

The Wisdom of God on Display - Entrenchment (1200 - 1400AD)

“I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” – Matthew 16v18

Thursday Night Bible Study - 11th February 2016

Historical Context

- The Hundred Years War, England vs France (1337 - 1453)
- Joan of Arc (1412 - 1431)
- The Bubonic Plague (1346 - 1353) - and estimated 75 - 200 Million people died
- Ongoing Crusades & the sacking of Constantinople (1204)
- The threat from the East - Genghis Kahn (1162 - 1227)

Theological Context

Papal Schism (1378 - 1417)

- Strife within the Catholic Church, three Popes claiming to be the Vicar of Christ.
- The different popes divided Europe as they each sided with one of them.
- The issues were resolved by reforming councils; the council of Pisa (1409) and the council of Constance (1414 - 1418)

Scholasticism

- Growing number of Universities, by 1500 there were 80+ universities in Europe.
- All Latin speaking
- In the UK; Oxford (1096) — ‘Dominus Illuminatio Mea’, Cambridge (1209) St. Andrews (1413), Glasgow (1451), Aberdeen (1495)

The ideal was to make the university into a centre for preserving and communicating the sum total of all human knowledge. Theology now became an intellectual subject, and people studied it in the academic context of university life, outside the constraints of monastic discipline.

Needham pg 244 & 246

- The most famous scholastic, **Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274)**
 - Wrote two significant works; the Summa Theologica (which he never finished) and Summa Contra Gentiles
 - He is still held in very high regard in Theological circles
 - The definitive edition of his works is yet to be finished, it began in 1882.

FUN FACT: When Thomas Aquinas died at Fossanova, the monks there cut off his head and various body parts to keep as relics. Some years later, they also exhumed his corpse so as to boil off the flesh and keep the bones in a more convenient place for veneration. Fun right?

Q: Questions or comments?

Pastoral Context

John Wycliffe (1330 - 1384)

- Wrote a particular work called, ‘The Truth of Holy Scripture’ in it he argued for two things: 1) That only scripture was the only source of Christian doctrine, by which believers must test all the teachings of the Church, including the early church fathers, the papacy and ecumenical Councils. 2) All Christians should read the Bible
- Arranged for the Latin Vulgate to be translated into English, wasn’t completed until after his death.
- Reformed the church through the preaching of the word, he was under the conviction that preaching is what made unbelievers into true christians, built christians up in faith by helping them understand what scripture meant.
- He was considered a heretic for his views.

Therefore Jesus is not found in riches, but in poverty; not in luxurious living, but in penance; not in a loose and lazy love of fun, but in bitter weeping and mourning; not in a crowd, but in a lonely place; not in the soft nourishing of the body, but in pain of body. In truth an evil person does not find Jesus; for he does not see Him where he is. He persuades himself that he can seek Jesus in the joys of this world, where Jesus will never be found. O you worldly and fleshly and wretched creatures, the devil has led you away from the joy of God and deceived you with his lies! You are not abiding in the blessed hope, nor desiring the coming of the glory of God.

To Love Jesus, from his The Poor Caitiff

FUN FACT: Wycliffe died in 1384, but this didn't stop his body being dug up, burned and his ashes thrown in the River Swift 34 years later!!

John Huss (1372 - 1415)

- Influenced by Wycliffe's ideas about the importance of scripture and attempted to reform the church in Bohemia (Modern day - Czech Republic).
- Condemned as a heretic for speaking against the 'doctrine' of indulgences (People paying money for extra grace to be bestowed by the pope to them) and saying that the Pope was not the head of the church, Christ is.
- Agreed with Wycliffe that preaching was the true heart of ordained ministry.
- Was subsequently martyred for the views that he held (his views would one day influence a certain Martin Luther)

Savonarola (1452 - 98)

- Like Hus and Wycliffe, he wanted reform, but his focus was primarily upon his church and state in Florence, Italy.
- He preached passionately against the pope, proclaimed the gospel to his people, preaching freedom to the city of Florence. His reforms were widespread throughout the city.
- Still honoured Mary, went a little too far towards the end and began to rely upon visions he had rather than scripture.
- He was eventually hung for being a heretic!

All of their crimes were for their desire to reform the church according to scripture! The church didn't like that one bit!

When Jesus is with us, all is well, and nothing seems hard. But when Jesus is absent, everything is difficult. When Jesus does not speak our hearts, nothing comforts us. But if Jesus speaks a single word, we have great comfort. Did not Mary rise instantly from the place where she wept, when Martha said to her, "The Master has come, and He is asking for you?" Happy the hour when Jesus calls us from tears to spiritual joy! How dry and hard your heart is, without Jesus ... He who finds Jesus finds a rich treasure, a good above every good. He who loses Jesus loses so much — more than the whole world. Poorest of all people is the person who lives without Jesus. Richest of all is the person who has the favour of Jesus.

Thomas a Kempis (1380 - 1471), *The imitation of Christ*, Book 2, chapter 8

Lessons

1. Small errors in doctrine can have big consequences (2 Peter:17)
2. Beware of idolatry! (Romans 1:23)
3. The Spirit of God does the work of God by the word of God. (Isaiah 55:8-11)
4. Worldly philosophy and scripture doesn't mix. (Colossians 2:20-23)

Discussion Questions

1. What have we learned?
2. Is theological training important? Why?
3. What does courage i.e. Wycliffe and Hus look like in church today?