



Reformation Studies

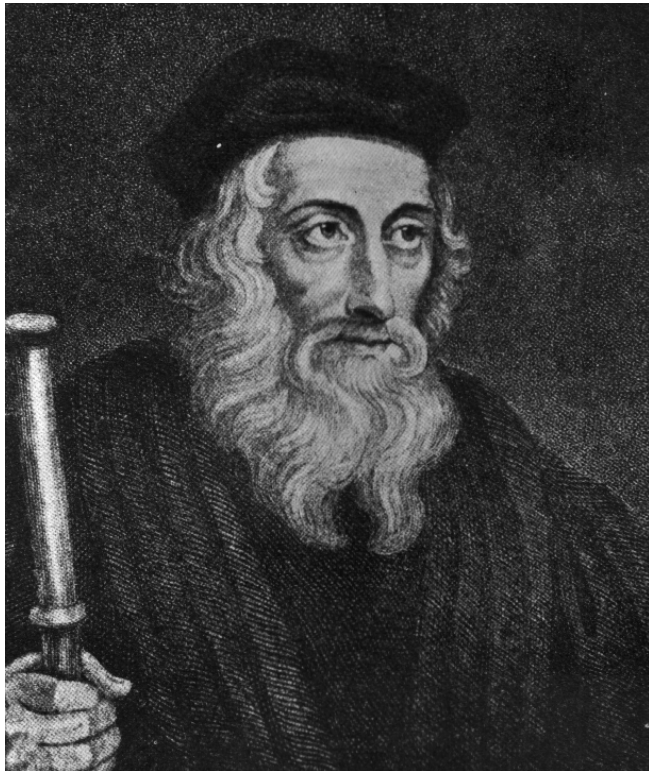
John Hus

A STUDY OF THE PEOPLE AND DOCTRINES OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION
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John Wycliffe (1324-1384)

“Morning Star of the Reformation”



- ▶ In 1384, John Wycliffe, the morning star of the reformation, died of a stroke in Lutterworth, England. His life, until its end, was the beginning of a recovery of the Scriptures and the Gospel from the corrupt and power hungry Church of Rome.
- ▶ Wycliffe broke with tradition by refusing to claim that the Church was the final authority in matters of faith.
- ▶ In 1378 he authored *The Truth of Holy Scripture* in which he claimed that the Bible alone was the authority for believers. He stated that church councils, tradition, and even the Pope himself were to be held accountable to the authority and teaching of Scripture.

Wycliffe's Controversy with Rome

- ▶ He also proclaimed that every Christian should be able to read the Bible for himself! This was novel, for the church not only controlled and interpreted the Bible for its members, but only the clergy were even allowed to own or read Bibles! Wycliffe's answer was to publish the Bible in the everyday language of the people.
- ▶ Wycliffe went on to say that the office of Pope was an invention of men and not based on Scripture. He said that the Pope was indeed the antichrist, exalting himself in the place of Christ the Lord. Further, he stood up against the doctrine of transubstantiation – the idea that at the offering of the mass, the Eucharist, that the priest offered Jesus again as a sacrifice for God's people and that the people then ate bread and wine which was literally the physical body and blood of Jesus.

Wycliffe's Controversy with Rome

- ▶ As Wycliffe continued in the teachings and tradition of Augustine his greatest contribution to the world was the Bible translated into everyday language.
- ▶ He Appealed to Parliament not to pay Rome
- ▶ Charged with Heresy and put on trial in London in 1374 - Pope Gregory XI filed 18 charges against Wycliffe, however, his trial ended with an outright brawl
- ▶ Great Papal Schism: The Election of rival popes in 1378 meant he was put under house arrest and his trial did not proceed
- ▶ Decried the wealth and immorality of the "Church" and clergy
- ▶ Denied: transubstantiation, indulgences, confessional, prayers to saints, icons, pilgrimages, celibacy of clergy, authority of popes and councils
- ▶ Proclaimed: inerrancy of Scripture, sole authority of Scripture over the church and every person, priesthood of the believer, translating the Scripture into English

Wycliffe on Trial

- ▶ At Trial
- ▶ 1. The pope of Rome has no political authority.
- ▶ 2. All popes are sinners just as other men and need to be reprovved.
- ▶ 3. The pope has no right to the national resources of England.
- ▶ 4. Priests have no power to forgive sins.
- ▶ 5. Neither the pope nor his priests have the power of excommunication.
- ▶ 6. The Church is a plunderer of the world's goods.
- ▶ 7. No tithes should be paid to Rome.
- ▶ 8. The Mass was blasphemous.

