

Early Attempts at Reform

Claudius of Turin

- **Claudius, who “became Bishop of Turin, Italy in AD 823, ordered that all images be cast out of the churches and burned. He denied that the cross was to be honored with any kind of worship. He treated relics with contempt, declaring that they had absolutely no merit in God’s sight” (Shackelford 49-50)**

Peter of Bruys

- **“objected to the excessive materialization of religion: church buildings, the Mass as a sacrifice, prayers for the dead, veneration of crucifixes, the authority of the church, the Old Testament, the church fathers and traditions of the church, and infant baptism” (Ferguson Vol. One 502)**

Peter Waldo

- **About 1173, this rich Lyons merchant provided an income for his wife, put his daughters in a convent, distributed his property to the poor and became an itinerant preacher**
- **His followers emphasized 3 principles: a life of voluntary poverty, access to the Bible in the vernacular, and public preaching**
- **“Rejecting only the practices they saw as clearly against Scripture, they opposed especially prayers for the dead, purgatory, images, and veneration of saints and relics” (Ferguson Vol. One 504-505)**

William of Occam (1280-1339?)

- **William of Occam was a well-studied English Franciscan**
- **He “defended the independence of the state from ecclesiastical authority”**
- **“in his contest with what he deemed a derelict papacy he taught that Scripture, and not the decisions of councils and Popes, is alone binding on the Christian (Walker 251-252)**

John Wycliffe and Bible Authority

- **“Scripture was to him the *magistrum optimum*, higher than reason of Church tradition, and doctrines were to be upheld only if they agreed with Holy Scripture” (John Stacey, *John Wyclif and Reform*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964, 81)**
- **“...he became devoted to the aim of giving the Bible to the masses as the book of true religion and the guide to salvation” (John T. McNeill, *Makers of the Christian Tradition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1961, 165)**

Translating Scripture

- **Nicholas of Hereford, one of Wyclif's supporters, worked with perhaps John Purvey, or John Wyclif himself, and other men to bring about the translation of the Bible into English from the Latin Vulgate (F. F. Bruce, *The English Bible: A History of Translations from the Earliest English Versions to the New English Bible*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1961, 13-14)**

Wycliffe on the Temporal Rule of Clergy

- **“His reform ideas stress particularly the perniciousness of the temporal rule of the clergy and its incompatibility with the teachings of Christ and the apostles” (J. Loserth, “Wyclif, John,” *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. XII, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, n.d., 456).**
- **That destructiveness began with the very head of the church, the pope**

Wycliffe on the Papacy

- “He saw the influence of the Papacy in England as an element in the general corruption. Searching the scriptures and the fathers, he boldly concluded that the papal institution had no divine authority and no modern justification. It had usurped the place of Christ and was antichrist” (Stacey 30-31)
- He decided the pope, like any other man, must be judged by the standard of the gospel (F. L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, London: Oxford University Press, 1958, 1480).
- “The ‘Bible Papacy’ consisted in a poor and humble life, spent in the service of the Church, setting before God’s people an example of Christian goodness. The Pope must be the shepherd of the flock and the preacher who brought men to Christ” (Stacey, p. 30)

Christ Is Our Pope

- **Wyclif thought there would be nothing wrong with having the right kind of leader, but the church could exist without a visible leader on earth (Loserth, p. 459).**
- **“He says explicitly that it is not necessary to go either to Rome or Avignon in order to seek a decision from the pope. Every place is sufficient for the penitent, since the triune God is everywhere. Our pope is Christ” (Loserth, p. 459)**

Corrupt Bishops

- **Usually, bishops were shrewd businessmen, held secular offices, were chosen by the king and appointed by the pope**
- **“They...worked hard, not at the visitation of their dioceses and the supervision of their spiritual courts, but at the administration of the country and at the royal finance and diplomacy” (Trevelyan 106-107)**
- **“He ascribed their indifference to their wealth and to their secular employment” (110)**
- **He saw cutting off their money and the state as the remedy**

Wycliffe's View of Priests

- **The priests used excommunication as a weapon to defend their privileges (Trevelyan 165).**
- **“Wyclif regarded that priest a sinner who incited the pope to excommunicate laymen when these had deprived wicked clergy of their temporalities, and enunciated the dictum that a man in a condition of sin had no claim upon government” (Loserth 456)**
- **Every “elect” person could be a priest, even without “episcopal ordination—he is a real priest made of God**
- **His most serviceable work is the preaching of the Gospel, more precious than the distribution of the sacrament, and among all works charity is the noblest, best, and most desired”**

