



The Council of Constance

600 years since the beginning of the Council
(1414)

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INTRODUCTION

The Council of Constance was the largest international assembly up until the 20th Century.¹ It is talked about it, as about the most noble concilium of nations that the world has ever seen. However, still prior to this Council, the Church had to survive a dramatic historical division: **“The Great Western Schism”**.²

THE PERIOD PRIOR TO THE COUNCIL

After almost seventy years of residence of the Popes in Avignon, in France, Pope **Gregory XI**³ transferred the Apostolic See and the curia back to Rome, thus in fact ending a long period known as the “Babylonian captivity”, the historians so referred to with a certain conscious allusion to the Babylonian captivity

¹ PROCHASKA, A.: *Sobór w Konstancji (Council of Constance)*. Krakow: Universitas, 1996, p. 61.

² EHRLICH, L.: *Pisma wybrane Pawła Włodkowicza. Vol. I*. Warsaw, 1968, p. 21.

³ GREGORY XI - A Frenchman, born Pierre Roger de Beaufort. He was born in 1329, at the Chateau Moumont, not far from Limoges. He came from a noble family and was the nephew of Pope Clement VI. Already as an 11-year-old, he became a canon in Rodez and Paris, and at 19 years his uncle appointed him a cardinal-deacon, and then sent him to the University of Perugia, where he studied Law. After finishing his studies, Pope Urban V commissioned Gregory significant roles. After the death of Urban V, the cardinals elected him on the 30th December 1370, as Pope, aged 42 years, and he adopted the name GREGORY XI. He was a man of faith, of a virtuous life, very sensitive, but of frail health. He sincerely tried to transfer the papal see from Avignon back to Rome. Gregory XI actually returned to Rome in 1377 and he received a heartfelt welcome in the Eternal City. The Vatican once again became his residence, which has remained the papal seat permanently since Gregory's return. The so-called “Babylonian captivity”, as the Avignon exile of the popes is often called, was finally closed. Gregory has not only been the last Avignon, but up until our times, also the last French Pope. His pontificate has not been wholly unsuccessful. He has contributed to the reform of the Order of St. John. He categorically condemned the mistakes of self-styled reformer John Wycliffe, in England; however, these bright moments in his activity were few. On his deathbed, he reportedly predicted the misfortune of the Church and even its schism. Unfortunately, he was not wrong. He died on the 27th March 1378, and is buried in the church of

of Israel.⁴ The Italian poet, Francesco Petrarca († 1374), spoke about the stay of the Pope in France as about the Babylonian captivity; this close fitting metaphor does justice to the situation of the popes, who had lost sight of their spiritual mission and had become - similar to the old Israel - too much burdened by political matters.⁵

During her stay in Avignon, **St. Catherine of Siena**⁶, with great courage, put forward to Gregory XI, the reform program

of the Catholic Church and a requirement to return the seat of the Apostolic See to the Eternal City. The pope was also addressed by **St. Bridget of Sweden**,⁷ in this matter, who warned Gregory XI in the face of a weakening of ecclesiastical power and papal dignity, if he did not end the stay of the popes in Avignon. On the 13th September 1376, Gregory XI left Avignon and on the 17th January 1377, he solemnly entered into the Eternal City, accompanied by the jubilation of the enthusiastic

St. Frances of Rome, at the Forum. A large relief over the sarcophagus displays Gregory's arrival in Rome, in the year 1377. The length of his pontificate was 7 years, 2 months and 29 days. (cf. MAXWEL-STUART, P.G.: *Papežové – Život a vláda od sv. Petra k Janu Pavlu II (Popes - The Life and Government from St. Peter to John Paul II)*. Prague: Svoboda, 1998, p. 134 – 135).

⁴ BÉCHEAU, F.: *Histoire des Conciles (The History of the Councils)*. Toulouse, 1993, p. 149. The Avignon popes: Clement V, who called a council in Vienne, as the first settled in Provence. His successors were French: John XXII, Benedict XII, Clement VI, Innocent VI, Blessed Urban V and Gregory XI.

⁵ JUDÁK, V.: *Kristova cirkev na ceste (The Church of Christ on a journey)*. Trnava: Society of St. Vojtech, 1998, p. 153.

⁶ ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA - born Benincasa; virgin, mystic, Doctor of the Church, Patroness of Italy, Dominican tertiaries and the second patron of Rome. She was born in 1347, in Siena. She was subtle, of fragile flesh, but of a great spirit and noble dignity. The Italians call her to this day *the greatest woman of Christianity*. She came from the large family of a Siena dyer. Her parents wanted to marry her off at the age of 12 years, but Catherine refused. As an eighteen year old, she has entered the Dominican tertiaries, in Siena. She selflessly nursed the sick and the dying. In 1374, in Pisa, she nursed the plague affected, which also affected Catherine. Despite her youth, she managed very competently to advise secular monarchs and also the highest church officials. For example, she managed to convince Pope Gregory XI to leave from Avignon to Rome. At the request of Pope Urban VI, after the outbreak of the Great Western Schism, Catherine settled in the Eternal City and worked towards the unification of the Church to the end of her life. Until her death, she concealed Christ's wounds, which she had received. She died on the 29th April 1380, at the age of 33. The last years she lived only from the Eucharist. Her final resting place she found in the Dominican Roman Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, in the vicinity of the Pantheon. Pope Pius II declared Catherine of Siena a saint in 1461, and Paul VI appointed her a teacher of the Church, on the 4th October 1970. (cf. SCHAUBER, V. – SCHINDLER, H. M.: *Hellige und namens patronne*. Augsburg: Welbild Verlag GmbH, 1993, p. 182 – 183.)

⁷ ST. BRIDGET OF SWEDEN - she was born in 1303, in Finstad near Upsale, in Sweden. Ever since the seventh year of her life, she had a vision of the crucified Christ. At age 13 she was married. She had 4 sons and 4 daughters. After the death of her husband, Bridget had a different vision in which Christ called her *his bride*. On the principle of Regul Augustinian, in 1346, the mystic Bridget developed her own regulated and established monastery, the first house of her new religious order of **Bridgettines**. Together with her daughter Catherine, later canonised, she went to Rome, in 1349, and there she worked in her Order. After a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she died in Rome, on the 23rd July 1373. In 1391, Pope Boniface IX canonised her. In the Church of St. Maria Novella, in Rome, there is a fresco depicted from the 14th Century of St. Bridget near the vision of Jesus' birth. (cf. PRACNÝ, P.: *Český kalendář světců (Czech calendar of saints)*. Prague: EWA Edition, 1994, p. 167 – 168.)

citizens.⁸ He settled in the Vatican, but soon he sensed the curtness of the citizens, because of his French origin. The Romans wanted that a Roman, or at least an Italian, sat on the papal see.⁹ Gregory XI, therefore, decided to return to Avignon. His intention, however, was not possible, because on the 27th March 1378, aged 48 years, he died. In a tense situation, a section of the French cardinals left from Rome.¹⁰

The citizens of the Eternal City, during the conclave convened after the death of Pope Gregory XI, demanded that a Roman would be elected.¹¹ In the conclave, which took place on the 7th April 1378, 16 cardinals had gathered, 11 of which were French. The cardinals elected Bartholomew Prignano as pope, who came from the kingdom of Naples, which, however, the

Romans did not like. However, the cardinals confirmed the election of the pope, on the 9th April 1378,¹² who took the name of **Urban VI**.¹³ His papal name, which contains the word *urbs*, expressed his interrelatedness with Rome.¹⁴ The new pope was reflected as an energetic and authoritarian man. He insulted the cardinals and members of the royal concilium, by his way of life. In this way, opposition was created against the pope, grouped around Cardinal Jean de Grande.¹⁵ The cardinals, under the pretext that he was elected under duress, declared the 2nd August 1378 election as invalid.¹⁶ Despite the disapproval of Urban VI, they elected a new antipope, French Cardinal Robert from Genoa, on the 20th September 1378, who adopted the name Clement VII (1378 – 1394).¹⁷ An ac-

⁸ FRÖHLICH, R.: *Dva tisíce let dějin církve (Two thousand years of the history of the Church)*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 1999, p. 113 – 114.