Wycliffe on Scripture

- ▶ The Bible translated was belittled by Rome: "By this translation, the Scriptures have become vulgar, and they are more available to lay, and even to women who can read, than they were to learned scholars, who have a high intelligence. So the pearl of the gospel is scattered and trodden underfoot by swine."
- ▶ Wycliffe replied, "Englishmen learn Christ's law best in English. Moses heard God's law in his own tongue; so did Christ's apostles."
- ▶ Translated Latin Vulgate into English, helped and finished by John Purvey
- ▶ Later, the Church made it illegal to read the Bible in English, or to translate, print, or own a copy in English

Wycliffe's Defense

- ▶ “You say it is heresy to speak of the Holy Scriptures in English. You call me a heretic because I have translated the Bible into the common tongue of the people. Do you know whom you blaspheme? Did not the Holy Ghost give the word of God first in the mother tongue of the nations to whom it was addressed? Why do ye speak against the Holy Ghost? You say that the Church of God is in danger from this book. How can that be? Is it not from the Bible only that we learn that God hath set up such a society as the Church on earth? Is it not the Bible that gives all its authority to the Church? Is it not from the Bible that we learn who is the builder and sovereign of the Church, what are the laws by which she is to be governed, and the rights and privileges of her members? Without the Bible, what proof has the Church to show for all these? It is you who place the Church in peril by hiding the divine warrant, the epistle of her King, for the authority she wields and the faith she enjoins.”

Wycliffe's Defense

- ▶ “Christ and his apostles taught the people in the language best known to them. It is certain that the truth of the Christian faith becomes more evident the more the faith itself is known. Therefore the doctrine should not only be in Latin but also in the common tongue, and as the faith of the Church is contained in the Scriptures, the more these are known in the true sense the better. The laity ought to understand the faith, and since the doctrines of our faith are in the Scriptures, believers should have the Scriptures in a language familiar to the people, and to this end the Holy Ghost endued them with knowledge of all tongues. If it is heresy to read the Bible then the Holy Ghost Himself is condemned who gave in tongues to the apostles of Christ to speak the word of God in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven. If Christ was so merciful as to send the Holy Ghost to heathen men, why should it be taken away from us in this land that be Christian men? If you say that believers are heretics, then thou make Christ a heretic. If thou condemnest the word of God in any language as heresy, then you condemn God as a heretic that spoke the word, for He and His word are all one, and if His word is the life of the world how many Antichrists take it away from us that are Christian men, and allow the people to die for hunger in heresy?”

Wycliffe's Death and Followers

- ▶ Suffered a stroke while administering the Lord's Supper, Dec. 29, 1384
- ▶ Died 2 days later, Dec. 31, 1384
- ▶ The Lollards, continued through until the time of the Reformation

Wycliffe's Twelve Conclusions

- ▶ The first conclusion asserts that the English Church has become too involved in affairs of temporal power, led by the bad example of the Church of Rome.
- ▶ The second conclusion asserts that the ceremonies used for the ordination of priests and bishops are without scriptural basis or precedent.
- ▶ The third conclusion asserts that the practice of clerical celibacy has encouraged homosexuality among the clergy.
- ▶ The fourth conclusion asserts that the doctrine of transubstantiation leads to idolatrous worship of everyday objects (the communion wafers).

