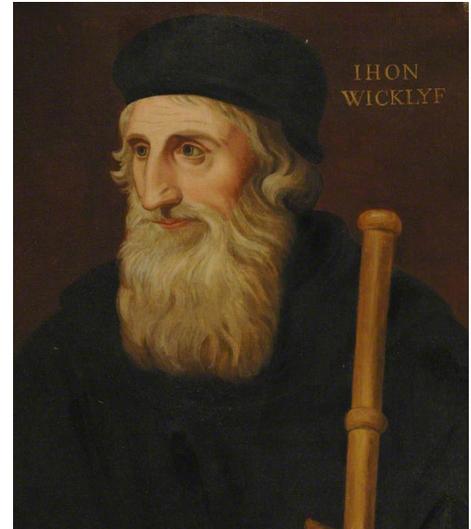


JOHN WYCLIFFE

Priest & Prophetic Witness, ca.1330-1384

Feast Day: 30 October

Collect: O God, your justice continually challenges your Church to live according to its calling; Grant us who now remember the work of John Wycliffe contrition for the wounds which our sins inflict on your Church, and such love for Christ that we may seek to heal the divisions which afflict his Body; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



Facts:

- Harbinger of the Protestant Reformation, English priest and academic
- Born in Yorkshire around 1330, ordained as a parish priest but spent most of his vocation teaching theology and philosophy at Oxford
- When the Crown entered a financial conflict with the Vatican, his defense of the monarchy gained him powerful enough political protection to tentatively test his increasingly controversial theological ideas
- Was increasingly frustrated with what he saw as the interference and abuse of international papal authority, wanted a national Church
- Widely known for translating the Vulgate (Latin edition of the Bible) into English
- Questioned the doctrine of transubstantiation—said the popular piety flowing from it led to superstition
- Had nothing to do with the Peasants' Revolt in 1381, but was blamed for it anyway, retired and died 3 years later
- Followers were called the Lollards, many were persecuted and burned at the stake

Spiritual/Theological Teachings & Legacy

- Major inspiration for other great lights of the Reformation, including Jan Hus and Martin Luther
- Taught that believers could have a direct, unmediated relationship with God, not requiring the intervention of the church or its priesthood
- Questioned the wealth and privilege of the clergy
- Most famous for his push for vernacular scripture: the Bible should be available to all who could read it and not mediated through the teaching/interpretation of the church/clergy
- His teachings led to first discussions of predestination, iconoclasm, caesaropapism (secular authority is higher than church authority in a nation, as opposed to theocracy), and questioning the veneration of saints, the sacraments, monasticism, requiem masses, transubstantiation and the papacy itself

Questions Raised by Life & Work

- What is the value of direct, unmediated access to the scriptures? Why didn't the church want that?
- How would your life be different if you were not given access or permission to read the Bible yourself? What would your relationship with the Church be like then?
- What is the role of a priest? Why do we have them? Can we do without them? Why or why not?
- How do we decide which parts of Tradition are worth keeping and which need reforming or discarding?
- What is the appropriate relationship between secular and religious authority?

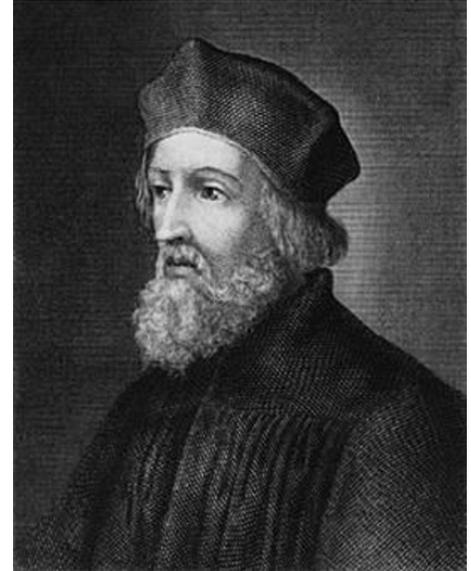
My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics:

JAN HUS

Prophetic Witness & Martyr, 1372-1415

Feast Day: 6 July

Collect: Faithful God, you gave Jan Hus the courage to confess your truth and recall your Church to the image of Christ: Enable us, inspired by his example, to bear witness against corruption and never cease to pray for our enemies, that we may prove faithful followers of our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.



