

Fudge, Thomas. *The Trial of Jan Hus: Medieval Heresy and Criminal Procedure*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 432 pp. Hardcover, \$82.00.

Thomas Fudge has written what is probably the most exhaustive study on the legal proceedings against Jan Hus, beginning in Prague and moving on to his culminating trial and fiery end at Constance. Thomas Fudge must be considered one of the leading experts on Jan Hus, for this volume is one of three books on Jan Hus and is the final result of a long research project which has yielded the two others: *Jan Hus: Religious Reform and Social Reformation in Bohemia* (2010) and *The Memory and Motivation of Jan Hus, Medieval Priest and Martyr* (2013). This book, then, completes a trilogy on the life of Jan Hus and comes at an important milestone; five hundred years since his death. It adds a very important contribution to the scholarship on Jan Hus and will be welcomed by scholars in the field.

Fudge, in his own words, has two goals in his book. The first is to legally assess the trials and the procedures that describe the case against Jan Hus in the light of prevailing canonical legislation. Fudge is seeking to answer the question: Was this trial legal? Second, Fudge seeks to evaluate the case against Jan Hus from a theological point of view. Was Hus guilty of heresy? Did Jan Hus have doctrinal views contrary to the teachings of the medieval church? Upon what legal and theological bases does the trial verdict rest?

Thomas Fudge's main argument is to prove that the trial of Jan Hus was legitimate and that it followed medieval legal precedent. Although he acknowledges some irregularities in some aspects of the trial, he asserts that based on accepted legal practices of that time, Hus's trial was legally sound. He also acknowledges that his views agree with the noted Czech scholar, Jiří Kejř and that he draws upon Kejř's research and is instructed by it, but he has also gone beyond and deeper than Kejř.

In the first half of the book, Fudge carefully lays out the historical groundwork for the trial by explaining the nature and history of medieval heresy and examines how laws, legal procedures, and practices affected medieval heresy trials. His intent is to provide evidence to support his main argument, namely that Jan Hus's trial followed historical legal precedent. One of Fudge's great achievements is his voluminous use of primary sources, not found in the English language, such as sermons, diaries, legal briefs, papal encyclicals, and narrative accounts of the council of Constance. The story is particularly compelling because it occurred in the history of the church when medieval Catholicism was in the throes of a leadership crisis. It was the time of the papal schism of the church, when there were various popes claiming to be legitimate and several European nations pledging allegiance to different popes according to their own national interests. The intersection of these wider events within the trial of Jan Hus exposed the corrupt underbelly of medieval Catholicism and made the call of Hus for reformation in the church even more strikingly relevant and urgently necessary.

Fudge uses his extensive and voluminous primary sources to weave a compelling and dramatic narrative that reads almost like a novel in some places. This is not merely dry historic retelling of facts, people, and events.

It is a human drama that pits Jan Hus and some of his supporters, including Jan Jesenic (his lawyer), Jerome, Simon Tisnov, and many nobles from Bohemia, against determined adversaries such as Michael de Causis, Stephen Palec, Stanislav of Znojmo and Zbynek Zajic representing the interests of the medieval church. There is an intense battle between the various characters and, as the conflict ebbs and flows, both sides experience victories and defeats before the final crushing defeat of Jan Hus and his followers at Constance. In many ways, Jan Hus's battle with the church was a warning and a foretaste of the bloody religious wars that would engulf Bohemia in the aftermath of his execution, resulting in the devastation of that country and the deaths of countless thousands.

In the second half of the book, Fudge describes the eight years of legal struggles that Hus had with the church, during which time he was excommunicated four times and the entire city of Prague came under an interdict because of him. Hus went into exile but, of course, ignored his being banned from preaching and continued to influence the people. Jan Hus and his supporters would write a series of appeals to church officials at the various levels of the church hierarchy, as well as treatises to explain his views in an attempt to counteract the false allegations made against him and seeking the removal of the heretical label that was placed on him. Ultimately, none of these efforts were successful and Hus was ordered to appear before the Roman Curia. In his final speech, Hus laid out the full history of his trials, and the false allegations made against him, and appealed to Christ for justice. Hus knew fully well, however, that this final appeal would seal his doom.