Wycliffe's Twelve Conclusions

- ▶ The fifth conclusion asserts that the exorcisms and hallowings carried out by priests are a sort of witchcraft and are incompatible with Christian theology.
- ▶ The sixth conclusion asserts that it is inappropriate for men who hold high office in the Church to simultaneously hold positions of great temporal power.
- ▶ The seventh conclusion asserts that prayers for the souls of specific individual deceased persons is uncharitable, since it implicitly excludes all the other blessed dead who are not being prayed for, and that the practice of requesting prayers for the dead by making financial contributions is a sort of bribery that corrupts the Church.
- ▶ The eighth conclusion asserts that the practices of pilgrimage and the veneration of relics at best are ineffectual for spiritual merit and at worst approach idolatry in their worship of created objects.

Wycliffe's Twelve Conclusions

- ▶ The ninth conclusion asserts that the practice of confession for the absolution of sins is blasphemous, because only God has the power to forgive sins, and because if priests did have that power it would be cruel and uncharitable of them to withhold that forgiveness from anyone in the world, even if they refused to confess.
- ▶ The tenth conclusion asserts that Christians should refrain from warfare, and in particular that wars given religious justifications, such as crusades, are blasphemous because Christ taught men to love and forgive their enemies.
- ▶ The eleventh conclusion asserts that women in the Church who have made vows of celibacy are having sex, becoming pregnant, and then seeking abortions to conceal the fact that they have broken their vows, a practice which the text strongly condemns.
- ▶ The twelfth conclusion asserts that Christians are devoting too much of their energy and attention to the making of beautiful objects of art and craft, and that people should simplify their lives and renew their devotion to godliness by refraining from unnecessary endeavors.

John Hus (1374-1415)



- ▶ John Hus, a priest in Bohemia, carried on the teachings of John Wycliffe, not only encouraging the translation of the Word of God into the language of the people, but he preached in the language of the people instead of in Latin. He wanted the gospel to be heard and believed by those to whom he preached.
- ▶ Hus rejected the power and authority of the Pope, and while at a meeting to discuss his views he was arrested and burned at the stake (July 6, 1415) for his “heresy.” The council also took the opportunity to proclaim Wycliffe a heretic, even though he had been dead for almost 40 years. In fact, they dug up his bones and burned them in contempt for his teaching and its influence on Hus.

Hus' Positions

- ▶ Pastoring in Prague, Czechoslovakia, he discovered Wycliffe's writings and made hand written copies for himself to study (Oxford to Bohemia).
- ▶ Preached in the common language and denounced all three currently serving popes and the immorality of the clergy
- ▶ Hung pictures in his church contrasting popes to Christ – Jesus washing feet while the pope's feet were being kissed, etc.
- ▶ Taught Sola Scriptura – church under authority of Scripture
- ▶ Called for higher standard of holiness for clergy
- ▶ Decried financial abuses of the church hierarchy and the doctrine of Papal Infallibility
- ▶ Called for printing and preaching the Bible in common languages
- ▶ Opposed indulgences
- ▶ Called for all church members to receive communion (at that time, congregation received the bread but only the priest could drink the wine)

Hus' Trial and Death

- ▶ Hus was promised safe travel to discuss his views, but was excommunicated, imprisoned, and accused of being a “Wycliffite.” He was not allowed to defend himself or his writings and when he refused to recant, and was declared a heretic.
- ▶ At the end of Hus' trial, when asked if he would appeal to the Pope for mercy, he responded, “I do affirm before you all, that there is no more just or effectual appeal, than that which is made unto Christ. Who is a higher judge than Christ?”
- ▶ When the chain was wrapped around his neck, binding him to the stake, he cried out, “My Lord Jesus Christ was bound with a harder chain than this for my sake, and why then should I be ashamed of this rusty one?”
- ▶ As Hus was dying, being burned alive at the stake, he proclaimed, “What I have taught with my lips I seal with my blood. You are now going to burn a goose, but in a century you will have a swan which you can neither roast nor boil.”
- ▶ He died singing Luke 18:38 - “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Hus' Influence

- ▶ After Hus' death, there were several wars fought between Rome and Bohemia and Moravia – the Hussite Wars. Many members were killed in the Thirty Year War (1618-1648) as Northern Protestants fought Rome. Many fled to Poland then sought refuge later at the Estate of Count Von Zinzendorf (a Lutheran noble). “Preach Christ. Die. Be Forgotten.”
- ▶ They reorganized under Zinzendorf in the 1700s as the Moravian Church and launched a massive international missionary endeavor including ministering to Mohican and Cherokee Indians in America.
- ▶ Their ministry lead directly to the conversion of John and later Charles Wesley.
- ▶ Followers broke into several denominations including The Unity of the Brethren which eventually included 250,000 followers
- ▶ The Brethren published the Bible and hymnals in the common language

