

John Wycliffe (1320-1384)

- Born in Yorkshire England – 1324
- Educated at Oxford
- Challenged much of the traditional theology and ecclesiology of the Church
- Contributed to the emergence of the Lollards
- Initiated the first translation of the Bible into English
- Considered the main precursor of the Protestant Reformation
- **Heretic – after death works declared heretical or unsound. Body excavated and destroyed**
- **Wycliffe's** views on civil dominion, the Bible, the Church and its priesthood, and the Eucharist - in some ways foreshadowed the doctrines of Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers
- **Hus** was greatly influenced by Wycliffe and he based much of his reform ideas on Wycliffe's writings

Jan Hus (1372-1415)

- Born in 1372/73 in Husinec in southern Bohemia (modern Czech Republic)
- Educated at the University of Prague – Greatly influenced by Wycliffe
- Highest goal of the religious life was to Love God
- Attacked the failings of the clergy
- **Declared a Heretic and burned at the stake at the Council of Constance** - inspired the Hussite Revolution and birth of the Czech national Church

Reform Issues

- **Civil Domination** – Challenging the Pope's secular power
 - All earthly power derives from God's grace
 - Kings and lords were empowered by God himself and that, as proved by scripture, they had the authority to rule over the Church
 - Civil law was established for the benefit of the community
 - Kings and lords much follow the dictates of the pope so long as they adhere to the teaching of the Gospels. Rejects the authority of the pope to excommunicate anyone
- **Visible and invisible Church** – Used to question the authority of the clergy
 - **Wycliffe** drew the concept from Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (On the City of God)
 - Invisible church the "True Church" was made up of the elect. Only those who were predestined to salvation are part of it
 - The visible Church was made up of those predestined to salvation or foreknown to be damned. No one knows to which group he or she belongs. Uncertain whether members of the clergy, including the pope, can be identified as belonging to the true Church
 - **Hus** followed Wycliffe's beliefs on the True Church but added:
 - Foreknown not predestined to damnation but through their own free will

- The laity and clergy in the church must be predestined
 - Catholic Church itself is not to be identified with the True Church of Christ
- **Corruption of the Church**
 - Denounced the clergy's avarice, worldliness, and corruption
 - Church had been corrupted with its claims to power and wealth
 - The Church and its leaders had become more concerned with worldly power and possessions than with the care of souls
 - Felt it was better to return to a time before the establishment of the imperial Church by Constantine and to disendow the Church, so as to make it possible for it to return to its apostolic purity
- **Scriptures as the ultimate authority**
 - Placed emphasis on the scriptures (nothing new had a long tradition)
 - Asserted the absolute truth of the scripture and the absolute centrality of the Bible to Christian life
 - Yet he did not adopt the notion of *sola* Scripture (only scripture)
 - The value of the writings of Augustine and other exegetes and theologians
 - Those who raised questions about the scriptures or pointed out inconsistencies in the text were the real heretics, because the Bible was the truth – it was God's word
 - Not a biblical literalist; rather it was the underlying sense of the words of the Bible that is true
- **Eucharist Wycliff**
 - *De Eucharist* (On the Eucharist) one of his most important and controversial theological works
 - Taught the substance of the bread and wine of the Eucharistic offerings remains after the consecration
 - The body of Christ is figuratively and not physically present in the bread and wine
 - Could find no scriptural justification of the doctrine of transubstantiation
 - Convinced that it was a sacrament instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper
 - Condemned as erroneous and a danger to the Church
- **Simony** – the buying and selling of Church offices or spiritual preferment
 - **Wycliff** - denounced as simony any form of clerical worldliness and corruption
 - **Hus** - Also concerned with Simony which he defined a trafficking in holy things (such as offices and sacraments) both the buyer and seller guilty of simony
 - He criticized the clergy for accepting money or gifts in exchange for performing the sacraments
 - Criticized excessive claims to papal power and authority – in particular or indulgences and matters of excommunication