

Trouble is Brewing in the Roman Church 1305-1517

Let's get caught up to what's happening in 1305:

The Crusades are over and have proven to be a dismal failure. Of course they were. The church went about things in a terribly unbiblical way. The church got involved in raising up armies, political intrigue and killing people. That's a bad idea and against everything Jesus taught.

It's interesting to see the evolution of the word "Crusades" even in American culture.

Billy Graham Crusades, and Evangelistic Crusades in general.

Crusade against breast cancer

Computer games: World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade

There has also been an intentional move in the last 15-20 years or so to move away from being associated with this word.

In 2000, Wheaton College, one of the leading Christian institutions in America, changed their mascot from the Crusaders to the Thunder.

Campus Crusade for Christ... now "Cru"

George Bush was vilified for using the word in a speech shortly after the events of 9/11. He said the war on terror would be our crusade. Didn't go over well at all!

Of course Muslims hear the word Crusades and they shudder, and they should. You're not getting many Muslim's to come to an evangelism crusade. They are staying away!

We also saw last week the zenith of Papal power, particularly after the success of the First Crusade. The Popes were at their most powerful and kings were bowing to them.

We ended last week talking about the other major blight in church history, the Inquisitions. Once again, the church did things that were utterly unbiblical in the *name* of the Bible. Ironic.

As Scott rightly said, the end did not justify the means.

Scott also mentioned that the Inquisitions didn't end in the 1300's and so we will talk a little more about the most famous of them, the Spanish Inquisition a little more tonight.

I. The Papacy in Decline

If the 11th-13th Centuries saw the zenith of Papal power, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries will see the steady decline of the power of the Pope.

In fact, it was going to be a rough time for the church as a whole.

Remember that the church had experienced great success in its growth and influence over people. That success quickly led to excess in almost every area.

One example had to do with the celibacy of the priests. The supposed celibacy of the priests that is. Many, many priests and bishops of this time period took concubines and or indulged in sexual affairs with women in their congregations. There was so much of this going on that a huge number of children were surprisingly popping up seemingly out of now where.

Many other priests were living in luxury reacting against those crazy, ascetic monks.

The bottom line was once again; the church leaders were spending far more time in the things of this world than they were in the things of the Word and in shepherding their people. They were involved with some of their people all right, just for all the wrong reasons.

Two phrases you should know that came about during this period that helped lead to the decline in Papal authority.

The “Babylonian Captivity” and the Great Schism. Don’t confuse the Great Schism with the Schism of 1054.

The Babylonian Captivity

Interestingly, the Babylonian Captivity and nothing to do with Babylon and nothing to do with a captivity. So what was it?

In 1305 the college of the cardinals elected a man we would come to know as Pope Clement V as Pope. (see slide)

He was a Frenchman and after ascending to the Papacy made an alliance with the King of France. He is most known as being the first Pope to move from Rome to Avignon in 1309. Even though Avignon was not technically French territory, it was close enough and most people viewed Pope Clement as now being under French Rule. Except for a few years of exception, the Popes would stay in Avignon and under the rule of the French Kings until 1377.

In fact it would be an amazing woman, a Christian mystic named Catherine of Siena (pic) who would press the then Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome and he did.

It’s called the Babylonian Captivity because it was a timeframe of some 70 years when the Pope/church was out of Rome and in another country, in this case, France. In 1377 the Pope came back to Rome.

The Great Schism

Remember that the Schism of 1054 had to do with the split of the church in the West and the church in the East – Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

The Great Schism had to do with the one college of the cardinals essentially electing two different Popes. One Pope lived in Avignon and one lived in Rome and both claimed to be the real Pope and claimed to be the descendant of Peter. What essentially happened were two things. **One, Europe was divided over which Pope to support and two, both Popes lost power.** This is what we refer to as the Great Schism. Two popes both claiming to be the real pope with the real power.

There were many other reasons for the decline of Papal power but most certainly one of the other reasons was the reaction of the population against what they viewed as severe **taxation** by the church and the Pope.

The church and the Pope received money in many different ways. I'll get to that here in a minute.

As a contrast, we receive money here at LG in one way, the freewill offerings of our people. That's it. I suppose we may include a very small return on our investment of some of the churches finances that we have in very secure CD's.

We have no other income and don't want to be involved in any other income.