Sola Scriptura



- ▶ In the years between Hus and Luther there arose another figure of great importance, William Tyndale. He learned Greek so that he might translate the Word of God in the New Testament from the original language into English. You and I have our Bibles today because of the perseverance and hard work of William Tyndale. His English New Testament is certainly one of the most important books ever published in the English language.
- ▶ Tyndale, while in attendance at a meeting with priests and bishops said that he “defied the Pope and all his laws” and vowed that “a plough-boy would know more of the Scriptures than they.” He was condemned as a blasphemer and heretic and burnt at the stake.

Sola Scriptura

- ▶ The name Hus, means literally “goose.” In the 100 years from 1415 to the early 1500s another man came on the scene, a man whose family crest was the picture of a swan. That man was Martin Luther.
- ▶ As the Word of God spread, and God continued moving upon men to proclaim the truth of the gospel, on the Eve of All Saints Day, October 31, 1517, (Reformation Day), a momentous and incredible event took place at the Church in Wittenberg, Germany, in fulfillment of Hus earlier prophecy. There this Roman Catholic monk named Martin Luther, the swan, challenged the leaders of the church that had burned the goose to a debate. He did so in the form of a protest.
- ▶ Luther had long been studying the Scriptures and having been regenerated by the Spirit of God was given understanding as to what the Scriptures taught about sin, salvation, and especially about the justification of lost sinners by faith alone in Jesus Christ. He came to see, as had Wycliffe and Hus, that the sole authority for the church was the Word of God.

Martin Luther



- ▶ Describing his own conversion, Luther wrote: At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, “In this the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’.” There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives, by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, God justifies us by faith, as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.

Fires of Reformation

- ▶ As Luther reacted against and protested the selling of indulgences (money paid to the church for the forgiveness of sins) and many other abuses by the church – things that he saw the church doing that clearly contradicted the teachings of Holy Scripture – he made a list. His list of 95 offenses or abuses, which are referred to as Luther's 95 Theses was an indictment of the church and many of its tradition and practices.
- ▶ In challenging the church, he wanted a public debate, and so took and nailed his list to the church door at Wittenberg. He made a public protest by posting this in such a way. It was a public statement about the condition of the church and its relation to the truth of Holy Scripture.

Here I Stand

- ▶ In response he was put on trial and challenged to recant of his theses, which the church court saw as heresy. He challenged their ultimate and infallible authority to interpret the Word of God for the people. At this trial, known as the Diet of Worms, Luther stood his ground. In fact, his final reply to the command to recant was an absolute appeal to the authority of Scripture alone as his guide in matters of faith. Luther was asked by the court:
- ▶ Do you wish to defend the books which are recognized as your work? Or to recant anything contained in them? . . .
- ▶ He concluded his reply by saying: “You demand a simple answer. Here it is, plain and unvarnished. Unless I am convinced by Scripture or by plain reason (for I do not accept the authority of popes or councils, for they have often contradicted each other), my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe.. God help me. Amen. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.”

Fires of Reformation

- ▶ As history unfolded around him, this date and time at that church door have become the spark that brought FIRES of renewal to the church and freed to gospel from the clutches of the cultic church controlled by Rome and the Pope. This spark, this birth of a protest against the abuses of the Church, is known to us today as the Protestant Reformation.
- ▶ This turning point in history has given us many rich traditions and doctrines. The foundation of the Reformation of course is the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This truth sprung forth from the cornerstone, the conviction that God's Word, the Holy Scriptures, was itself the sole infallible authority for life and faith, for salvation and Christian living, for the church and the world.

John Hus - July 6, 1415

- ▶ Today, we give thanks for these Reformers and faithful followers of Jesus Christ, especially John Hus, on this 607th anniversary of his martyrdom.
- ▶ **Hebrews 11:35 Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.**