⁹ KADLEC, J.: *Dějiny Katolické církve (The history of the Catholic Church)*. II. Vol. Brno: Palacký University, 1993, p. 237.

¹⁰ BANASZAK, M.: *Historia Kościoła katolickiego (History of the Catholic Church)*, Vol. 2. Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology, 1989, p. 257.

¹¹ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechné w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*. Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 79.

¹² ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history)*, Vol. II. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 23 – 24.

¹³ URBAN VI – born Bartolomeo Prignano, was born in 1318, to a noble family from Naples. After studying in France, he took vows in the Benedictine Order. In 1342, he defended his doctorate in Law and began to lecture about Church history, in Montpellier and in Avignon. He served as vicar general, the abbot of the monastery and the papal legate in Italy. He was elected as Pope on the 8th April 1378, inducted into office on the 18th April and crowned with the papal Tiara. He was a temperamental man, a little priggish, but a strict ascetic who enforced his asceticism on the cardinals. He ignored the urging of the cardinals, who encouraged him to return to the Eternal City. He died on the 15th October 1389, in Rome, and is buried in St. Peter's Basilica, in Rome. His pontificate lasted for 11 years, 6 months and 6 days. (cf. Kelly, J.N.D.: *Pápeži dvoch tisícročí (Popes from two millennia)*. Bratislava: Roal, 1994, p. 179 – 181).

¹⁴ MAXWEL-STUART, P.G.: *Papežové – Život a vláda od sv. Petra k Janu Pavlu II (Popes - The Life and Government from St. Peter to John Paul II)*. Prague: Svoboda, 1998, p. 139.

¹⁵ BANASZAK, M.: *Historia Kościoła katolickiego (History of the Catholic Church)*, Vol. 2. Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology, 1989, p. 257.

¹⁶ KUMOR, B.: *Cirkevné dejiny – jeseň cirkevného stredoveku (Church History - the autumn of the Church of the Middle Ages)*. Levoča: Polypress, 2002, p. 76 – 77.

¹⁷ MRÁČEK, P. K.: *Stručná příručka církevních dějin (A Brief Manual of Church History)*. Olomouc: Maticе Cyrilometodějská (Matica of Cyril and Methodius), 1996, p. 75.

cessible man, sincere, friendly and with a penchant for the finer things. Clement VII transferred the papal seat back to Avignon.¹⁸ Clement was supported by the French king, Charles V, Paris University, Portugal, Navarre, Scotland, Aragon and Castile. Behind the valid Pope Urban VI stood the Empire, most of the German princes, England, Sweden, Hungary and Poland.¹⁹ Clement VII, with the help of hired troops, tried to conquer Rome, but only came as far as San Marino. Despite this, he settled down in Avignon, created his curia and a new college of cardinals.²⁰

The Catholic Church was fragmented into two parts. Both of the popes excommunicated one another, appointed their cardinals, and developed a broad cooperation with bishops, monarchs and universities.²¹

The schism, which broke with extraordinary intensity, lasted 40 years. It did not only cause humiliation of the Pontifical authority, but also disgraced the monas-

teries, bishops and parishes. It inflicted considerable damage to the Apostolic See and to the entire Catholic Church.²² The hazy circumstances of the elections of Urban VI made it impossible to answer the question of which pope was legitimate. It elicited confusion also between the Church hierarchy, because both were elected by the same cardinals. Even the people of a holy life were confused from this.²³ For example, St. Catherine of Siena considered Pope Urban VI to be the valid one, and in turn **St. Vincent Ferrer**²⁴ considered it to be Clement VII.

This difficult situation discredited the belief in a papal primacy and ultimately the unity of the Church.²⁵ Opinions were spread as to whether the Church can dispense with a pope and everything will be resolved by a general council - **conciliarism** was born.²⁶

In this way, a large papal schism began in Western Europe, which divided

¹⁸ BIALECKI, B.: *Leksykon papieży (Lexicon of the Popes)*. Krakow: Znak, 1990, p. 126.

¹⁹ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechne w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*. Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 79.

²⁰ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechne w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*. Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 80.

²¹ JEDIN, H.: *Kleine Konziliengeschichte 8th Edition* Freiburg im Breispau, 1978, p. 49.

²² ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history), Vol. II*. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 24.

²³ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history), Vol. II*. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 25.

²⁴ ST. VINCENT FERRER – Dominican monk. He was born in 1350, in Valencia, as the son of an English immigrant in Spain. He became a Dominican, in 1367. He excelled as a philosopher and preacher. He urged Christians to repentance. Finally, he devoted himself exclusively to preaching, with which he reached extraordinary successes. His main themes were sin, the last judgement and eternity. In 1414, at the Council of Constance, he attempted to end the papal schism, which since 1409 had expanded to three popes. He worked on Pope Benedict, in order for him to abdicate, but he failed. Exhausted by tireless work, he died on the 5th April 1419, in Vannes. Pope Callixtus III, in 1455, declared him a saint. The Feast of St. Vincent Ferrer is celebrated on the 6th April. (cf. FARMER, D. H.: *Oxfordský lexikón svätcov (The Oxford lexicon of saints)*. Bratislava: Kaligram, 1996, p. 513 – 514).

²⁵ RÁČEK, B.: *ČESKOSLOVENSKÉ DĚJINY (CZECHOSLOVAK HISTORY)*. Prague: L. Kuncif, 1933, p. 192 – 193.

²⁶ Conciliarism - a theory, which has been discussed since the 13th Century and further developed in the 14th Century. It was applied at the Council of Constance (1414 - 1418) and in Basel (1431-1445). Conciliarism demanded the superiority of the council as a general ecclesiastical assembly over the pope. The classic formulation of this theory is in

European Christianity for 40 years (1378-1417).²⁷ Both the popes, in Rome and also in Avignon, appointed a conclave of cardinals, who could elect a successor and thus the schism deepened even more.²⁸ After the death of Urban VI († 1389), the Italian cardinals elected a new pope, **Boniface IX**,²⁹ who unfortunately discredited the reputation of the Church, with his nepotism and ruthless raising of church taxes. He did not show an understanding, neither a willingness, to unify the fragmented Christianity.³⁰

After the death of Clement VII, the Avignon cardinals, in order to avoid the possible intervention of Boniface IX, quickly elected the antipope - the Spanish Cardinal Peter of Luna, who adopted the name Benedict XIII. (1374 – 1417).³¹ Although

he was originally a supporter of the idea of unification of the Church and signed that he will waive office, if so requested by a majority of the cardinals, after the election he did not want to even hear about it. French troops occupied Avignon and he was held captive four years.³² Benedict XIII, in order to restore unity, recommended that the popes personally met together and agree on a union. If they will not, a competent ecclesiastical court was supposed to resolve this dispute.³³

After the death of Boniface, the Roman Cardinals elected **Innocent VII**³⁴, who like Benedict XIII had signed an electoral capitulation, which has pledged to remove the papal schism at the cost of his resignation from office. However, the unity did not occur.³⁵

the Constance decrees *Sacrosancta* and *Frequens*. Its aim was to achieve a reform of the Church, at the head and the limbs, through councils and conciliar decrees, which encountered, however, opposition from the pope and the curia. (cf. ELSER, M. – EWALD, S. – MURRER, G.: *Encyklopedie náboženství (Encyclopaedia of Religions)*. Kostelní Vydří: Carmelite Publishing House, 1997, p. 156).

