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JOHN WYCLIFFE AND JOHN HUS EARLY REFORMERS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✘ Know the state of the Catholic Church in Medieval Europe
- ✘ Be familiar with the lives of John Wycliffe and John Hus
- ✘ Know the basic Teaching of John Wycliffe and John Hus
 - + Civil Domination
 - + Visible and invisible Church (Earthly vs. Christ's Church)
 - + Corruption of the Church
 - + Scriptures as the ultimate authority
 - + Eucharist
 - + Simony
- ✘ Know that they were considered Heretics

CHURCH IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

- ✘ Sale of Indulgences
- ✘ Obligatory confession
- ✘ Papal taxation – fees for sacraments

CHURCH OF BOHEMIA IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

- ✘ Faced problems of corruption and clerical abuse
 - + Church was regarded as worldly and too concerned with land and wealth
 - + In Bohemia the Church was the greatest landowner in the kingdom
- ✘ Clergy were scorned for their immorality and lack of religious devotion
 - + Some were said to have concubines and mistresses
 - + Charged for performing sacraments

GREAT SCHISM – 1378-1415

EFFECT ON BOHEMIA

- ✘ Divided the Christian nations of Europe between those who supported the pope in Rome and those who supported the pope in Avignon
- ✘ Weakened the power of the popes, who were less able to impose order and discipline on the Church
- ✘ Charles IV (Bohemia) a devout and religious ruler took the first steps at reform
 - + Harsh legislation against heresy and the Beguines
 - + Sought to limit worldliness and excessive materialism both at his court and the Church
- ✘ Wenceslas IV ineffective ruler sides against Roman Pope

LIFE OF JOHN WYCLIFFE (1320-1384)



- ✘ Born at Ipreswell, Yorkshire England
- ✘ Educated at Oxford
 - + Study of theology, ecclesiastical law and philosophy
 - + Grounded in Roman and English law
- ✘ Leading scholar at Oxford - gained prominence as a philosophy and theology teacher
- ✘ Ordained c. 1351 - joined the Augustinian order

LIFE OF JOHN WYCLIFFE

- ✘ Challenged much of the traditional theology and ecclesiology of the Church - Not only England's most important heretic but also as one of its first
- ✘ Contributed to the emergence of a popular movement known as the Lollards
- ✘ Initiated the first translation of the Bible into English
- ✘ Considered the main precursor of the Protestant Reformation
- ✘ Heretic - Body dug up, burned, and dumped into a stream

LIFE OF JOHN HUS (1372 - 1415)

- ✘ Born in 1372/73 in the small village of Husinec in southern Bohemia (Modern Day Czech Republic)
- ✘ At age 18 entered the University of Prague while studying for his Masters - introduced to the works of Wycliffe.
- ✘ Ordained in June 1400 - pursued a doctorate in the field of Theology
- ✘ A leading scholar and theologian
- ✘ His death at the Council of Constance in 1415 inspired the Hussite Revolution and birth of the Czech national Church



LIFE OF JOHN HUS

- ✘ Delivered some 3000 sermons; many of them originally composed or preserved in Latin
- ✘ Highest goal of the religious life was to Love God
- ✘ Ferociously attacked the failing of the clergy
- ✘ Sided with the wrong pope – incited the anger of his Archbishop – tried as a heretic and burned at the stake

BASIC TENETS OF THEIR REFORM MESSAGE

CIVIL DOMINATION – CHALLENGING THE POPE’S SECULAR POWER

- ✘ All earthly power derives from God’s grace
- ✘ Kings and lords were empowered by God himself - as proved by scripture, they had the authority to rule over the Church
- ✘ True lordship was characterized by justice
- ✘ Civil law - established for the benefit of the community
- ✘ Kings and lords must follow the dictates of the pope so long as they adhere to the teaching of the Gospels

LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

- ✘ Both Wycliffe and Hus questioned the authority of clergy even the pope – except when they adhere to the Gospels
- ✘ Based on the idea of a “True Church” and predestination

TRUE CHURCH - INVISIBLE - WYCLIFFE

- ✘ Drew from Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (On the City of God)
- ✘ Pushed to the extreme Augustine's identification of two cities – the earthly one and the heavenly one
- ✘ Stressed that the true church was made up of the elect. Only those who were predestined to salvation are part of it
- ✘ The True Church is comprised of three parts:
 - + One triumphing in heaven
 - + One sleeping in purgatory
 - + One battling on earth

VISIBLE CHURCH

- ✘ Made up of those predestined to salvation or foreknown to be damned
- ✘ The two groups are strictly divided and no one knows to which group he/she belongs