Solving Problems with the Clergy

- **Wycliffe's book, *On the Pastoral Office*, says a "pastor's" duties include cleansing the sins of the church and the feeding of that church on Christ's word (Matthew Spinka, ed., *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, from *The Library of Christian Classics*, Vol. XIV, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953, 25)**
- **Wyclif believed in "the divinely appointed duty of the state to deprive unworthy clerics of their possessions, since the state has the responsibility for the temporal order" (Spinka 24).**
- **Jesus and the apostles paid tribute to the emperor and Paul appealed to Caesar, so "Sinful indeed is he who opposes the power of the king, since this is derived immediately from God" (Loserth 458)**

Lollards

- **Wycliffe replaced the existing hierarchy with poor priests, bound by no vows, receiving no formal consecration and preaching the gospel to the people(Loserth 460).**
- **They went by twos wearing dark-red robes, carrying a staff and barefoot**
- **Gregory XI gave them the name“Lollard” in a papal bull “a word imported from the Netherlands where it had been applied to singers of popular religious songs” (McNeill 166)**

Lollards' Duties

- **Wyclif believed preaching was the best way to cause men to feel a personal relationship with God, which made men see the importance of their actions**
- **“Absolution, masses, pardons, and penance commuted for money were so many ways of keeping all real feeling of responsibility out of the mind” (Trevelyan 177)**

Transubstantiation

- Wycliffe saw transubstantiation as unduly exaggerating “even dangerously the importance of the priestly office” exposing Christ’s body to potential accidents and indignity while encouraging men to become idolatrous (K. B. McFarlane, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of the English Nonconformity*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953, 94)
- It horrified him to think every priest celebrating the mass was creating the body of Christ, making the creature bring the Creator into existence (Trevelyan 174)
- Christ’s body could only be present figuratively, not essentially or corporeally (McFarlane 94)

Wycliffe on Penance

- **“The wealthy not only paid fines instead of penance, but sometimes gave annually a lump sum to the more corrupt courts, to prevent inquiry” (Trevelyan 117)**
- **Wycliffe asked, “If the pope had the power to snatch souls from purgatory, why did he not in Christian charity take them out at once?” (Will Durant, *The Reformation*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957, 34)**
- **He saw the sale of pardons as encouragement to do evil (Trevelyan 142)**

John Huss (1373-1415)

- **Students from Bohemia went to England to study when Anne of Bohemia married Richard II (1383)**
- **They brought back the teachings of Wycliffe, which were read and adopted by John Huss**
- **Huss became the preacher for Bethlehem Chapel (1402-1414) in Prague**
- **His fiery sermons in the Bohemian language gained a huge following**
- **“he held the church to consist of the predestinate only, of whom the true head is not the Pope, but Christ, and of which the law is the New Testament, and its life that of Christ-like poverty (Walker 271)**

Huss' Positions and Death

- **Pope Alexander V commissioned Archbishop Zbynek to root out Wycliffe's ideas that were being spread in Bohemia**
- **Hus protested and was excommunicated (1410)**
- **He opposed Pope John XXIII's right to use physical force against King Ladislaus of Naples, saying money payments did not bring true forgiveness**
- **He said an indulgence had no value unless a man was of the predestinate**
- **He was ordered to go to the Council of Constance under a safe-conduct from the emperor**
- **Hus refused to recant and was burned at the stake July 6, 1415 (Walker 272-273)**
- **His book *De Ecclesia* (1413) lived on (Cairns 246)**

Followers of Huss

- **The Taborites, the more radical of Huss' followers, rejected all in the faith and practice of the Roman church that could not be found in Scripture**
 - **Some of the Taborites formed the Bohemian Brethren (c. 1450)**
 - **The Moravian church developed from them and became one of the most evangelistic in history**
- **The Utraquists took the position that only that which the Bible actually forbade should be eliminated and the laity should receive both bread and wine in the Mass (Cairns 247)**

Jerome Savonarola

(1452-1498)

- **He thought of himself as a divinely inspired prophet, as did many of the people of Florence**
- **“The French invasion of 1494 led to a popular revolution against the Medici, and Savonarola now became the real ruler of Florence, which he sought to transform into a penitential city. A semi-monastic life was adopted by many of the inhabitants. At the carnival seasons of 1496 and 1497, masks, indecent books and pictures were burned” (Walker 285)**
- **“He denounced the misrule of the Pope [Alexander V]. In turn, the Pope excommunicated him and demanded that he be punished” (Shackelford 53)**