²⁷ KALISTA, Z.: *STRUČNÉ DĚJINY ČESKOSLOVENSKÉ (A BRIEF HISTORY OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA)*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 1992, p. 123.

²⁸ DELOUCHE, F.: *Dějiny Evropy (The history of Europe)*. Saint-Germain: Hachette, 1992, p. 178 – 179.

²⁹ Boniface IX - born Piero Tomacelli, was born in 1350, in Naples. He came from a noble family. He was elected as pope on the 2nd November 1389, aged 39 years, and took the name of Boniface IX. His pontificate, which lasted 14 years and 11 months, was not successful, because this pope did not even attempt to end the papal schism. He died on the 1st October 1404, and is buried in St. Peter's Basilica, in Rome. (cf. GELMI, J.: *Papežové od svatého Petra po Jana Pavla II. (The popes from St. Peter to John Paul II)*. Prague: Mladá fronta, 1994, p. 142 – 143).

³⁰ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Církevné dejiny (Church history), Vol. II*. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 25.

³¹ KELLY, J.N.D.: *Pápeži dvoch tisícročí (Popes from two millennia)*. Bratislava: Roal, 1994, p. 187 – 188.

³² JUDÁK, V.: *Kristova cirkev na ceste (The Church of Christ on a journey)*. Trnava: Society of St. Vojtech, 1998, p. 154.

³³ RAK, P.: *Historia soborów (History of the Councils)*. Krakow, 1998, p. 150.

³⁴ Innocent VII - born Cosimo de' Migliorati. He was born in 1336, in the Italian Sulmona. He was a professor of Law, a cardinal and a priest. Urban VI called him to the papal curia, where he served 10 years in England as a collector of taxes and tithes. In 1387, he was appointed as Archbishop of Ravenna. Following the death of Boniface IX, on 17th October 1404, at age 68 years, he was elected Pope. Although he lived virtuously, promoting learning in the Church, he was too good-natured. He died on the 6th November 1406, and was buried in St. Peter's Basilica, in Rome. His pontificate lasted 2 years and 21 days. (cf. FISCHER-WOLLPERT, R.: *Lexikon der Päpste (Lexicon of the Popes)*. Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1985, p. 128).

³⁵ MAXWEL-STUART, P.G.: *Papežové – Život a vláda od sv. Petra k Janu Pavlu II (Popes - The Life and Government from St. Peter to John Paul II)*. Prague: Svoboda, 1998, p. 142.

Innocent's successor, **Gregory XII**³⁶, had to promise to restore union in the electoral capitulation. After the election, he has actually taken serious steps in this matter. Both the popes, in the Marseilles Treaty of 1407, agreed to meet in Savona, where they were supposed to restore unity by mutual agreement. Both, started off on a journey to Savona, but they did not reach there, because they both mistrusted each other of malevolent intent.³⁷ The childish behaviour of the popes ultimately disgusted the supporters of Gregory XII and also the supporters of Benedict XIII.³⁸

The Church of Rome overcame, in this period, the most difficult crisis in its history. During thirty years, despite the efforts of many personalities, none of the parties had received unanimous support.³⁹ Theologians from the University of Paris suggested a decision making process, the outcome of which would enforce the decree of the Church. There were resounding voices that Christianity may be bifurcated, as once David's kingdom

was bifurcated.⁴⁰ Some thought that the Church may have more popes, and others even claimed that the papacy is not at all necessary. Apparently, the general concilium is decisive.⁴¹

In 1408, 13 cardinals from one or the other popes gathered at Livorno and unequivocally agreed for the convening of a general ecclesiastical concilium in Pisa.⁴² The Council was to bring the Christian world a longed-for peace and unity.⁴³

The ecumenical council in Pisa was convened for the 25th March 1409.⁴⁴ It was attended by 24 cardinals, 90 patriarchs, archbishops, abbots and general superiors of religious orders; together nearly 300 delegates.⁴⁵

At the 8th plenary session (1st May 1409), they officially adopted and indicated the conciliar theory - the superiority of the council over the pope - into practice.⁴⁶

None of the popes ever recognised this meeting in Pisa as a general concilium, therefore, it is not in any cata-

³⁶ GREGORY XII - born Angelo Correr, was born in Venice, in 1325, within a noble family. He was a cardinal, a priest and papal secretary. As pope, he was elected on the 30th November 1406, aged 81 years. He was forced to abdicate on the 4 July 1415. He remained in the rank of cardinal and bishop of Porto. He died on the 18th October 1417, and is buried within the family estate, in Recanati. His pontificate lasted for 8 years, 7 months and 6 days. (cf. KELLY, J.N.D.: *Pápeži dvoch tisícročí (Popes from two millennia)*. Bratislava: Roal, 1994, p. 189).

³⁷ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechnie w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*. Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 81.

³⁸ PROCHASKA, A.: *Sobór w Konstancji (Council of Constance)*. Krakow: Universitas, 1996, p. 93.

³⁹ BAGIN, A.: *Cirkevné dejiny – stredovek (Church history - The Middle Ages)*. Bratislava: CMBF, 1982, p. 185.

⁴⁰ FRANZEN, A.: *Malé církevní dějiny (A small church history)*. Praha, 1992, p. 172.

⁴¹ DELOUCHE, F.: *Dejiny Európy (The history of Europe)*. Saint-Germain: Hachette, 1992, p. 178 – 179.

⁴² JUDÁK, V.: *Učebné texty z cirkevných dejín (Teaching texts from Church History)*. Bratislava: UK CMBF, 1998, p. 132 – 133.

⁴³ ŠMÁLIK, Š.: *Boží ľud na cestách (God's people on the move). Cirkev v 49 pokoleniach (The Church in 49 generations)*. Bratislava: Lúč, 1997, p. 410.

⁴⁴ RÁČEK, B.: *Československé dějiny (Czechoslovak history)*. Prague: L. Kuncíř, 1933, p. 193.

⁴⁵ HERTLING, L.: *Dejiny katolíckej cirkvi (History of the Catholic Church)*. Samizdat. p. 218 – 219.

⁴⁶ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechnie w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*. Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 82.

logue written as a council, but mostly as a synod.⁴⁷

On the 5th June 1409, under the influence of the provisions of the Sorbonne, the council, to the great joy of the citizens of Pisa, deposed, excommunicated and declared both popes heretics.⁴⁸ Only that neither Rome, nor Avignon, subjected themselves to this decision. The first attempt to unify the Roman Church thus failed.⁴⁹

On the 26th June, the conclave elected a new antipope, originating from Greece, Petros Philargos, who adopted the name Alexander V (1409 – 1410), by which three popes were now established in the Catholic Church.⁵⁰ Alexander V was Pope for only less than a year and after his sudden death, the cardinals elected Cardinal Balthazar Cossu, in Bologna, as a new antipope, who took the name John XXIII (1410 – 1415).⁵¹ This exceptional diplomat and politician was, however, from the spiritual side, one of the most unworthy.⁵²

The election of the third pope evoked total chaos in the Church: the previous

popes, Gregory XII and Benedict XIII, did not give up office, which did not regain the coveted unity, but deepened the internal fragmentation of the Church.⁵³

The situation in the Church and Europe became intolerable for many and voices for the convening of a new concilium resounded more and more urgently. Everyone was convinced that the solution could only be found already in a new council, if all three popes would accept it.⁵⁴ The Emperor Sigismund, who was an ambitious, energetic and flexible man, leaned on the Pisan Pope John XXIII, to convene a general ecumenical concilium on the 1st November 1414, in a city on German territory, in Constance.⁵⁵

All three popes have adopted the convening of the council with resentment: Benedict XII threatened all the supporters who attended the concilium with excommunication,⁵⁶ Gregory XII sent off, at the end, only two observers⁵⁷ and John XXIII at this time dealt with acquiring the territory of the ecclesiastical manor, after the death of Ladislaus of Naples.⁵⁸

⁴⁷ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history), Vol. II.* Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 27.