PREDESTINATION – STATUS NOT KNOWN

- ✘ No one can claim to know or assert that they belong to the True Church
- ✘ No one can claim to be at its head
- ✘ Uncertain whether any member of the clergy, including the pope himself, can be identified as belong to the True Church
- ✘ Rejects the authority of the pope to excommunicate anyone – only the individual can excommunicate himself through sin

DE POTESTATE PAPAE - WYCLIFFE

“The Catholic truth which I have often repeated consists of this: that no pope, bishop, abbot, or any spiritual prelate is to be believed or obeyed except in so far as he says or commands the law of Christ”

INVISIBLE CHURCH - HUS

- ✘ Drew from Wycliffe but added:
 - + It consisted in the mystical body of Christ, and Christ himself was the sole head of the Church
 - + Foreknown are are not predestined to damnation but through their own free will turn from God
- ✘ Members of the clergy and laity of the Catholic Church are surely among the predestined
- ✘ Catholic Church itself is not to be identified with the True Church of Christ

WYCLIFFE - CORRUPTION OF THE CHURCH

- ✘ Denounced the clergy's avarice, worldliness, and corruption
 - + Corrupted with its claims to power and wealth
 - + More concerned with worldly power and possessions than with the care of souls
 - + Need to return to a time before the establishment of the imperial Church by Constantine and
 - + Disendow the Church- make it possible for it to return to its apostolic purity

SIMONY

- ✘ Buying and selling of Church offices or spiritual preferment
- ✘ Denounced as simony any form of clerical worldliness and corruption

HUS - SIMONY

- ✘ Drawing from Gregory the Great and Church Fathers - defined as “an evil consent to an exchange of spiritual goods for non-spiritual”
- ✘ Both the seller and the buyer are simoniac
- ✘ Criticized the clergy for accepting money or gifts in exchange for performing the sacraments
- ✘ Criticized excessive claims to papal power and authority – in particular indulgences and matters of excommunication

WYCLIFFE - SCRIPTURES AS ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

- ✘ Absolute truth of the scripture and the absolute centrality of the Bible to Christian life
- ✘ Inspired the translation of the Bible into English
- ✘ Yet he did not adopt the notion of *sola Scripture* (only scripture)
 - + Recognized the value of the writings of Augustine and other exegetes and theologians on the bible
- ✘ Those who raised questions about the scriptures or pointed out inconsistencies in the text were the real heretics

TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE - WYCLIFFE

“For since the whole of sacred scripture is the word of God, there could not be a superior, safer, or more effective testimony than this: if God who cannot lie says this in his scripture, which is the mirror of his will, then it is true.”

WYCLIFFE NOT A BIBLICAL LITERALIST

- ✘ Five levels of Truths – bible is the combination of the written word and the meaning derived from the symbol in the text
 - + The truths of life
 - + The truths of life in their ideal being
 - + The truths in their existence
 - + The truths written on a man's soul
 - + The truths of sounds or books

EUCCHARIST - WYCLIFFE

- ✘ *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
 - + Wycliffe could find no scriptural justification of the doctrine of transubstantiation
 - + But remained convinced that it was a sacrament instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper
- ✘ Condemned as erroneous and a danger to the Church

EUCCHARIST - HUS

- ✘ Turned away from Wycliffe – The Eucharist was transformed however:
 - + The priest did not transform the bread and wine into the body and blood
 - + Christ himself was the originator of this miracle
- ✘ Differentiating between the form of the bread and the substance of Christ within it

WYCLIFF'S WORKS HERETICAL

- ✘ 1407 the Archbishop of Canterbury and Oxford banned the teaching of his works
- ✘ Four years later, 267 of his propositions were labeled as heretical or unsound
- ✘ Spring of 1428 his body was dug up

HUS AS REFORMER

- ✘ Hus was more in the tradition of the Czech reformers
 - + Like Wycliffe Hus was critical of the claims to papal primacy and authority over the Church
 - + Did not deny that the pope and the cardinals were the most esteemed and respected figures in the Church
 - + He denied that the pope was the direct successor to Peter – the pope was fallible and could sin
 - + It was Christ who was the foundation of the Church and remained its head
- ✘ Asserted the necessity of clerical morality

HUS AS REFORMER

- ✘ Examined the nature and powers of the priesthood – restricting the authority of the priest to spiritual matters and denying him any temporal power, which belongs to nobles and kings
- ✘ No priest, no matter how high in the Church hierarchy, could forgive sins on his own
- ✘ Denied that any cleric has the power to excommunicate or to grant indulgences
- ✘ Priests are responsible for administering the sacraments – but the efficacy is the result of God's grace

