

His-Story

Church history and why it matters to me

SOMETHING'S
GOTTA GIVE

The Reformation Dawns

I. Introduction: Matthew 23:1-12

¹ Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ² “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, ³ so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. ⁴ They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. ⁵ They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, ⁶ and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues ⁷ and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. ⁸ But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹ And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. ¹¹ The greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Hmmm.... Some things to think about

1. Were the scribes and pharisees in Jesus’ days possible precursors to the papal positions? Are we, in a Protensant church, any better (or worse)?
2. In calling a man a “pope” — which comes from the Greek word *pappas* meaning “father” — is this a direct violation of Jesus’ instruction in Matt. 23:9, or was Jesus speaking hyperbolically?

II. Problems in the Papacy (or shall we say “Papacies”?)

- A. 70 Year captivity of the Church
 1. In 1305 Pope Clement V moved the papacy (the head of operations for the Roman Catholic Church) from Rome, Italy to Avignon, France
 2. Practically all of Europe protested this move
 3. Clement V dismantled the Order of the Knights Templar who had been charged for their sacrilege, sodomy, and idolatrous practices
 4. For 70 years the papacy ruled from Avignon, but truth be told it was really the French Monarchy that controlled the papacy (therefore France had its thumb on the church)
- B. 1378 began the Great Schism
 1. Pope Gregory XI elected Pope and moved the papacy back to Rome
 2. However, France declared Clement VII to be the next Pope
 3. The Roman Church struggled for 40 years with two rivaling popes
 4. Reconciliation was needed (and felt) throughout Europe
- C. 1409: The Conciliar Movement
 1. The cardinals of both popes, tired of the duelling leaders, proposed a council in Pisa in 1409 (The cardinals came, but the 2 popes refused)
 2. Outcomes of the council
 - a. The cardinals took measures to address the widespread practices of simony (the buying or selling of ecclesiastical privileges, for example pardons or benefices)
 - b. Voted to depose both popes and appointed Alexander V to be the new Pope
 3. When this decision reached Rome and Avignon, both popes refused to resign, resulting in having three popes
 4. Alexander V died (in less than a year of being elected), and John XXIII appointed new pope
 5. John unable to bring reconciliation and through political pressure fled to Emperor Sigismund for refuge

Notes

6. Sigismund called for the Council of Constance (1414) to put an end to the craziness and bring some stability
 - a. John XXIII forced to resign as Pope
 - b. Gregory XII resigned (he had promised to resign if his rivals did too)
 - c. Pope Benedict XIII (of Avignon) refused to resign but by this time (and with the Hundred Years War in France), he was not respected or heeded. Avignon never elected a successor.
 - d. Martin V elected as the sole Pope over the church
7. *Those who gathered at Constance had hoped, not only to end the schism, but also to begin the long process of ridding the church of heresy and corruption. It was with the first of these in mind that they condemned John Huss... When it came to evils such as simony, pluralism and absenteeism, the council found that it could do little more than issue some fairly general decrees. It therefore resolved to take measures for the continuation of what it had begun, and ordered that similar councils should meet periodically in order to make certain that the reformation that began at Constance would continue* (Justo González. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1. page 345*).

III. The papacy draws criticism

- A. With the papacy declining in prestige, other religious movements sprang up or were off-shoots from recognized orders
 1. The Franciscans
 - a. The question of whether or not to own property; and if so who “owns” it – the church or the order or no one?
 - b. Franciscans divided into two groups:
 - The Spirituals, who maintained absolute poverty and thought they nor the church should own property. The Spirituals were vocal in their discontent with the church (and its affluence)
 - The Conventuals, who sought to work with the Catholic Church
 - c. Spirituals eventually condemned and excommunicated
 2. The Flagellants
 - a. Religious zealots who sought to atone for their sins through self-inflicted pain
 - b. Were known to starve themselves, tote large wooden crosses, and carry around whips that they routinely used on themselves
 - c. Subtle message that one doesn’t need a pope or a priest to issue weak and ineffective penances
 3. Public distrust of the church
 - a. The populace began to question the tenants and practices of the church (not just theologians)
 - Italian writer/poet Boccaccio: wrote anti-clerical pieces
 - English writers Langland and Chaucer: condemned church wealth
 - d. Lollards (from the Dutch word for *mutterer* or *mumbler*): followers of Wyclif and Huss who condemned church practices
- B. Major players
 1. William of Ockham (1290-1349) and Ockham’s razor (see page 3)
 2. John Wyclif (about 1329-1384) (see page 4)
 3. Jan Hus (1374-1415) (see page 4)

IV. Why this segment of history matters (or *should matter*) to me

- A. How does this lesson enhance your knowledge of God?
- B. In what new ways are you challenged in your own walk with Christ?

William of Ockham

H. D. McDonald

William of Ockham was a thinker of first-rate importance. He was born around 1290, probably in the village of Ockham in Surrey, England, and died in Munich around 1349. After entering the Franciscan order he began theological study at Oxford around 1309, and completed the requirements for the status of Master with his lectures on Peter Lombard's *Book of Sentences* (about 1318-20).