⁴⁸ JEDIN, H.: *Kleine Konziliengeschichte 8th Edition* Freiburg im Breispau, 1978, p. 49 – 50.

⁴⁹ BANASZAK, M.: *Historia Kościoła katolickiego (History of the Catholic Church), Vol. 2.* Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology, 1989, p. 268.

⁵⁰ FRÖHLICH, R.: *Dva tisíce let dějin církve (Two thousand years of the history of the Church).* Prague: Vyšehrad, 1999, p. 114.

⁵¹ PROCHASKA, A.: *Sobór w Konstancji (Council of Constance).* Krakow: Universitas, 1996, p. 19.

⁵² Since this was an anti-pope, Cardinal Angelo Roncalli Giuseppe, after being elected pope, in 1958, adopted the same name John XXIII, in order to cleanse it.

⁵³ BÉCHEAU, F.: *Histoire des Conciles (The History of the Councils).* Toulouse, 1993, p. 152.

⁵⁴ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechne w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity).* Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 83.

⁵⁵ SEIBT, F.: *Lesk a bída středověku (The gloss and the misery of the Middle Ages).* Prague: Mladá fronta 2000, p. 312 – 313.

⁵⁶ ZIENTARA, B.: *Historia powszechna średniowiecza (A widespread history of the Middle Ages).* Warsaw: Wydawnictwo "TRIO", 1994, p. 385.

⁵⁷ BAGIN, A.: *Cirkevné dejiny – stredovek (Church history - The Middle Ages).* Bratislava: CMBF, 1982, p. 187.

⁵⁸ KADLEC, J.: *Dějiny Katolické církve (The history of the Catholic Church). II. Vol.* Brno: Palacký University, 1993, p. 241 – 242.

COURSE OF THE COUNCIL

The Council of Constance, which was also the 16th general concilium, was opened by Pope John XXIII, on the 5th of November, 1414.⁵⁹

This concilium was one of the largest ecclesiastical gatherings of that period and was at the same time a political congress for the entire Western Christian world.⁶⁰ 29 cardinals, 3 patriarchs, 33 archbishops, over 300 bishops, hundreds of abbots and superiors of religious orders, hundreds of superiors of universities and of chapter houses, kings and princes, and everyday people and towns, all came to Constance. Pope Gregory XII and Pope Benedict XIII did not participate in person, but only through their legates.⁶¹

Pope John XXIII, with little hopes and great fear, came to the Council in person with an Italian armed escort. The main figure of the Council was the Emperor Sigismund.⁶² The concilium was supposed to solve three basic problems:

- **To remove the papal schism and to create the unity of the Church (causa unionis).**

- **To remove doctrinal heresies preached by John Wycliffe and Jan Hus (causa fidei).**

- **To reform the Church (causa reformationis).⁶³**

Since only half of the participants of the concilium came from Italy, from the camp of Pope John XXIII, the concilium decided that they would not vote according to the current practice according to titles, but by the university way, according to nationalities.⁶⁴

The following had the right to vote: Italians, French, Germans (along with the Slavs and Hungarians) and later the Spanish.⁶⁵ Each nationality first deliberated separately.⁶⁶ On these specific negotiations, not only the bishops had the right to vote, but also the abbots, chapter houses, universities, doctors of theology and ecclesiastical law, and even representatives of the princes.⁶⁷ In the general council, every nation had one vote⁶⁸ and the majority of votes were deciding.⁶⁹ Through this manner, the council acquired a democratic and a parliamentary course.⁷⁰

⁵⁹ KUMOR, B.: *Cirkevné dejiny – jeseň cirkevného stredoveku (Church History - the autumn of the Church of the Middle Ages)*. Levoča: Polypress, 2002, p. 88.

⁶⁰ HERTLING, L.: *Dejiny katolíckej cirkvi (History of the Catholic Church)*. Samizdat, p. 218 – 219.

⁶¹ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechne w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*., Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 82.

⁶² SCHATZ, K.: *Allgemeine Konzilien – Brennpunkte der Kirchen-geschichte*. Paderborn, 1997, p. 133.

⁶³ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history)*, Vol. II. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 31.

⁶⁴ KADLEC, J.: *Dějiny Katolické církve (The history of the Catholic Church)*. II. Vol. Brno: Palacký University, 1993, p. 242.

⁶⁵ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechne w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*. Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 85.

⁶⁶ HERTLING, L.: *Dejiny katolíckej cirkvi (History of the Catholic Church)*. Samizdat, p. 218 – 219.

⁶⁷ BAGIN, A.: *Cirkevné dejiny – stredovek (Church history - The Middle Ages)*. Bratislava: CMBF, 1982, p. 185.

⁶⁸ BANASZAK, M.: *Historia Kościoła katolickiego (History of the Catholic Church)*, Vol. 2. Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology, 1989, p. 263.

⁶⁹ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history)*, Vol. II. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 32.

⁷⁰ JUDÁK, V.: *Učebné texty z cirkevných dejín (Teaching texts from Church History)*. Bratislava: UK CMBF, 1998, p. 133.

REMOVAL OF THE PAPAL SCHISM AND THE CREATION OF THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH (CAUSA UNIONIS):

Negotiation in Constance, in the first section, dealt with the end of the papal schism.⁷¹ The Constance concilium was assembled by the antipope, Pope John XXIII, who had the most support.⁷² The Council Fathers were aware that the best and easiest solution in the eradication of the papal schism would be the withdrawal of all three Popes.⁷³ Legates of Pope Gregory XII stated that Gregory would willingly resign if Pope Benedict XIII and Pope John XXIII would do so, as well.⁷⁴ John's position weakened, especially after the reading of an anonymous letter, in which in detail the pope's past was described, therefore, he also declared that he will willingly resign, if the other two do so, as well. However, he only acted "pro forma", in reality he had a different plan.⁷⁵ He hoped that he would escape from Constance to Avignon, take hold of the papal power and dissolve the concilium.⁷⁶ Although, the Emperor Sigismund closely guarded the city gates, John managed to escape from the city, dressed as a knight, with the help of Frederick of Austria.⁷⁷ How-

ever, on the 21st March 1415, the pope was caught and imprisoned in Germany, where an indictment was raised against him.⁷⁸ The pope's escape initially caused confusion. The assembly considered that without the pope, they could not negotiate. But Sigismund and the Chancellor of the University of Paris have managed to reassure the participants of the council. They argued that the absence of the pope could not disrupt the course of the concilium.⁷⁹ The Council Fathers declared themselves representatives of the entire Church, and claimed that they have the power to save Jesus Christ, and so every Christian, and also the pope, should be subjected to His will.⁸⁰ The concilium must not break up until the papal schism has been removed. The conciliar theory was officially recognised, but the popes had never confirmed it.⁸¹

At the next meeting, the council began the process against John XXIII. For simony and a scandalous life, the concilium got rid of his Pontifical rank and sentenced him to four years in prison. Pope Martin V, however, granted him a pardon and received him into the conclave of Cardinals. He died in 1419 in Florence.⁸²

⁷¹ HERTLING, L.: *Dejiny katolíckej cirkvi (History of the Catholic Church)*. Samizdat. p. 218 – 219.