Facts:

- Forerunner of the Protestant Reformation, Czech priest and reformer who called for a return to scripture and living out the Word of God in the life of the individual
- Preached to the people in Prague in their native language, and hundreds gathered every day to hear his call for personal and institutional reform
- Took the radical step of appealing directly to Christ rather than to the church hierarchy for the justification of his theological stances
- After his exile from Prague, travelled to the Council of Constance to try and clear his name of heresy charges
- Had been promised safe conduct from the emperor, but was imprisoned because “promises to heretics need not be kept”
- Council demanded his recantation, but he insisted the charges were false or twisted versions of his teachings and he could not recant opinions he had never held
- Faced with the ultimatum to recant or die, he chose to die
- Burned at the stake on July 6, 1415
- Reformers continued after him, and Hus' famous rallying cry, “Truth will conquer!” is the motto of the Czech Republic today

Spiritual/Theological Teachings & Legacy

- Quote from Hus: “The principal intention of my preaching and of all my other acts of writings was solely that I might turn men from sin. And in that truth of the Gospel that I wrote, taught, and preached in accordance with the sayings and expositions of the holy doctors, I am willing gladly to die today.”
- Hus believed personal and institutional reform were both necessary, and the success of one depended on the success of the other—the corruption of the Church could not be addressed without addressing the sin of the individual, and vice versa
- On corruption: “One pays for confession, for mass, for the sacrament, for indulgences, for churching a woman, for a blessing, for burials, for funeral services and prayers. The very last penny which an old woman has hidden in her bundle for fear of thieves or robbery will not be saved. The villainous priest will grab it.”

Questions Raised by Life & Work

- What are our accepted sources of authority? God? Scripture? The Church? Some combination thereof? How do we choose when to trust them? What is the interaction between inner authority (your own mind and heart) and outer authority? How is the Holy Spirit at work in both?
- Where do we see corruption in the Church today? Are we aware of it? What steps are we taking to address it?
- When is schism necessary for reform of the Church? What are the advantages of schism? What is the price?

My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics:

MARTIN LUTHER

Theologian & Reformer, 1483-1546

Feast Day: 18 February

Collect: O God, our refuge and our strength: You raised up your servant Martin Luther to reform and renew your Church in the light of your word. Defend and purify the Church in our own day and grant that, through faith, we may boldly proclaim the riches of your grace which you have made known in Jesus Christ our Savior, who with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, now and forever. Amen.



Facts:

- Primary architect of the Protestant Reformation
- Showed intellectual promise at a young age, father planned a career for him in law
- Entered the local Augustinian monastery in 1505, ordained a priest on 3 April 1507
- Professor of Biblical studies at University of Wittenburg—his lectures on the Bible were popular, and he made the university a center for Biblical humanism
- As a result of his studies, began to call into question the selling of indulgences
- 31 October 1517, nailed the 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenburg castle
- Pope called on the Augustinians to discipline him
- After a series of meetings, political maneuvers and attempts at reconciliation, Luther refused to recant
- Was excommunicated on 3 January 1521
- Summoned by Charles V, still refused to recant
- Warrant issued for his arrest, but he was helped to escape and go into seclusion, where he kept writing reformation doctrine and correspondence for twenty years until his death in 1546

Spiritual/Theological Teachings & Legacy

- Pioneered *sola scriptura* as a theological principal: it is not valid unless it is found in scripture, and it is not invalid unless it can be proved wrong in scripture. This is in contrast to the Anglican approach of a balance between scripture, tradition and reason/experience—for Luther it was all scripture
- Exposed the hypocrisy and venality of the clergy class who used their offices to make money and hoard land, effectively making them economic oppressors and spiritual manipulators of the people
 - Indulgences were certificates that said you or a loved one were granted so many years off your sentence in Purgatory if you paid X amount of money to the priest—Luther interpreted this as buying God's forgiveness
- Questioned the necessity of priests as intermediaries between lay people and God
- Was virulently anti-Semitic
- Salvation comes through grace by faith, not earned by good works—Luther had a transformative experience around this while reading Romans
- Got married and thereby pioneered married clergy as a Protestant practice

Questions Raised by Life & Work

- What do you make of *sola scriptura* as a guiding principle? What are its strengths? What are its limitations?
- What is the role of priests? Do we need them? What for?
- What is the relationship between justification (eternal salvation apart from our actions) and sanctification (taking action to grow in holiness)? What is the relationship for you between faith and works?

My notes/observations/questions/prayer topics: