

## 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. Brethren 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 (ca. 1320–1384): Morningstar of the Reformation
  - 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 (ca. 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 a Middle Status Groups (merchants, craftsmen, artisans, etc.)
2. Effects of Decline of Guild System (Beginnings of Competitive Capitalism)

#### 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. Irwin Iserloh — theses mailed not nailed
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
4. Calvin’s “opinion” of Copernicus

### *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*, edited by Theodore K. Rabb and Jerrold E. Seigel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 77–89.