Apparently denounced as a heretic to Pope John XXII by the university's former chancellor, William was summoned to Avignon in 1324. While there, he was embroiled in a controversy about apostolic poverty, which made him more critical of the papacy. He called for a college of popes to rule the church, and claimed that Christ was the church's only head—teachings which looked forward to the conciliar movement. Ockham entirely rejected papal authority in secular matters. In 1328 he fled to the service of the Emperor, Louis of Bavaria, supporting him in his struggles with the papacy.

In philosophy, William elaborated a new form of Nominalist theory. He rejected the prevailing view that 'universals' really exist. He argued that they are simply artificial products of the human mind, necessary for communicating by means of language. Only individual or 'particular' things have real existence. William's Nominalism became known as 'the modern way' (*via moderna*) over against 'the old way' (*via antiqua*) of

Aquinas. Since knowledge was based on experience of individual things, natural science took on new significance.

In his many writings, William discussed with masterly logical skill the great themes of philosophy and theology. By the principle known as 'Ockham's razor' he insisted that 'What can be done with fewer (assumptions) is done in vain with more'; the mind should not multiply things without necessity. William made an elaborate criticism of philosophical proofs for the existence of God, although he himself had a strong, positive theology. He stressed that God was known by faith alone, not by reason or illumination, and that God's will was absolutely supreme. In these and other respects William of Ockham paved the way for Reformation theology.

AN AGE OF UNREST

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One of the earliest surviving detailed maps of Britain. It was drawn about 1250 by Matthew Paris, a historian and monk at St Albans, Hertfordshire.



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John Wyclif

Tim Dowley

R We ask God then of his supreme goodness to reform our church, as being entirely out of joint, to the perfectness of its first beginning.

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The Lollard Conclusions,
1394



John Wyclif (about 1329-84) was a prominent English reformer of the later Middle Ages. He came from the north of England, and became a leading philosopher at Oxford University. He was invited to serve at court by John of Gaunt, who was acting as ruler at this time. Wyclif offended the church by backing the right of the government to seize the property of corrupt clergymen. His views were condemned by

the pope in 1377, but Wyclif's influential friends protected him. Wyclif pushed his anti-clerical views further, and began to attack some of the central doctrines of the medieval church. He opposed the doctrine of transubstantiation. He claimed rather that Christ was spiritually present in the eucharist. He held that the church consisted of God's chosen people, who did not need a priest to mediate with God for them.

The reformer was gradually deserted by his friends in high places, and the church authorities forced him and his followers out of Oxford. In 1382 Wyclif, a sick man, went to live at Lutterworth, in the midlands, where he died in 1384.

Wyclif wrote many books, including a *Summa Theologica*. He initiated a new translation of the Latin *Vulgate Bible* into English (*The Wyclif Bible*).

A group of followers soon arose around Wyclif at Oxford. He attracted support by his energetic preaching and lecturing. His followers spread to Leicestershire, and became known as 'Lollards'—which may mean 'mutterer' or 'mumbler'. By 1395 the Lollards had developed into an organized group, with their own ministers and popular support.

The Lollards stood for many of the ideas set out by Wyclif. They believed particularly that the main task of a priest was to preach, and that the Bible should be available to everyone in his own language. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Lollards were suppressed, particularly when their protest became linked with political unrest. But Lollardy continued to thrive in some parts of England, and prepared the way for the coming of Lutheranism in the next century.

Jan Hus

Caroline T. Marshall

Jan Hus (1374-1415) achieved fame as a martyr to the cause of church reform and Czech nationalism. Jan was ordained a priest in 1401, and spent much of his career teaching at the Charles University in Prague, and as preacher in the Bethlehem Chapel, close to the university.

In his writing and public preaching Hus emphasized personal piety and purity of life. He was heavily indebted to the works of Wyclif. He stressed the role of Scripture as an authority lifted preaching to an important status in church services. In the process he became a national hero. In his chief work, *On the Church*, he defined the church as the body of Christ, with Christ its only head. Although he defended the traditional authority of the clergy, he taught that only God can forgive sin.

Hus believed that neither popes nor cardinals could establish doctrine which was contrary to Scripture, nor should

any Christian obey an order from them which was plainly wrong. He condemned the corruptness of the clergy and criticized his people for worshipping images, belief in false miracles, and undertaking 'superstitious pilgrimages'. He criticized the church for withholding the cup of wine from the people during communion, and condemned the sale of indulgences.

Hus was at the centre of lengthy struggles in Prague, and his case was referred to the Council of Constance in order to defend his beliefs. Although he was travelling under the Emperor's safe-conduct, he was tried and condemned to be burnt at the stake, without a real opportunity to explain his views. However, his heroic death aroused the national feelings of the Czech people, who established the Hussite church in Bohemia until the Hapsburgs conquered in 1620 and restored the Roman Catholic church. The Hussite reform was closely associated with the resistance of the Czechs to German domination.

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