This book is well worth reading for a number of reasons. It is the most thorough analysis available in English of the legal proceedings against Jan Hus. Fudge has left no stone unturned in his quest for understanding the reasons behind the trial and punishment of this most revered reformer of late medieval Christianity. His conclusions are troubling and can cause one to reevaluate the myth surrounding Hus. The whole reading experience is also a journey into the arcane world of medieval legal procedures and judicial practices. Although Fudge acknowledges his lack of legal training, because of his experience with the modern legal system, he has provided us with an inside look at one of the most storied legal cases in church history with the deftness, skill, and thoroughness of an expert legal mind. He has combined the acumen of a competent church historian with the analytic skills of a legal scholar. I do not agree with some of his conclusions, but the breadth and scope of his research is admirable.

This study also provides us a window into the theological world of medieval Catholicism with regard to the history and nature of heresy. What Fudge reveals is an organization that gave no concessions to dissenting voices. There is no room here for tolerance. In this convoluted and twisted legal world, once a defendant was accused, guilt was assumed and the defendant had the difficult task of proving himself innocent. The problem that Hus experienced was that once the heretical label was placed on him, the only option the church left him was to confess his heresy. The forum they provided

for him was never intended to give him an opportunity to make his case. All they wanted was a public recantation that would also serve as a warning to others who may have had heretical tendencies.

Fudge fully acknowledges the pursuit of his study was not to determine whether Jan Hus's trial was based on truth and justice as some of the admirers of Jan Hus may be inclined to think, since many of them saw his trial and treatment as unjust and based on lies. Fudge's narrow definition of what is legal at times does not encompass truth and justice. Fudge's aim here is about what was legal according to the definition of that time and place. I was of the opinion that such legality, as it was being pursued by the church, would be based on truth and justice, but the trial of Jan Hus, as described by Fudge, seems to put aside justice and truth as important elements in the quest for legality. Can this case be considered legitimate and legal when the path to Hus's conviction is strewn with lies, perjuries, and bribes? If the path to the desired outcome is crooked, can the ultimate outcome be accepted as legitimate?

My major concern with Fudge's book is his narrow definition of what he considers "legal." While I may agree with his definition based on the legal precedence of the time, one must keep in mind that Hus was not simply being persecuted by a secular court. Jan Hus was a member of the Christian church, God's earthly representative that should supposedly base its decisions on justice and truth. The betrayal, treatment, and punishment of Jan Hus were clearly at odds with the principles of the Bible and against justice, truth, and mercy. Jan Hus, a deeply pious and morally upright priest, whose major aim was to rebuke the church of its many sins and call the church back to the teachings and practices of Jesus Christ, revealed how far removed the church was from these principles. Corruption, avarice, immorality, licentiousness, greed, secularism, materialism, and the unquenchable thirst for power had almost engulfed the church and its leaders, so that Hus's call for reform, like so many others before him, had to be crushed at all cost. Jan Hus remains a beloved and revered figure, while his detractors and critics are forgotten and left upon the dustbin of history. History has judged both groups, and Jan Hus has come out on the right side of history.

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Graves, Michael. *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture: What the Early Church Can Teach Us*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 201 pp. Paperback, \$24.00.

Since the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Christians have given much of their attention to issues of biblical interpretation. When the questions raised about the legitimacy of the clergy were applied to their interpretation of Scripture during and after the Reformation, a revolution in textual criticism and biblical historicism soon developed to the point that the supernatural foundation of Christian Scripture was seriously questioned. As a product of this hermeneutic of suspicion, the assumption that the Bible was inspired by God has been relegated to a secondary position in biblical studies. Michael