⁷² KELLY, J.N.D.: *Pápeži dvoch tisícročí (Popes from two millennia)*. Bratislava: Roal, 1994, p. 191.

⁷³ ŠMÁLIK, Š.: *Boží ľud na cestách (God's people on the move)*. *Cirkev v 49 pokoleniach (The Church in 49 generations)*. Bratislava: Lúč, 1997, p. 310.

⁷⁴ HERTLING, L.: *Dejiny katolíckej cirkvi (History of the Catholic Church)*. Samizdat, p. 220.

⁷⁵ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history)*, Vol. II. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 30.

⁷⁶ ZIENTARA, B.: *Historia powszechna średniowiecza (A widespread history of the Middle Ages)*. Warsaw, 1973, p. 385.

⁷⁷ VEBER, V. et al.: *Dějiny Rakouska (The history of Austria)*. Prague: NLN 2002, p. 176 – 177.

⁷⁸ PROCHASKA, A.: *Sobór w Konstancji (Council of Constance)*. Krakow: Universitas, 1996, p. 71.

⁷⁹ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history)*, Vol. II. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 31.

⁸⁰ RAK, P.: *Historia soborów (History of the Councils)*. Krakow, 1998, p. 154 – 155.

⁸¹ BANASZAK, M.: *Historia Kościoła katolickiego (History of the Catholic Church)*, Vol. 2. Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology, 1989, p. 268.

⁸² FRANZEN, A.: *Malé cirkevní dějiny (A small church history)*. Praha, 1992, p. 172.

The legitimate Roman Pope, Gregory XII, at that time a 90-year old man, resigned voluntarily. Through a personal legate, he has sent his resignation and by his bull, dated 4th July 1415, he officially proclaimed the concilium in his name, thereby the concilium became legal and could be counted in the registry of the general councils.⁸³ The delegates in Constance accepted the resignation and Gregory retained the rank of cardinal.⁸⁴ He died in 1417, as Cardinal-Bishop of Porto.⁸⁵

The most stubborn “pope” was Benedict XIII, in Avignon. He defended his rights to the Apostolic See, with the support of central France and Spain.⁸⁶ The Emperor Sigismund had chosen to appear in person before him in Catalonia - in the town of Perpignan, where he was then located. Sigismund appealed towards an abdication, but Benedict XIII resolutely refused.⁸⁷ When, however, also the last Spanish princes left him, the council began the process against him, which

contained up to 90 points of indictment. They declared him a heretic and a schismatic and deposed him on the 26th July 1417.⁸⁸ Peter Luna (Benedict XIII) did not accept this conciliar verdict, continuing to declare himself the legally valid pope and successor of St. Peter.⁸⁹ He lived in the Pyrenees Castle, Peniscola, and usurped the papal rank until his death in 1424.⁹⁰ During that time, he appointed several cardinals, who after his death chose two completely inconsequential antipopes, Clement VIII and Benedict XIV⁹¹

After the removal of the three popes, the council remained sovereign and the only one that appertains the election of a new pope.⁹² First, however, until he acceded to the election, the Emperor Sigismund, supported by influential conciliaris, tabled the council requirement that still before choosing a pope, the issue of the **reform of the Church** was to be discussed.⁹³ When the council had plotted the reform decrees, they then had to choose a pope and oblige him to approve the decrees.⁹⁴

⁸³ ŠMÁLIK, Š.: *Boží ľud na cestách (God's people on the move). Cirkev v 49 pokoleniach (The Church in 49 generations)*. Bratislava: Lúč, 1997, p. 411.

⁸⁴ KUMOR, B.: *Cirkevné dejiny – jeseň cirkevného stredoveku (Church History - the autumn of the Church of the Middle Ages)*. Levoča: Polypress, 2002, p. 90.

⁸⁵ BIALECKI, B.: *Leksykon papieży (Lexicon of the Popes)*. Krakow: Znak, 1990, p. 129.

⁸⁶ BIALECKI, B.: *Leksykon papieży (Lexicon of the Popes)*. Krakow: Znak, 1990, p. 128.

⁸⁷ KALISTA, Z.: *STRUČNÉ DĚJINY ČESKOSLOVENSKÉ (A BRIEF HISTORY OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA)*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 1992, p. 127.

⁸⁸ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechne w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*. Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 86.

⁸⁹ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history), Vol. II. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 30.*

⁹⁰ KUMOR, B.: *Cirkevné dejiny – jeseň cirkevného stredoveku (Church History - the autumn of the Church of the Middle Ages)*. Levoča: Polypress, 2002, p. 90.

⁹¹ JEDIN, H.: *Kleine Konziliengeschichte 8th Edition* Freiburg im Breispau, 1978, p. 52.

⁹² RÁČEK, B.: *ČESKOSLOVENSKÉ DĚJINY (CZECHOSLOVAK HISTORY)*. Prague: L. Kuncič, 1933, p. 218.

⁹³ ZIENTARA, B.: *Historia powszechna średniowiecza (A widespread history of the Middle Ages)*. Warsaw, 1973, p. 385.

⁹⁴ JUDÁK, V.: *Učebné texty z cirkevných dejín (Teaching texts from Church History)*. Bratislava: UK CMBF, 1998, p. 155.

From a legal perspective, in order that the council became general and valid, it had to adopt a path of compromise in the election of a new pope. The delegates acceded to it on the 30th October 1417.⁹⁵ The election of a new pope was attended by 23 cardinals and 30 representatives of the five nations. Each nationality was represented by 6 representatives. On the 11th November 1417, Cardinal Otto Colonna was unanimously elected,⁹⁶ who adopted the name **Martin V**⁹⁷. Since then, the pope has presided over council negotiations.⁹⁸ The new pope was recognised by the entire world and finally ended the 40 years long papal schism.⁹⁹ Thus occurred the unification of the Church and although

the crisis persisted also further, it was the first point fulfilled of the negotiations of the concilium – *causa unionis*.¹⁰⁰ A further two serious, previously mentioned points also awaited resolution - the removal of doctrinal heresies and carrying out the reform of the Church.¹⁰¹

THE REMOVAL OF THE DOCTRINAL HERESIES, WHICH WERE PREACHED BY JOHN WYCLIFFE AND JAN HUS (CAUSA FIDEI)

In addition to the problem of the schism of Western Christianity, the Council of Constance had undertaken to solve the Hussite unrest in Bohemia.¹⁰² **Jan Hus**,¹⁰³ a theologian at the University of Prague, was inspired by the doctrine of

⁹⁵ KUMOR, B.: *Cirkevné dejiny – jeseň cirkevného stredoveku (Church History - the autumn of the Church of the Middle Ages)*. Levoča: Polypress, 2002, p. 90.

⁹⁶ KADLEC, J.: *Dějiny Katolické církve (The history of the Catholic Church). II. Vol.* Brno: Palacký University, 1993, p. 241.

