

# The Rise of the Reformers

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## *Reasons for the Decline of Papal Power (1309-1439)*

1. Renewed interest in Scholarship
  - a. Establishment of universities rekindled an interest in art, literature, & science
2. The invention of the printing press
  - a. Gutenberg invented the first movable print press in 1455
  - b. The Bible fell into the hands of the common man and he could see how far the Catholic Church was from the New Testament church.
3. National Defiance
  - a. National states began to defy the idea of Universal Sovereignty of the pope and the Catholic Church.
  - b. Royalty began to flex its muscle and work with the working middle class.
4. The failure of the Clergy
  - a. Low moral standards
  - b. The extravagancies of the pope turned people off
5. The “Babylon Captivity”
  - a. Clement V, a French man, move the papacy to Avignon, France. In the minds of the people, this placed him for all practical purposes under the control of the King of France. This is known as the Babylonian Captivity.
6. Papal Division
  - a. Later, after the papacy was reestablished in Rome, the College of Cardinals elected Urban VI pope. He angered them, however, and they deposed him and elected Clement VII as the new pope.
  - b. Urban refused to step down; Clement once again move the papacy to Avignon.
  - c. To complicate matters even more, at the Council of Pisa (July- August, 1409), a third pope was established.
    - i. So, three popes ruled the church, each claiming sole power.
7. Papal Taxation
  - a. The pope had several sources of wealth:
    - i. Income from papal estates
    - ii. Tithes
    - iii. Payment of church officials first year of salary to the pope
    - iv. Right of Spoils—personal property of upper clergy went to the pope on their deaths
    - v. Income from vacant offices
    - vi. Numerous fees
  - b. These sources drained the people, who were also paying taxes to the governments, dry.

- c. The rulers resented and coveted the money paid to the church
- 8. Mysticism
  - a. Mysticism was a “charismatic” movement of sorts. An effort that grew out of the cold and developed formalism of Catholic worship. They were some of the first critics of what the church had become.
  - b. It strove for emotional experiences, as opposed to intellectual or non-experiences.
- 9. These were just a few of the reasons the power of the pope began to wane at the close of the Middle Ages. This weakening of power was the crack in the door the reformers needed—and exploited.

## *Forerunners of the Reformation*

1. John Wycliffe (1328-1384)
  - a. Known as “The Morning Star of the Reformation.”
  - b. With nationalistic defiance on the rise, however, he drew courage and began to speak against the church in England.
  - c. His criticisms of the Catholic Church were numerous:
    - i. He called for the elimination of an immoral clergy
    - ii. He called for the stripping of church property
    - iii. He attacked the authority of the pope, claiming Christ to be the only head of the church.
    - iv. He argued the Bible as a sole source of authority, even over tradition.
    - v. He urged the Catholic Church to model itself after the New Testament pattern.
    - vi. He argued against transubstantiation
  - d. In 1382, he translated the New Testament into English.
  - e. With the support of the king of England and royalty, the church dared not touch him.
  - f. Though condemned by the Church, he established “lay preachers,” called Lollards, who preached his doctrines around England.
2. John Huss (1369- 1415)
  - a. He adopted the teachings of Wycliffe and continued the battle, causing so much grief for the Catholic Church he was eventually burned at the stake at the Council of Constance.
3. Jerome Savonarola (1452- 1498)
  - a. A Dominican monk, he preached passionately against the evil life of the pope and was eventually excommunicated, then hanged and his body burned at the stake in town square of Florence, Italy.

## *Questions*

1. How did the invention of the printing press influence the reformation movement?
2. Which three popes ruled the Catholic church at one time?

3. Describe the “charismatic” movement of the Catholic church.

4. Who was John Wycliff and what did he do?