to be cut out. In destroying it the heretic was to be put out of the world. This was the avowed theory of Innocent III. and the Twelfth Ecumenical Council, 1215, and Innocent and his successors put it into practice in the office of the Inquisition and in crusades against entire peoples. The principle was buttressed by the reasoning of the Schoolmen. Thomas Aquinas stated the

case without hesitancy when he pronounced a heretic worse than a coin-clipper. He deserves death for mutilating the faith and should be turned over to the civil authority for the execution due his crime. The Council would have denied itself in granting liberty and life to Huss and Jerome as well as the law fixed by centuries of argumentation and practice. It is true the councillors acted in defiance of the merciful spirit of Christ, as this age holds, but it acted according to statute law. A better day was long off in the future. For Luther seems to have disavowed the noble statement of his earliest period that heretics should be persuaded, not burnt. The Second Helvetic Confession prescribed the penalty of death for the violation of the first table of the law. And it is only the otherwise moral dignity and high aims of Calvin which keep us from turning from him as an unfeeling inquisitor. Both he and Beza justified in tracts the putting to death of heretics. Thomas Cartwright declared that he was on the side of the Holy Ghost in taking the same position.

In tracing the struggle which has led up to our modern assertion of the rights of free speech and liberty of conscience, perhaps no two personalities will be found who suffered more to advance it than the two Bohemian confessors. The positions Huss took in his treatise on the Church lead directly on to the noble words of the Westminster Confession, — words, however, which its makers did not adequately understand, — “God alone is Lord of the conscience.” “Not custom ought we to follow, but Christ’s example and the truth,” said Huss; and the words with which he resisted the attempts to bring him to a recantation might well be taken as the watchword of his life, “I cannot recant, lest I offend against God and my conscience.” Galileo’s example furnishes a warning to all who waver when truth is at stake; Huss

and Jerome's, encouragement to all who would be steadfast. Six months after Jerome's death, the Council wrote to Sigismund complaining that the pictures of those "true followers of Belial and disciples of John Wyclif, John Huss and Jerome, who had been condemned by the holy synod, were painted in the temples of God and worshiped as citizens of heaven and of the household of God,"—so deep was the impression they made upon their own people by their life, preaching, and death. Their names, also, have become a part of the history of the struggle for the rights of conscience.

Seldom has so brilliant a testimony been given, man to man, as the testimony which Poggio Bracciolini gave to the eloquence and personality of Jerome. This distinguished Italian humanist was present when Jerome made his self-defense in the cathedral of Constance, and looked on while he was suffering the agony of death. The description which he gives to his correspondent, Aretino, elaborates the details of Jerome's address as we have it from other writers, men who sympathized with Jerome's religious attitude which Poggio, though not without hesitancy, disavows sharing. Jerome, so he wrote, reminded the Council of the noble men of antiquity who had been sentenced to death, in spite of their virtues, on the testimony of false witnesses and by the decision of unrighteous judges. Such an one was Socrates. Such were Moses and the prophets. Such was John the Baptist; yea, and the Saviour himself. Such an one was Stephen, put to death by the priests, and such were the apostles, condemned as public agitators and despisers of the gods. Jerome urged the principle that such treatment becomes more iniquitous when meted out by a council of priests. He reminded his judges that they were men, not gods, and liable, as mortals, to be mistaken. As lights of the world and as the wiser of

the earth, they should be on their guard not to do anything contrary to justice. As for himself, he was a man of small importance, a *homiunculus*. He spoke of the things he had endured in prison, bound hand and foot, lying in filth in the bottom of the tower, without means of reading or even seeing, yea, in need of all things, and while his detractors were being freely given audience, the Council was unwilling to listen to him for a single hour. But of this asperity, Poggio says, the prisoner did not complain, though it called forth his surprise. He praised Huss as a good man, just and holy, a man who held no opinions hostile to the church, but without fear denounced the clergy for its pride and license.

Jerome, so Poggio continues, now hushed his audience to silence, now brought a flush to the cheeks of his judges. His voice was soft, clear, resonant, his gestures dignified and expressive. "There he stood fearless, not alone spurning death but looking forward to it, so that you would have said he was another Cato. O man, worthy of the eternal memory of men! What he may have said contrary to the customs of the church I do not praise, but I admire his wide knowledge, his eloquence, his elegance of speech, his skill in argument."

Taking his correspondent to the scene of execution, Poggio described that auto-da-fe even down to the singing, "which the smoke and the fire were scarcely able to interrupt." "I saw his end," he wrote, "and gazed upon his several acts. In this way this man excellent — except in regard of the faith — was burnt. Mutius did not bear the burning of his hand with such firm resolution as this one bore the burning of his whole body. Never did a Stoic endure death with such a steadfast and brave mind as he seemed to greet it. Nor did Socrates so willingly drink the hemlock as he received the flames."