

***Jan Hus: Faithful Witness to Truth.* By Jan Blahoslav Lášek and Angelo Shaun Franklin. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2022. xx + 202 pp. \$95.00 hardback.**

Angelo Shaun Franklin refers to his collaboration and translation with Jan Lášek as an “unconventional volume,” and he is correct (vii). *Hus Witness to Truth* is not a biography of Bohemian Reformer Jan Hus, nor is it really narrow enough to be a topical monograph. It has an array of primary sources, with analysis, while providing fairly general and condensed narratives of Hus’s life with relevant scholarship. Much of the book is a work of translation from the original 1991 Czech edition, which in itself is a useful piece of historiography.

Lášek’s original work, skillfully translated by Franklin, is part of the broader post-communist religious reclamation of Czech history. It stems from the Czechoslovak Hussite Church and Evangelical Protestants’ striving to re-fan the flames of religious devotion in Czech lands in the wake of secular Marxist interpretations of the Hussite movement. In this context, “the Truth” that ties the book together appears to be the protestant beliefs of the author’s Czech Hussite church (xv). Yet, for centuries prior to Communism’s arrival in modern Czechia, no one doubted Hus’s religious devotion. In the intervening years since the original publication of this book, Hus’s devotion to religious reform remains unchallenged. The author’s equating of Hus’s beliefs with pieces of modern protestant doctrine, however, may make many current scholars of the Bohemian Reformation a bit squeamish (72–73). The author’s primary argument roughly equates Hus with Luther to bring international attention to Czech religious history and to give the predominately secular modern Czech nation a point of religious pride. In 1991, this was a major theme in Czech scholarship, but to the broader community of international scholars, thirty years later, this argument seems rather unnecessary. On the contrary, the field is working to draw attention to Hus in his own era and in many ways to demonstrate how he fits the late medieval context rather than situate him as precursor of the Reformation. The eight pages dedicated to the late medieval church are hardly adequate to contextualize Hus, and it reflects a need in much of the book to go a bit further in its search of the truth.

The work makes two significant contributions to current scholarship. First, it serves as a valuable link to a period of Hus scholarship that was widely ignored in English. No biography of Hus in English had been produced since Matthew Spinka’s (1968) and Thomas Fudge’s first biography of Hus in 2010. Since 2000, the amount of scholarship on Hus has expanded dramatically, but an English version of a 1991 work created during the reinvention of Czech religion is still a valuable resource for Anglophones interested in Hus. Second, where more recent scholarship tends to accept Hus’s strong religious convictions as given, this work documents their centrality to understanding Hus. To read recent scholarship on Hus in English, German, or Czech is to frequently, though not always, receive an often understated take on Hus’s strong convictions (often reflecting the secular perspective of the authors). Placing Hus’s understanding of “truth” at the center of this narrative, serves to remind scholars of his theological center.

Overall, I appreciated the level of scholarship in this manuscript, and early on I realized that this work would have been quite valuable early in my research, especially for its bibliography. The editor/translator’s updates to the original notes correct some of the shortcomings in areas where research has advanced considerably since 1991. In

addition, translations of Hus's writings to English are always welcome as they create opportunities for scholars without Czech or limited Latin to access Hus's words and ideas.

The text, however, strays a bit far toward hero worship, as the author and translator utilize glowing language fit for a saint rather than a historical figure who still remains enigmatic (89). The author argues for Hus to be held as a precursor of the Reformation, and the focus on truth is grounded in Reformation understanding of the term (73). A second frustrating aspect of the piece is its rather shallow dip into Hus's preaching. The scholarship on preaching is extensive and demonstrably shows that Hus fit well into the preaching paradigms of the age, but this technical scholarship is mostly absent from the notes. Finally, the sources highlighted in the scholarship are also rather limited in scope. A whole chapter is dedicated to an analysis of the *Appeal to Jesus Christ the Supreme Judge* from 1412, and the author spends significant time throughout with Hus's *On the Church*, the *Czech Sunday Postil*, and *Dcerka* but these sources date from 1414. As these sources come in the last three years of Hus's career, they give a certain perspective of a Hus removed from his congregation and in conflict with his bishop and king. The author, in many respects, ignores the early career of Hus, which is certainly less heroic and more mainline pastoral than the radical reformer on a steady march toward martyrdom. An analysis of Hus's understanding of the truth before the controversies of his later life might make an interesting comparison.

Although imperfect and rather dated, parts of this work should still be valuable for scholars working on religious reform or fifteenth-century Bohemia. If one is particularly interested in late medieval/Reformation understandings of truth, this work is particularly useful. I would not, however, suggest that someone interested in Hus or the Bohemian Reformation start with this work, as more comprehensive alternatives in English are available.

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***The Many Faces of Credulitas: Credibility, Credulity, and Belief in Post-Reformation Catholicism.* By Stefania Tutino. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. x + 248 pp. £74.00.**

This book—the last in a list that includes several contributions Tutino has devoted to Catholic theological elaboration and doctrinal control—addresses the relationship between truth and demonstration as well as faith and empirical proof in the Roman Church after the Reformation. She privileges two kinds of sources—theological texts and the documents produced by the Congregations of Inquisition and Index—to trace the trajectory of a Latin term of great impact in the Western tradition. This is *credulitas*, which meant both credulity and credibility. While pagan authors had stigmatized as *credulitas* the attitude of those who are inclined to believe what cannot be ascertained, Augustine and Aquinas outlined the traditional interpretation of the term. Believing means first of all performing an act of the will to embrace a truth that is