

Church History Timeline By Century

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14th Century

We have now reached the 14th century in our ongoing series of century summaries. My Christian hero from this century is John Wycliffe--commonly hailed as "the Morning star of the Reformation." It was my privilege to produce a film on his life.

During the preparation phase of the production, our director, Tony Tew, and his family moved from London to Dorset in the south of England. One day a woman in her eighties welcomed them to the neighborhood. She inquired about Tony's profession.

He told her he was a filmmaker preparing a film on a late medieval clergyman named John Wycliffe. The dear lady was stunned and almost passed out. When she was able to speak, she revealed her name as Marcella Wycliffe -- Thompson, the only known living descendant of John Wycliffe, from the lineage of Wycliffe's sister.

She had lived her life as a Christian and devout daughter of the Church of England and never once heard the life and ministry of Wycliffe emphasized. That a film would now be made on his life exceeded her fondest dreams that her ancestor would not be forgotten. What a joy it was to bring this aged woman to the set and let her meet the actors. She gazed for a long time into the face of Peter Howell, who played the role of Wycliffe, in beard and costume. Then she asked him a few questions, before turning to me

to say: "Yes, that is he all right!" She, of course, had drawn her impression of Wycliffe from historic paintings just as we had in preparing the actor. - - Ken Curtis

- The Papacy, having reached its high point with Innocent III (1160-1216), begins a decline under Boniface VIII (c. 1234-1303).
- 1302--Papal bull "Unam sanctum" pronounces the highest papal claims to supremacy
- 1309-1377--"Babylonian Captivity" of papacy. Pope resides in Avignon, France, strongly under the control of the French King.
- 1378-1417--Great Schism, with two or three popes claiming authority.
- The Black Death or bubonic plague ravages Europe; 25 million Europeans, over 1/4 of the population, dies.
- Mysticism flourishes in many areas, especially Germany and the Low Countries.
- Meister Eckhardt teaches the nature of God is unknowable except through the inner knowledge of Himself God has placed in each soul.
- Catherine of Siena has a vision joining her with Christ in a mystical marriage; spends her life in serving others, including trying to end the Great Schism of the papacy.
- Seeking forgiveness from sins, bands of "flagellants" roam the countryside beating themselves as penance.
- 1305-1314--Dante writes his Divine Comedy mirroring the heights and depths of the Christianity of the 13th and 14th centuries.

- John Wycliffe transforms Oxford into the spiritual center of England. Looks to the Scriptures for authority and truth.
- 1382--Wycliffe is expelled from Oxford, translates Bible into English, and trains lay preachers to spread the Scripture.
- 1398--John Hus begins lecturing on theology at Prague University and spreads Wycliffe's ideas.