The church of Rome in this time was very different. They also received freewill offerings from their people and...

When someone joined the clergy of the church they happily donated their entire first years salary back to the church.

If the Pope traveled, the city he traveled to paid all of his expenses.

If a clergyman died, especially rich and powerful clergy, all of their estate automatically went to the Pope.

Something called Peter's Pence which was essentially an annual tax paid by the laity in most of Europe to the Pope.

You can imagine how much people enjoyed paying this to the Pope. Think about how unpopular this was in places like England who was an arch enemy of France when the Pope was living in France and at least seen as being under French rule. The English saw this money as going to the French! Not happy people.

So, the clergy of church as whole are living with mistresses and living in luxury and enjoying their lands and their power and are far more concerned about secular demands on their time than they are about the business of the church.

That scenario would lead us to the Mystics.

II. The Mystics

The reality of the pendulum swinging back and forth from one extreme to the other happens in our culture and so too in the church.

In the 1300 and 1400's the church was lapsing into formalism. She was going through the motions of looking spiritual on the outside but full of sin and corruption on the inside. It was all pomp and circumstance and very little attention was paid to the heart.

Remember that last week we talked about scholasticism and the Abelard's and Aquinas' of the world. How they loved higher reasoning and sought to argue for Christianity at the philosophical level. They did a lot of good things and got people thinking at a higher level.

Then the pendulum swings and along come the mystics. The mystics were clergy and laypeople within the church who desired to get back to connecting to God at the heart level. This was accomplished through

contemplation and having an experience with God. It was more about emotions than the intellect.

“The main objective for the mystic is immediate apprehension of God in an extrarational way as the mystic waits before Him in a passive, receptive mood.”

Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) (Pic) was a Dominican monk who is credited with bringing mysticism to the Germans.

He taught that the aim of the Christian should be the union of the spirit of the person with the Spirit of God by a fusion of the human essence with the divine essence during an ecstatic experience.

He is reputed to have said, “God must become I, and I God.”

His views either came very close to or crossed the line into pantheism (all is God) and his views were condemned in a papal bull issued after his death.

Eckhart’s teachings spurred other men to form movements such as the Friends of God and the Brethren of the Common Life. These were all movements trying to get back to the real life of the church in the N.T. and emphasizing an inward experience over the formalism of outward ceremonies.

One person who came out of the Brethren of the Common Life movement was a person named Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471) (pic and pic of book) and his famous book, *The Imitation of Christ*. The book stresses both the negative renunciation of the things of this world and the need for a positive love of Christ and service for Him in humble and practical ways.

“The mystical movement, the classical form of Roman Catholic piety, developed as a reaction against formal and mechanical sacerdotal ritual and dry Scholasticism in the church of the day. It reflected the perennial tendency toward the subjective aspects of

Christianity, which always occurs when too much emphasis is laid on outward acts in Christian worship. In that sense mysticism may be thought of as anticipating the more personal approach that was such an outstanding characteristic of the Reformation.” Earl Cairns

III. Forerunners of the Reformation

John Wycliffe (1329-1384) (pic)

Wycliffe studied and taught at Oxford for most of his life. He was the leading scholar of his time as is thought by many to have been the man put Oxford on the map, academically speaking. He was brilliant!

His life, however, was marked by controversy as he had this dangerous habit of saying what he thought.

Up until about the last six years of his life he fought to bring about reform inside the Roman church by the elimination of immoral clergy and by stripping the church of its property holdings, which he felt was the root of her corruption.

Wycliffe didn't stop there. In 1379 he attacked the authority of the Pope and began to oppose many of the doctrines of the Roman church as being unbiblical. For instance, he opposed the doctrine of Transubstantiation, the sale of indulgences – letters that were commonly believed to pardon sin – and church offices, the superstitious worship of saints and relics and the pope's authority. You can imagine how these views went over in the eyes of the Pope and the church.

But what Wycliffe is most known for is his high view of the Scriptures.

He asserted that the Bible instead of the church was the sole authority for the believer and that the church should model itself after the pattern of the N.T.

He said, "Forasmuch as the Bible contains Christ, that is all that is necessary for salvation, it is necessary for all men, not for priests alone."

