

From Wycliffe to Hus

Historical Theology

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INTRODUCTION:

1. Key points about John Wycliffe
2. Who are the Lollards?
3. Who is Jan Hus?

I. REMEMBERING WYCLIFFE (CA 1330 - 1384), MORNING STAR OF THE REFORMATION

• NOTES:

- Condemned as heretic at Council of Constance (1415)
- Exhumed, burned and ashes cast in the river in 1428

II. WHO WERE THE LOLLARDS?

A. Followers of John Wycliffe

- a. Lollard is a poor rendering of a Dutch word *lollaert* meaning mumblor.

- b. Initially many minor and not so minor nobles and other important folks. Later mostly commoners as the movement is driven under ground.

B. 12 CONCLUSIONS (1395 AD) (copied from GotQuestions.org article "Who were the LOLLARDS")

1. The Church of England has become subservient to the Church at Rome.
2. The ordination ceremonies for bishops and priests have no biblical support.
3. Celibacy of the clergy has encouraged sodomy among the clergy.
4. The doctrine of transubstantiation leads to the idolatrous worship of the wafer.
5. Exorcisms and consecrations practiced by the priests are more in line with witchcraft than Christianity.
6. Men who hold powerful church offices should not simultaneously hold powerful secular offices.
7. The practice of praying for the dead should be rejected, and accepting money to say prayers for the dead corrupts the church.

8. Making pilgrimages and venerating relics are ineffective for spiritual growth and can lead to idolatry.
9. Confession of sin to a priest should be stopped because only God can forgive sins, and, if priests had the power to do it, they should forgive everyone regardless of whether or not they had confessed.
10. Christians should not participate in warfare, especially warfare that purports to have a spiritual basis (such as the Crusades).
11. Vows of celibacy among women have led to all kinds of sexual sin among those women.
12. Christians are spending too much time producing things, not being content with what they have

C. Additional beliefs

- a. Clergy should focus on preaching and ministering to the flock.
- b. People should have access to scripture in their common language. (1 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 3:14-18)

D. "When Henry IV came to the throne of England in 1399, he made fighting "heresy" a top priority, and the Lollards were in his crosshairs. In 1401 the Lollard Henry Sawtre was burned for his faith. In 1414 the Lollards were involved in a military revolt led by Sir John Oldcastle and defeated by Henry V. Fearing reprisals, the

remaining Lollards were driven into hiding. This actually facilitated the spread of their teaching and influence. Their influence spread as far as Czechoslovakia and Jan Hus who in turn influenced Martin Luther." (copied from GotQuestions.org article "Who were the Lollards?")

III. INTRODUCING JAN HUS (ca 1369 - July 6, 1415) (From GotQuestions.org article "Who was Jan Hus (John Huss)?" and Wikipedia Article "Jan Hus")

A. Beginning from the end:

- a. Arrived at Council of Constance on November 3rd, 1414 to defend his and Wycliffe's teachings, with promise of safe passage from King Sigismund of the Holy Roman Empire, who had called for the council to convene.
- b. Arrested on November 28th by representatives of Rome due to rumors that he intended to flee the Council.
- c. These events greatly angered Sigismund since he had promised Hus safety, but the Roman representatives convinced Sigismund he was not bound by promises to a heretic.

- d. The council proceeded to "demonstrate" Hus' "errors" which Hus repeatedly said he would recant if they would show how he was in conflict with the Bible, but no such demonstration was offered, so he would not recant. On July 6th, 1415 Jan Hus begged the council not to condemn him, then begged God to be merciful to the council even though they condemned him and reportedly sang hymns while the flames consumed his body.

B. Hus' beginning

- a. Born to poor parents in rural Bohemia (modern day Czech Republic)
- b. Pursued priesthood as a way to escape poverty, which lead him to receive a Bachelor's and eventually a Doctoral degree as well as much time studying the Bible. He became distinguished for his commitment to his studies.

C. Early career

- a. In 1398 he began teaching at University of Prague and in 1401 was promoted to Dean of Philosophy.
- b. Appointed as preacher of Bethlehem Chapel in 1402.

- c. His position as preacher and educator granted him a lot of influence among common people and university students.
- d. In 1403 Hus translated Wycliffe's work *Triologus* into Czech and helped distribute it despite its being banned by Roman Officials.
- e. Hus began to teach many of Wycliffe's teaching especially regarding reforms to the clergy. Initially Hus' archbishop tolerated this and even treated Hus favorably, but in 1405 Pope Innocent VII instructed the archbishop to put a stop to Hus.
- f. In 1408 the Bohemian king and Prague University complied with Papal instructions to rid themselves of Wycliffe's writings. Hus also complied with these orders and condemned some points he thought were in error regarding preaching and indulgences.

- g.** Also in 1408 the Western Schism brought further unrest with Hus' and other being forced to side with anti-pope Alexander V. In 1410 the anti-pope ordered all Wycliffe writings be burned and demanded the end of "free-preaching." When Hus appealed this decision he and all his adherents were excommunicated.

D. The Goose is Cooked

- a.** As all these animosities and more escalated Hus continued to call for freedom for the Bohemian people to have preachers who could actually preach from scripture in the common language.
- b.** Finally in an effort to bring peace to his kingdom and the Holy Roman Empire King Sigismund called the Council of Constance, so all sides could debate the issues. Jan Hus was instructed to be there, but also promised safety if he went. In the end this was not to be.