John Reuchlin (1455-1522) and Erasmus (1465-1536)

- **Reuchlin had a good reputation as a Latinist, studied Greek in the University of Paris, published a Latin dictionary (1475-76) and a Hebrew grammar and lexicon (1506)**
- **His nephew was Philip Melanchthon**
- **Desiderius Erasmus published the Greek edition of the New Testament (1516) and helped with the works of Jerome, Origen, Basil, Cyril, Chrysostom, Irenaeus, Ambrose and Augustine (Walker 293-294)**
- **He “advocated its translation into the languages spoken in his day” (Shackelford 53)**

The Great Schism Resulted in the Call for a Council

- **Urban VI and Clement VII each claimed to be the legitimate successor to Peter, which resulted in the Great Schism (1378)**
- **Europe began to be split ecclesiastically and politically**
- **Both men had been chosen by the college of cardinals**
- **Leading theologians (Univ. of Paris) proposed a council of the Roman Catholic church should decide the matter**
- **Marsilius of Padua (ca. 1275-1342) and John of Jandun set forth a rationalization for reform through a council in *Defensor Pacis* (1324) (Cairns 247-248)**

Beliefs of Those Supporting a Council

- **They supported Louis of Bavaria against the pope**
- **Marilius believed the people in a state and Christians in the church were the repository of sovereignty and they could elect the emperor through representative bodies and the pope but the emperor was over the pope.**
- **The church in general council guided by the New Testament alone could proclaim dogma and appoint its officials**

The Council of Pisa (1409)

- **Called to end the schism in leadership, to reform the church from within and put down heresy**
- **Benedict XIII was in control of Avignon and Gregory XII held the papal chair in Rome**
- **The council, called by the cardinals, stated that the cardinals had the authority to call it and that it was competent even to call the popes to account for the Great Schism**
- **It deposed both Benedict XIII and Gregory XII and appointed as rightful pope - Alexander V, but the other two refused to step down**
- **John XXIII was elected when Alexander died (Cairns 248)**

Council of Constance

(1414-1418)

- **Called by Sigismund, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and John XXIII to end the Great Schism, end heresy and reform the church in “head and members”**
- **To frustrate John’s attempt to control the council, over 350 high officials agreed to vote as national groups of clergymen**
- **Each national group was allotted one vote and a unanimous vote of the five nations represented was necessary for binding action by the council**
- **The council declared its legality and its right to supreme authority in the Roman church**
- **This decree which substituted conciliar control of the Church of Rome for papal absolution was given the title *Sacrosanct* (Cairns 248, 250)**

Results of the Council of Constance

- **Gregory XII resigned and, after some negotiation, both Benedict XIII and John XXIII were deposed by 1415**
- **Martin V was elected by the council as the new pope**
- **They dealt with the problem of heresy by condemning the ideas of Wycliffe and burning Hus at the stake**
- **A decree of the council, called *Frequens*, provided for the meeting of general councils at stated times in the future to keep order in the Roman church (after 5 years, after 7 years and then once a decade)**
- **They would deal with the problems of schism, heresy and reform (Cairns 250)**

The Councils of Basel and Ferrara/Florence (1431-49)

- **Council of Basil (1431-49) held because of unrest in Bohemia after martyrdom of Huss and the need for continued reform**
- **Eugenius IV deposed in 1439, one year after the rival council, which he had called, met at Ferrara**
- **Because of the plague, the rival council was moved to Florence in 1439 - unsuccessful attempt to reunite the Greek and Roman Catholic churches.**
- **They declared the seven sacraments to be accepted by the Roman church, which was promulgated by Eugenius IV in a papal bull in 1439 (Cairns 250)**

Councils Failed

- The Council of Basel acknowledged defeat, dissolving in 1449
- The papacy thus reverted to despotism
- Pius II in a papal bull entitled *Execrabilis* (1460) condemned any appeals to future general councils
- The French clergy concurred with the French ruler in the proclamation of the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges in 1438, which made the French church independent of the pope and put it under the power of the state
- The reforming council had saved the church from the disorder of the Great Schism.
- The lack of success in securing effective reform destroyed the last chance of reform of the Roman Catholic church from within, making the Protestant Reformation inevitable (Cairns 250)