⁹⁷ MARTIN V - was born in 1368, in the Italian Genazzano, within a noble family. He studied Law at Perugia, was apostolic protonotary and later archdeacon. He actively participated in the preparation of the Council in Pisa (1409). As pope, he was elected on the 11th November 1417, aged 49 years, and took his name from the saint, which accounted for this day. Immediately after his accession to the papal see, he declared that the highest institution of the Church is the pope and after his decision in matters of faith, already it is not possible to appeal towards other religious institutions. Martin embarked on a reform of the papal pensions and ultimately, in April 1418, he dissolved the Council of Constance. A further two years he was housed in Mantua and Florence, until in September 1420, he has entered into Rome. The combined use of armed power and diplomacy reinstated control over the Papal States, and thus ended its pillaging and devastation, caused by long-term papal schisms. He got involved in the repair of Roman basilicas, particularly St. Peter's Basilica and St. John's in Lateran, which was destroyed by fire. He died on the 20th February 1431, from a stroke. They buried him in Lateran, where to this day is his portrait made from brass plating. His pontificate lasted for 13 years, 3 months and 9 days. (cf. MAXWEL-STUART, P.G.: *Papežové – Život a vláda od sv. Petra k Janu Pavlu II (Popes - The Life and Government from St. Peter to John Paul II)*. Prague: Svoboda, 1998, p. 143 – 144).

⁹⁸ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history), Vol. II.* Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 31.

⁹⁹ HERTLING, L.: *Dejiny katolíckej cirkvi (History of the Catholic Church)*. Samizdat. p. 218 – 219.

¹⁰⁰ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechné w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*. Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 87.

¹⁰¹ HERTLING, L.: *Dejiny katolíckej cirkvi (History of the Catholic Church)*. Samizdat, p. 221.

¹⁰² KOREC, J. Ch.: *Cirkev v dejinách Slovenska (The Church in the history of Slovakia)*. Bratislava: Lúč, 1994, p. 407.

¹⁰³ JAN HUS – was born in 1370, in the South Bohemian village of Husinec. Although his parents were poor and his father had died, Hus got into Prague University. He completed studies in 1393 and graduated as a Bachelor of Liberal Arts. In the year 1400, he was ordained as a priest. In 1401, he became Dean, 1404 a Bachelor of Theology and in

John Wycliffe.¹⁰⁴ According to Wycliffe, The Bible is the only true dogma and all later texts should be thrown out. The Holy Scripture is not only spiritual, but also the highest secular authority. On the basis of this principle, he reproached the clergy and the monasteries' wealth, accusing them of ripping off the poor. He denied the pope's right to levy taxes. His supporters were giving up material goods and as "poor priests", they preached throughout the earth. After the death of Wycliffe, they were pursued, therefore they have resorted to Bohemia.¹⁰⁵

The Czechs felt threatened by the spread of German culture and stood up against the Germans directly on the grounds of Prague University.¹⁰⁶ The new rector, Jan Hus, who preached the language of the people in the Bethlehem Chapel, had enjoyed great popularity.¹⁰⁷ He adopted Wycliffe's opinions

and preached the idea of reforming the Church. (He preached against the papal bull; he taught heresies about the Blessed Sacrament (remanence); the laity should allegedly be administered Holy Communion under both ways; the sacraments carried out by priests in a state of mortal sin were, according to Hus, invalid; the pope and the cardinals are not infallible (as Gerson and many others participants of the council also thought), and the faithful should commit obedience to them only if they are destined towards, and live according to, the law of Christ; the doctrine of indulgences is unnecessary and misleading). Hus' preaching opened up a considerable response among the people.¹⁰⁸

Jan Hus was invited to the council to defend his teachings.¹⁰⁹ He travelled to Constance, on the basis of a covering letter by Emperor Sigismund, who guaranteed him

1409 the Rector of Prague University. Between 1402 and 1412, he was a preacher in the Bethlehem Chapel. He took on some of the religious and social reform ideas of John Wycliffe. He tirelessly advocated these against the secularisation of the clergy and against the wealth of the Church. His teachings provoked social unrest in Bohemia. Hus was excommunicated in 1408, in 1412 he was cast into a curse and an interdiction was declared over Prague. In 1414, Jan Hus was summoned by the Council of Constance, where an indictment was raised against him. The concilium denounced his 30 theses and since he did not recant them, he was sentenced to death. Hus was burned as a heretic on the 6th July 1415, and his ashes were spilled out into the river Rhine. (cf. RAJECKÝ, F.: *Ján Hus vo svetle pravdy (Jan Hus in the light of the truth)*. Trnava: Society of St. Vojtech, 1936, p. 5 – 43).

¹⁰⁴ JOHN WYCLIFFE – was born in the year 1320, in Yorkshire. An English philosopher, theologian and reformer. An advocate of the early Christian ideal of poverty. He criticised the papacy in Avignon, he did not approve of the worship of images and saints, nor priestly celibacy. His English translation of the Bible and upbringing of lay preachers founded a popular movement, which inspired the peasant uprising in England, in the year 1381. He had a strong influence on Jan Hus and on the pre-reformation on the old continent. His doctrine was convicted in the year 1382, in London. The Council of Constance, in 1415, declared it delusional and ordered the burning of his books. He died on 31.12.1384, in Lutterworth. (cf. ELSER, M. – EWALD, S. – MURRER, G.: *Encyklopedie náboženství (Encyclopaedia of Religions)*, p. 380).

¹⁰⁵ JUDÁK, V.: *Dejiny mojej Cirkvi, II. diel (The history of my Church, part II)*. TRNAVA: SSV, 2011, P. 94 – 96.

¹⁰⁶ KOREC, J. Ch.: *Cirkev v dejinách Slovenska (The Church in the history of Slovakia)*. Bratislava: Lúč, 1994, p. 408 – 411.

¹⁰⁷ PROCHASKA, A.: *Sobór w Konstancji (Council of Constance)*. Krakow: Universitas, 1996, p. 73 – 74.

¹⁰⁸ RAJECKÝ, F.: *Majster Ján Hus (Master Jan Hus)*. Trnava: Society of St. Vojtech, 1934, p. 321 – 325).

¹⁰⁹ KEJŘ, J.: *Husův proces (The Hus process)*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 2000, p. 21 – 23.

security during the trip.¹¹⁰ Despite the sovereign's letter, the Council Fathers arrested Hus in Constance.¹¹¹ His doctrine was in absolute contrast to the doctrines of the Church, he had to be therefore declared a heretic.¹¹² Because he did not want to withdraw his heresies, the court handed down its judgement of death upon him.¹¹³ Hus was invited to retract his heresies to the council.¹¹⁴ Since he did not, he was handed over to the secular court as a heretic and even the emperor's covering letter did not save him from being burned on the 6th July 1415.¹¹⁵ The same fate was also managed by his Prague friend and associate, Jerome of Prague.¹¹⁶

In recent decades, Hus' eventual rehabilitation has been discussed. Its importance was appreciated at the Second Vatican Council by Cardinal Josef Beran, and by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Czechoslovakia, in 1990.¹¹⁷

REFORM OF THE CHURCH (CAUSA REFORMATIONIS)

The Council stayed to discuss still a third, very serious point - the reform of the Church (*causa reformationis*) in the "head and limbs", that is to say, in the papal curia and also the entire Church. Despite the great expectations of the general council, not very much progress was made in this direction.¹¹⁸

Up to the 39th meeting (9th October 1417), 5 reform decrees had been issued, which had mainly the character of conciliar theory.¹¹⁹ The Decree of "Frequens", later confirmed by the pope, determined that the general concilium will be held regularly: the next one in five years, the second one in seven years and then every tenth year.¹²⁰

Other decrees, sought to prevent the occurrence of a papal schism, with their content.¹²¹ The pope has, after his election, put together the confession of faith.¹²² At the 40th session, which was held on the 30th October 1417, reservations, procurations and the non-canonical

¹¹⁰ BANASZAK, M.: *Historia Kościoła katolickiego (History of the Catholic Church)*, Vol. 2. Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology, 1989, p. 269 – 270.