Because he believed this about the Bible, in 1382, John Wycliffe made the first complete manuscript translation of the New Testament into English. He took a hand written copy of the Latin Vulgate (that only priests and scholars could read) and translated from the Latin into English. (pic in his study)

Nicholas of Hereford completed the translation of the Old Testament into English in 1384.

It would be William Tyndale who some years later would be the first to translate a Bible directly from the Hebrew and Greek into English.

But, let us not overlook how important this was, for now for the first time in History, the common Englishman could read the bible in his own language.

Wycliffe formed a group that came to be known as the **Lollard's**. The term Lollard was a derogatory name given to people who followed the teachings of Wycliffe and were seen as heretics. It sort of means a "*mutterer* or a *mumbler*, a Lollard."

The Wycliffite's or Lollard's were priests who agreed with Wycliffe's theology and taught the Scriptures to the common people and went around England preaching the Gospel.

Wycliffe suffered a stroke in church and died on December 31, 1384.

In 1401 Parliament made the preaching of Wycliffe's ideas punishable by the death penalty.

Then in 1414-1418, the Council of Constance met and at the end excommunicated Wycliffe (he was doing just fine in heaven) and his writings were publically burned.

Then in 1428, some ten years later, not ready to just excommunicate and burn his books, his bones were exhumed, burned and the ashes scattered on the river Swift.

This was an ironic twist as no one could have imagined just how swift Wycliffe's ideas would spread throughout Europe.

John Wycliffe is often referred to as "The Morning Star of the Reformation." (new pic)

"He himself managed to stay within the Roman church all of his life, but in the hearts and minds of his hearers, the Reformation was already quietly underway." Kenneth Curtis

Wycliffe Bible Translator's (logo pic) are a leading mission organization today, translating the Bible into thousands of languages. Indeed his legacy lives on.

Jan Hus (1373-1415) (pic)

"We'll cook his goose." The man of whom these words were spoken was John Hus, whose last name meant, "goose" in his native language, Czech. The man who spoke these words referred to the fact that Hus would be burned at the stake.

In 1401, John Hus was ordained as a priest and would spend much of his ministry teaching at Charles University in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and preaching in the influential Bethlehem Chapel, not far from the University.

Through a series of political and nations reasons, the teachings of Wycliffe reached the ears and mind of John Hus and his life was changed forever.

Hus began thinking about the contrast between the Pope and Jesus. While the pope rode a horse, Jesus walked. Jesus washed the disciples' feet while the pope had his feet kissed. This offended Hus and he began to preach and talk about it. He elevated the place of the Bible and the clear preaching of the Bible became an important part of the church service.

All of this came to the attention of the archbishop of Prague who succinctly objected to Hus' teaching and instructed him to stop and asked that the University burn Wycliffe's writings. Hus refused and the archbishop condemned him. Hus would eventually leave the city but he continued to draw big crowds as he preached in open-air gatherings. One of the first of the kind.

Hus further stirred up controversy when he wrote a book entitled, *On the Church*, where Hus asserted that only Christ was the head of the church, not the pope. He also wrote that only God alone can forgive a person's sins, not the pope or the church. He said that no pope or bishop could establish doctrine contrary to the Bible.

1414 Hus was summoned to the Council of Constance (remember this is the Council that formally condemned the teachings of John Wycliffe), to defend his teachings. As soon as he arrived he was arrested, the Council had already made up its mind.

Hus would spend the next year or so in prison fighting illness and lack of sleep. But Hus would not recant and refused to renounce his "errors". His response to the Council, "I would not, for a chapel full of gold, recede from the truth."

On July 6, 1415, the church formally condemned Hus and handed him over to the secular authorities for immediate punishment. (pic of burning at the stake)

On the way to his place of execution, Hus passed a churchyard where a bonfire had been made of his books. No coincidence I'm sure. Laughing, he told the bystanders to not believe the lies that had been about him. When he arrived at the place where he would be burned at the stake, the empire's marshall asked Hus one more time to retract his views.

“God is my witness,” said Hus, “that the evidence against me is false. I have never thought nor preached except with the one intention of winning men, if possible, from their sins. Today I will gladly die.”

As we now know, instead of stamping out the teachings Hus and Wycliffe, their deaths only fueled the fire and in time Germany would revolt against the Catholic Church and her teachings.