HUS AS REFORMER

- ✘ In most cases Hus's positions were not altogether unorthodox
 - + Accepted a unique form of the transubstantiation as well as the authority of the Bible
 - + Accepted the authority of the councils of the Church Fathers
 - + Approved of the veneration of saints, especially the Virgin Mary
 - + Believed in purgatory, masses for the dead, sacraments, and other conventional beliefs and practices of the Church of his day

HUS' ROLE IN POLITICS

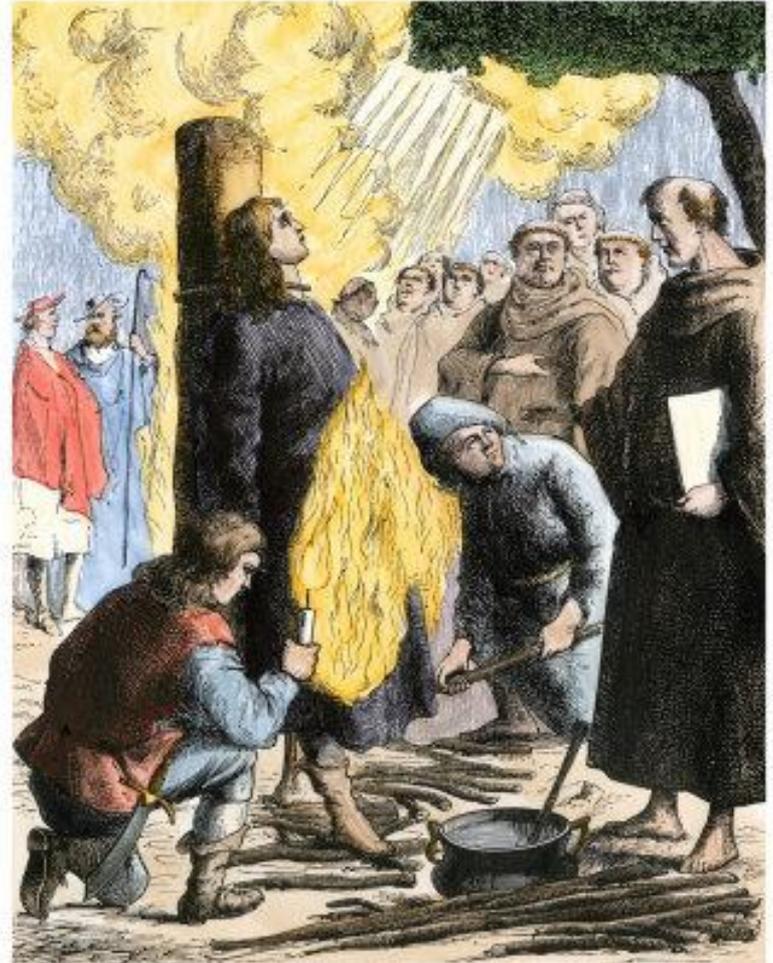
- ✘ Controversy over the allegiance of the Prague Church who supported the Roman pope.
 - + King wanted to switch allegiance to the new pope of Avignon
 - + Archbishop Zbynek was forced to switch his alliance from Gregory to Alexander.
 - + Zbynek turned away from the reform and he asked Alexander to issue a bull condemning Wycliffe's teachings
 - + Hus continued preaching and gained popular support against the archbishop
 - + Zbynek burned Wycliffe's books on Jul 16, 1410

HUS'S ROLE IN POLITICS

- ✘ John XXIII issued a bull of indulgences to support his crusade against King Ladislas of Naples a supporter of Gregory XII
 - + Czech reformers did not support the papal bulls
 - + Hus's sermons stimulated the dramatic and sometimes violent popular opposition to the indulgence bull
 - ✘ The temporal sword held by the king was to enter battle, but not the spiritual sword held by the Pope
 - ✘ Maintained that God alone can offer an indulgence
 - + Also ran afoul of the king who also would have profited from the sale of the indulgences

THE GREAT SCHISM ENDS AND SO DOES HUS

- ✘ Council of Constance
 - + Reigning Popes abdicated
 - + New Pope elected
 - + John Hus tried as a heretic
 - ✘ Not allowed to defend himself
 - ✘ Condemned – burned at the stake



SUMMARY

- ✘ Catholic Church in Medieval Europe
 - + Clergy became more concerned with worldly pleasures
 - + Sale of indulgences and taxes for rites
- ✘ Lives of John Wycliffe and John Hus
- ✘ Teaching of John Wycliffe and John Hus
 - + Civil Domination
 - + The Church (Earthly vs Christ's Church)
 - + Behavior of the Clergy
 - + Simony
 - + Eucharist
- ✘ Treatment as Heretics