¹¹¹ HERTLING, L.: *Dejiny katolíckej cirkvi (History of the Catholic Church)*. Samizdat, p. 218 – 219.

¹¹² NEUNER, J. – ROOS, H.: *Viera cirkvi v úradných dokumentoch jej magistéria (The faith of the church in the official documents of its magisterium)*. TRNAVA: DOBRÁ KNIHA (THE GOOD BOOK), 1995, p. 206 – 207.

¹¹³ HLAVÁČEK, I.: *Ze správ a kronik doby husitské (From the administration and chronicles of the Hussite period)*. Prague: Svoboda, 1981, p. 176 – 177.

¹¹⁴ KEJŘ, J.: *Husův proces (The Hus process)*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 2000, p. 206.

¹¹⁵ KALISTA, Z.: *STRUČNÉ DĚJINY ČESKOSLOVENSKÉ (A BRIEF HISTORY OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA)*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 1992, p. 125.

¹¹⁶ HERTLING, L.: *Dejiny katolíckej cirkvi (History of the Catholic Church)*. Samizdat, p. 218 – 219.

¹¹⁷ ELSER, M. – EWALD, S. – MURRER, G.: *Encyklopedie náboženství (Encyclopaedia of Religion)*. p. 109.

¹¹⁸ FRANZEN, A.: *Malé církevní dějiny (A small church history)*. Prague, 1992, p. 173.

¹¹⁹ KUMOR, B.: *Církevné dejiny – jeseň cirkevného stredoveku (Church History - the autumn of the Church of the Middle Ages)*. Levoča: Polypress, 2002, p. 91.

¹²⁰ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Církevné dejiny (Church history)*, Vol. II. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 31.

¹²¹ FRÖHLICH, R.: *Dva tisíce let dějin cirkve (Two thousand years of the history of the Church)*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 1999, p. 116.

¹²² BAGIN, A.: *Církevné dejiny – stredovek (Church history - The Middle Ages)*. Bratislava: CMBF, 1982, p. 187.

joining of benefices were abolished.¹²³ There was a limited right of tenths for the pope and other church officials and reduced church taxes.¹²⁴

It deliberated also on the occupation of ecclesiastical benefices, the reform of the papal curia, dispensation, indulgences, simony and the non-observance of a permanent residence.¹²⁵ The council ordered the clerics to wear tonsure and forbade the wearing of secular garments.¹²⁶

Eventually, on the 21st March 1418, the reform decrees eliminated unhealthy practices from the period of “the Avignon captivity”.¹²⁷

THE DOGMATIC PROVISIONS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council of Constance renounced the doctrinal heresies of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus.¹²⁸

John Wycliffe (1320 - 1384), a professor at Oxford University, was the most dangerous leader of the Reformation in England. Wycliffe essentially argued that the Church was not founded by Jesus Christ as a visible community, having the right of teaching and management.

He acknowledged only the *predestined* church, that is to say predetermined for salvation. He refused tradition and considered the Holy Scripture as the single source of faith. He acknowledged the theory of the superiority of the emperor over the pope, which also Marsilius of Padua took from him.¹²⁹ The Council of Constance condemned Wycliffe’s assertion: *The Catholic Church is the synagogue of Satan, the Pope is not the closest immediate representative of Christ and the apostles.*¹³⁰

The Sacrament of Reconciliation according to Wycliffe’s teaching does not depend on priestly absolution, but only from the sinner’s repentance. In connection with this, he declared that it does not matter whether the minister of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be a layman, a priest, a bishop, or the pope himself. The confession of sins, according to him, is even unnecessary.¹³¹

Jan Hus was a supporter of Wycliffe’s assertions, although not in all points. He also renounced the legal-institutional establishment of the Church, which was of the utmost outrage for the conciliar fa-

¹²³ BÉCHEAU, F.: *Histoire des Conciles (The History of the Councils)*. Toulouse, 1993, p. 158.

¹²⁴ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechne w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*. Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 89.

¹²⁵ KADLEC, J.: *Dějiny Katolické církve (The history of the Catholic Church). II. Vol.* Brno: Palacký University, 1993, p. 243.

¹²⁶ HERTLING, L.: *Dejiny katolickej cirkvi (History of the Catholic Church)*. Samizdat, p. 218 – 219.

¹²⁷ KUMOR, B.: *Cirkevné dejiny – jeseň cirkevného stredoveku (Church History - the autumn of the Church of the Middle Ages)*. Levoča: Polypress, 2002, p. 91.

¹²⁸ MRÁČEK, P. K.: *Stručná příručka církevních dějin (A Brief Manual of Church History)*. Olomouc: Maticе Cyrilometodějská (Matica of Cyril and Methodius), 1996, p. 85.

¹²⁹ GŁOWA, S. – BIEDA, I.: *Breviarium fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła (The choice of doctrinal expression of the Church)*, c. d., p. 65.

¹³⁰ GOFFA, J.: *L’uomo medievale (Medieval man)*. Roma – Bari : Giuseppe Laterza and Figli Spa 1996, p. 172 – 173.

¹³¹ ZIENTARA, B.: *Historia powszechna średniowiecza (A widespread history of the Middle Ages)*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo “TRIO”, 1994, p. 386.

thers who sought to re-create the unity of the Church.¹³² The Constance concilium rejected Hus' assertion saying: *Everyone predestined for damnation, although sometimes living in sanctifying grace, according to the general rule of justice, cannot be a limb of the Holy Church. Conversely, everyone predestined for heaven, always remains a limb of the Church, although sometimes has lost sanctifying grace, but has not lost the grace of predestination.*¹³³

The issue of the administration of Holy Communion by the laity under both methods entered into the council doctrinal character, because in Bohemia priests and laity were considered to have an equivalent status in the Church.¹³⁴ This theme was related to the doctrine of the Church. On the issue of the chalice, which was advocated by Prague magister Jakub from Mišna, Jan Hus took the opposite view in his work *De sanguine Christi sub specie vini a laicis sumendo*, written in Constance, however later he began to openly support Jakub.¹³⁵

The decree of the council does not deny that Jesus administered Holy Communion under both ways. The concilium emphasised the definitive truth of faith: beneath each consecrated essence, the whole Christ is present. The council wanted to achieve that the administering of Holy Communion under the man-

ner of bread avoided many heresies and delusions. Pope Martin V confirmed this practice in two personal bulls.¹³⁶

The Council still dealt with the problem of tyranny. A lot of time and discussions at the council foreclosed the admissibility of the "murder of a tyrant", as it had an unusually sharp political response. The particular case of the assassination of Prince Louis of Orleans, the brother of the French king, Charles VI, (1407) by Burgundy Prince John, was specifically related to it. This matter was tabled to the council by John XXIII, on whom the appellation had been raised.¹³⁷ It was dealt with by the Commission of Cardinals, but a great interest was also reflected by the Conciliar Commission for the issues of faith. After unusually long disputes, on the 15th January 1416, it was decided that the problem should be entrusted to the next general council.¹³⁸ However, this issue was circumscribed only a general prohibition and was not issued by any conciliar norm.¹³⁹

Neither provisions of the council in the ecclesiastical reform met the anticipated expectations. Although in general there was much talk about the reform, no one knew exactly where to start it. All reform efforts were directed mainly in order that countries could get rid of the too high pa-

¹³² NODL, M. – BUBNÍKOVÁ, M.: *Středověký člověk a jeho svět (Medieval man and his world)*. Prague: Nakladatelství Vyšehrad, 1999, p. 174 – 176.