(pic of Hus memorial in Prague today)

Johann Gutenberg (1398-1468) (pic)

When I say this name, what comes to your mind? The Gutenberg press!

During the whole of the Middle Ages, few people owned Bibles or books of any kind. Monks copied texts by hand, on papyrus sheets or parchment made of animal skins. The cost of both materials and the copyist’s time made the cost of owning a bible or any book for that matter way too expensive for all but the richest people.

It is true that not many people could read their own language but even if they could, most books including the Bible were only written in Latin, a language even fewer people understood.

The average person relied on the priest to tell them what the Bible said and meant. One of the problems was that the average, local priest had little or no training in Latin and so his knowledge of the Bible was also quite minimal. Thus this old adage, “If it’s fuzzy in the pulpit it’s really foggy in the pew” was lived out.

In the 1440’s Johann Gutenberg experimented with movable pieces of metal type. By setting books in lead type, he could make many copies of the Bible or any book, at a fraction of the cost of a hand-copied text.

(pic of printing)

In 1446 Gutenberg printed 200 copies of Jerome’s Latin Vulgate Bible. Again, while most of the common people couldn’t read the Latin version of the Bible, this most certainly set the stage for what was to come.

By 1483, the year Martin Luther was born, every large European country had at least one printing press. Within fifty years of Gutenberg's printing of the Bible, printers had out-printed centuries of monks. Books had become available in numerous languages and literacy was on the rise in a big way.

With the invention of the printing press, men who would soon come on the scene like Martin Luther, could make the Bible and theology available to "every plowboy and serving maid."

No longer would a priest or the church stand in the way of the common man knowing his Bible. We cannot underestimate the impact Gutenberg's printing press had on the church and the Reformation that was brewing in Germany and across Europe.

(pic of recreated printing press)

Let's end this evening talking about one of the most important seasons in the history of the world, the Renaissance.

IV. The Renaissance (pic of Florence Italy, the birthplace of the Ren)

We can't leave this time period, 1305 to 1517 and not mention the Renaissance. The Renaissance took place from about 1350 to 1650 and marks the transition between medieval and the modern world.

The name "renaissance" is a derivation of Latin words that means something like a rebirth of culture.

This rebirth if you will largely started in and took place in Italy. There was a rediscovery if you will of classical literature and languages of Greece and Rome.

This is most notable as a time when society began to look away from the God and the church to find the meaning to life and the answers to their questions, and began looking to themselves and to humanism for the answers.

“The medieval theocentric conception of the world, in which God was the measure of all things, gave way to an anthropocentric view of life, in which man became the measure of all things.” Earl Cairns

It has been said that the god of the Renaissance was beauty, in nature or in man, and sometimes with God.

Michelangelo (pic) would paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He would also become the architect of St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome and did you know that his first love was not painting or architecture, but sculpture. You will know of the young David (I chose the g-rated pic). I’ll say this too about this time period. There is a lot of attention given to human anatomy, just think about the judgment scene in the Sistine chapel (pic).

That’s a rocked up Jesus.

The tender Pieta (Pic - Mary and her sacrificed son), and the righteous but angry Moses (pic) (again look at the muscles on Moses).

The incomparable Leonardo da Vinci (pic) would paint the Last Supper (pic) and the.... Mona Lisa (pic). What is she thinking about? Is she smiling?

Da Vinci would also draw sketches of machine guns and submarines and tanks and flying machines and the human anatomy. (pic)

Da Vinci and Michelangelo would thus giving rise to the term, “Renaissance Man” – someone who was well schooled in so many different disciplines.

Let me summarize by saying three things that began here in this time period, the 1300’s to the early 1500’s, would change the history of Europe to this day.

1. The Renaissance period and it's change from God being the measure of all things to man being the center and the measure of what's most important. Europe is still there. Walk into the average church in Europe today.

2. The Spanish Inquisition. We talked about this a little last week as the Inquisition's really began in the 1100 and 1200's. But the Spanish Inquisition, which hit it's zenith under King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella (remember them – Christopher Columbus), had lasting impact on Spain. While most of the rest of Europe with the exception of Italy of course lies in Protestant hands, Spain would remain to this day in the hands of the Roman Catholic Church.

3. The birth of the Reformation would bring about lasting change both in Europe and around the world and we are here today because of those events. That's next week!

Q & A