

Origins of the Reformation, Part I: Why Wyclif?

I. Preliminary Developments—Challenges from Within the Church

A. Nominalists

1. William Durand of Saint-Pourçain (ca. 1270–1334) – reason above “any doctor”
2. William of Ockham (1290–1347) – “Ockham's Razor”

B. Brethern of the Common Life

1. Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471)—*The Imitation of Christ*
2. Wessel Gansfort — visit to Pope Sixtus VI
3. Lead your life as Christ led his

C. Heretics and Near Heretics

1. John Wyclif (c. 1320–1384)
 - a. protest against worldliness of clergy and call for sterner morality
 - b. turn from Church to Bible as authority
 - c. turn from theology of Aquinas to theology of Augustine
 - d. turn from free will to predestination
 - e. turn from salvation by works to election by divine grace
 - f. rejection of indulgences
 - g. rejection of auricular confession (favored public confession)
 - h. rejection of transubstantiation (favored consubstantiation)
 - i. rejection of priest as intermediary between people and God
 - j. protested alienation of local wealth to Rome
 - k. invited king to end his subordination to papacy
 - l. attack on temporal possessions of clergy
2. John Hus (c. 1369–1415)
 - a. Council of Constance (1415)
 - b. Lessons for Luther

Origins of the Reformation, Part II: Luther's Theses: Mailed Not Nailed

I. Preconditions and Impetuses

A. Intellectual/Religious

1. Renaissance Humanism
2. Northern Mysticism
3. Abuses in the Church
 - a. Sale of indulgences—Pope Leo X; Albrecht, Archbishop of Magdeburg, Halberstadt, and Mainz; Johann Tetzel; Ninety-five theses
 - b. Sale of Church offices and dispensations
 - c. Sale of relics
4. Clash Between Two Systems of Theology
 - a. Augustinian System
 - b. Late Medieval Theology of Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas
5. “Babylonian Captivity” (1309–1377) and the Great Schism (1378–1415)

B. Political

1. Localized Allegiances
2. Independent German Princes

C. Social

1. Ambitions of the Middle Status Group (merchants, craftsmen, artisans, etc.)
2. Effects of Rise of Competitive Capitalism (end of guild system)

D. Economic

1. Tithes, Sale of Indulgences, etc.
2. Desire to Confiscate Wealth of the Church
3. Resentment Against Papal Taxation

E. Technology—“The printing press caused the Reformation” (Marshall McLuhan) “the Reformation, born of the printing press” (James Burke)

1. Neither Printing nor Movable Type Was Invented in Mainz in 1452
 - a. Xylography and Paper — Chinese Inventions
 - b. Johann Gutenberg (ca. 1395–1468)—reusable metal type molds

2. Some Immediate Results
 - a. Cheap Books and Pamphlets
 - b. Promoted Scientific Research — invention of the “fact”
 - c. Pamphlet Polemics and the Origins of Tabloid Journalism
 - d. Censorship — *The Index*

II. Major Issues

A. Martin Luther (1483–1546)

1. Interpretations of his break with the Catholic Church
 - a. Catholic view
 - b. Protestant view
 - c. Erwin Iserloh — theses mailed not nailed
 - d. Erik Erikson — psycho-history
2. Luther’s Theology
 - a. *sola fide*
 - b. *sola scriptura*
 - c. *sola gratia*

B. Huldreich Zwingli (1484–1531)

1. bread and wine are merely symbols that signify the body and blood
2. used wooden chalice

C. John Calvin (1509–1564)

1. *The Institutes*
2. Predestination (the Elect and the Reprobate)
3. Geneva, a theocracy // similarity with More’s Utopia

Recommended Reading:

- Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Norton, 1962).
- Erwin Iserloh, *The Theses Were Not Posted: Luther Between Reform and Reformation* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968).
- J. H. Hexter, “Utopia and Geneva,” in *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of E. H. Harbison*, eds. Theodore K. Rabb and Jerrold E. Seigel, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 77–89.