¹³³ Głowa, S. – BIEDA, I.: *Breviarium fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła (The choice of the doctrinal expression of the Church)*. Poznań, 1988, p. 65.

¹³⁴ RÁČEK, B.: *Československé dějiny (Czechoslovak history)*. Prague: L. Kuncič, 1933, p. 189.

¹³⁵ KEJŘ, J.: *Husův proces (The Hus process)*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 2000, p. 168.

¹³⁶ HLAVÁČEK, I.: *Ze správ a kronik doby husitské (From the administration and chronicles of the Hussite period)*. Prague: Svoboda, 1981, p. 190 – 191

¹³⁷ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dějiny (Church history), Vol. II*. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 31.

¹³⁸ RAK, P.: *Historia soborów (History of the Councils)*. Krakow, 1998, p. 159.

¹³⁹ BAGIN, A.: *Cirkevné dějiny – stredovek (Church history - The Middle Ages)*. Bratislava: CMBF, 1982, p. 188.

pal taxes.¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, not even the above average personality of Pope Martin V tried hard enough in order that the inherently necessary reform of the Church actually took place.¹⁴¹

COMPLETION OF THE COUNCIL

Pope Martin V concluded with special agreements for the individual nations, which were first known as **concordats**. They concerned mainly the Conclave of Cardinals, in which each nation should have a proportional representation.¹⁴²

On the 22nd April 1418, Martin V ended and dissolved the council. During the duration of the three popes, the council held 45 formal sittings, one hundred general and national meetings and meetings of committees.¹⁴³ The last three sessions had a legitimate character of a general council, as Pope Martin V presided over them.¹⁴⁴ The resolutions of the previous sessions were not officially confirmed by Martin V, neither as a whole, nor as their individual parts. His successor, Pope Eugene IV, declared in 1446 that he recognises the general Council of Constance, as long as its resolution does not interfere with the rights, dignity and primacy of the Holy See.¹⁴⁵ In reality he thereby re-

nounced resolutions of the first three sessions, but also others, which were borne in the spirit of the conciliar theory. In all the remaining points, the Constance Council deems the 16th general concilium (*imperfecto modo*).¹⁴⁶

CONSEQUENCES OF THE COUNCIL

The completion of the schisms and tremendous work in the history of the Church must be objectively attributed to the account of the Council of Constance. The schism was sad, scandalous, and for the Church, an extremely dangerous event, hurting the Christian conscience.¹⁴⁷

Thirty-one year old, Catherine of Siena, wrote to Pedro de Luna, the future Benedict XIII, the Avignon antipope rebellious against the council, and at that time still cardinal: *Please let your eminence beg the earthly Christ (Urban VI) and the cardinals to introduce peace and exploit all possible means to achieve this objective, in order to worship God, reform the Holy Church and mitigate the scandal arising from the division.*¹⁴⁸

Martin V also managed to dispose of the remnants of the old papal schism, acquiring the King of Aragon, Alfonso V, the

¹⁴⁰ MRÁČEK, P. K.: *Stručná příručka církevních dějin (A Brief Manual of Church History)*. Olomouc: Maticce Cyrilometodějská (Matica of Cyril and Methodius), 1996, p. 76.

¹⁴¹ FISCHER-WOLLPERT, R.: *Lexikon der Päpste (Lexicon of the Popes)*. Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1985, p. 130 – 132.

¹⁴² BANASZAK, M.: *Historia Kościoła katolickiego (History of the Catholic Church)*, Vol. 2. Warsaw: Academy of Catholic Theology, 1989, p. 275.

¹⁴³ JEDIN, H.: *Kleine Konziliengeschichte 8th Edition* Freiburg im Breispau, 1978, p. 54.

¹⁴⁴ ŠPIRKO, J.: *Cirkevné dejiny (Church history)*, Vol. II. Turčiansky sv. Martin: Neografia, 1943, p. 32.

¹⁴⁵ MAXWEL-STUART, P.G.: *Papežové – Život a vláda od sv. Petra k Janu Pavlu II (Popes - The Life and Government from St. Peter to John Paul II)*. Prague: Svoboda, 1998, p. 144.

¹⁴⁶ DYL, J.: *Sobory powszechnie w drugim tysiącleciu chrześcijaństwa (Ecumenical councils in the second millennium of Christianity)*. Tarnów: Biblos, 1997, p. 93.

¹⁴⁷ ŠMÁLIK, Š.: *Boží ľud na cestách (God's people on the move). Cirkev v 49 pokoleniach (The Church in 49 generations)*. Bratislava: Lúč, 1997, p. 412 – 413.

¹⁴⁸ RAK, P.: *Historia soborów (History of the Councils)*. Krakow, 1998, p. 160.

main protector of the antipope, Benedict XIII. After his death, still one more antipope was elected, canon Munnoz of Valencia, who was named Clement VIII, but even Aragón did not recognise him. The legacy of Cardinal Peter de Foix, a relative of the King of Aragon (1425), ultimately led to the resignation of the antipope Clement VIII (26th July 1429). The Synod, which took place on this occasion in Tours, adopted several reform decrees.¹⁴⁹

In accordance with the Constance Decree *Frequens*, the pope called the concilium to Pavia, on the 23rd April 1423, which was supposed to address the reform of the Church. Because of cholera, which broke out in the city, they moved the council to Siena. This council, which did not make a single reform decree, ended in 1424.¹⁵⁰ The following concilium was to take place in 1431, in Basel.¹⁵¹ The pope, fearing the renewed decrees of Constance, only agreed to the convening of the council in Basel under the threat of the opening of the German national synod and designated to it the legate Cardinal Julian Cezarija.¹⁵² Before the concilium

was open, the pope died on the 20th February 1431, and was buried in the Lateran Basilica of St. John.¹⁵³

ABSTRACT

The Council of Constance belongs among the principle historical milestones of the Catholic Church. The delegates of this concilium in Constance primarily addressed the internal crisis of the clergy. They unequivocally rejected and condemned the heretical teachings of Jan Hus and his followers. The author of this study thoroughly analyses the contemporary secular, political, social and religious situation at the time of the preparation of the Council of Constance and its progress. He evaluates the results of the negotiations of the conciliar fathers in Constance and the impact of the documents adopted at this concilium, as reflected in the life of the Church, in the coming decades.

KEYWORDS

Avignon, the Church, heresy, Hus, Council, reform, dogmatic.

Dobre wychowanie polega na ukrywaniu tego, jak wysoko człowiek ceni sam siebie, a jak nisko - innych.

¹⁴⁹ KUMOR, B.: *Cirkevné dejiny – jeseň cirkevného stredoveku (Church History - the autumn of the Church of the Middle Ages)*. Levoča: Polypress, 2002, p. 92.

¹⁵⁰ JUDÁK, V.: *Učebné texty z cirkevných dejín (Teaching texts from Church History)*. Bratislava: UK CMBF, 1998, p. 155.

¹⁵¹ KUMOR, B.: *Cirkevné dejiny – jeseň cirkevného stredoveku (Church History - the autumn of the Church of the Middle Ages)*. Levoča: Polypress, 2002, p. 93.

¹⁵² FRÖHLICH, R.: *Dva tisíce let dějin církve (Two thousand years of the history of the Church)*. Prague: Vyšehrad, 1999, p. 116.

¹⁵³ KELLY, J.N.D.: *Pápeži dvoch tisícročí (Popes from two millennia)*. Bratislava: Roal, 1994, p. 194.