**When Christianity was Dark - A church synopsis from Fourth Lateran Council until Luther’s 95 Theses (1215-Oct 31, 1517 A.D.)**

This 300-year period saw few good things and a lot of evil things happen. This is the time of the Black Death, the Mongols, Tamerlane, anchorites, and evil popes. But quietly there were many points of list that most Christians don’t know much about: Ramon Lull, Thomas Aquinas, Richard FitzRalph, Thomas a Kempis, John Wycliffe, Geer Groote, and Jan Hus.

# Those Evil Councils!

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215 A.D.) persecuted Jews and launched a crusade against the Albigensians and Waldenses. It was also important in formalizing the Roman Catholic faith more with transubstantiation and seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, marriage, ordination, confession, and extreme unction.

The Council of Tarragon (1233/34 A.D.) said, “No one may possess the books of the Old and New Testament, and if anyone possessed them he must turn them over to the local bishop within eight days, so that they may be burned…”

The Council of Constance (1414-1418 A.D.) was worse than the rest, which we will discuss at the end.

# The Crusades!

After Fatimid Caliphs robbed and killed Christian pilgrims, and destroyed numerous churches in Israel, the Crusades, aka Christian Jihads, were supposedly done so that Christians could make pilgrimages to the Holy land in peace, and to answer the request for help from the Byzantines against Muslim aggression.

However, around nine crusades ended up massacring Mideast villages (local Christians included), allying with and then betraying the Muslim ‘Alawites, sacking the Byzantine Empire, having a doomed crusade of just children. Crusades were also launched in northeastern Europe, against Jews, the biblical Waldenses and heretical Albigenses, and the Holy Roman Empire itself. One Crusade, the Layman’s Crusade in 1228 peacefully negotiated with the Egyptian Caliph, so the Pope excommunicated them.

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| **Year AD** | **Timeline of the 4th Lateran Council to Luther’s 95 Theses (1215-1517 A.D.)** |
| 1215 | 4th Lateran Council. Formalized 7 sacraments, transubstantiation, restrictions against Jews |
| 1215-21 | Dominican order 12K at its peak, 7K in 1983 |
| 1209-26 | Francis of Assisi starts Franciscan monks. |
| 1229 | Council of Toulose: Hunt down heretics. Non-clergy cannot read any non-Latin Bible |
| 1189-1272 | 9 Crusades to take Israel (& Constantinople) gain land and money |
| 1248-74 | Thomas Aquinas – Aristotelian theologian |
| 1286 | Kublai Khan asks Pope to send 100 Christian teachers. Only 7 were sent. |
| 1286 | Mongols start to convert to Islam |
| 1296 | Pope Boniface VII papal bull excommunicates clergy who pay secular taxes. Priests outlawed in England. |
| 1296 | Flagellants common in Europe |
| 1298 | Nestorian work, *The Pearl* |
| 1278-98 | Peter John Olivi. Taught papal infallibility |
| 1302 | Pope Boniface VII’s papal bull *Unam Sanctam*. French king Philip tortures him for heresy. Next pope dies mysteriously a month later. Next, Clement V, is France’s puppet |
| 1306 | Philip the Fair expels 100K Jews from France |
| 600-800 | 30 Bible manuscripts, p31, p34, 096, etc. |
| 1300-08 | Duns Scotus teaches immaculate Conception, pre-existence of souls |
| 1310 | Muslim massacre Christians in Arbela, Iraq |
| 1274-1315 | Ramon Lull, Mathematician, Catalan & Arabic writer, missionary to Muslims |
| 1321 | 5K Jews burned in Guienne, France. |
| 1324 | Pope John XXII in his bull calls the idea of papal infallibility “the work of the devil” |
| 1328- | French king Louis depose Pope John XII for heresy and persecutes clergy loyal to him |
| 1321-47 | William of Ockham against unlimited papal power |
| 1348 | 11K German Jews burned for the black death |
| 1328-60 | Richard FitzRalph of Armagh. dominion doctrine |
| 1347-80 | Catherine of Sienna, Christian mystic |
| 1367-82 | John Wycliffe & the Lollards; Bible reading |
| 1366-84 | Geert Groot, preacher until the pope forbade non-clergy from preaching. died helping the sick |
| 1350-99 | *The Cloud of the Unknowing* |
| 1360-1405 | Tamerlane kills 17 million, 5% worlds’ pop. Kills Hindus, fellow Muslims, and most Nestorians |
| 1408 | English Bible illegal in England |
| d.1416 | Julian of Norwich, English Anchorite |
| 1378-1417 | Western Schism of Dueling Catholic Popes in Rome & Avignon, France |
| 1418-27 | Thomas a Kempis wrote *The Imitation of Christ* |
| 1414-18 | Council of Constance burns Jan Hus to death |
| 1420 | Papal bull to exterminate Wycliffites, Hussites |
| 1419-34 | Hussite Wars; they didn’t want to be exterminated |
| 1440 | Lorenzo Valla refutes *Donation of Constantine* |
| 1457- | Count Zinzendorf and the Moravian Brethren |
| 1478- | Spanish Inquisition under Torquemada |
| 1500 | An estimated 76-100 million Christians |
| 1215- | 1517: 102 writers, 8 councils, 5 histories |

# Lights Shining in the Darkness

**Raymond Lull** (or Llull) (lived 1232-1316) was from SW Spain. He was a good mathematician who influenced Leibnitz. But he was also inspired by Francis of Assisi’s heart for mission. He spent nine years learning Arabic and devoting his life to spreading the gospel to Muslims, and writing how to do so. Lull was finally stoned to death by Muslims.

**Richard FitzRalph** started “dominion theology”. Since everything was from God’s grace, someone was not following God, then we should not be paying tithes or taxes to them. In 1360 he was invited to come to Avignon, France to discuss his ideas. But after he arrived, FitzRalph somehow just disappeared.

**John Wycliffe** was influenced by FitzRalph, and he had the Bible translated into English so that anyone could read it. He started the Lollards, where peasants would just stand on a street corner, or in some other public place, and just start reading scripture. After he died in 1382, authorities dug up his body, burning it.

**Geert Groote** (died 1384) was a founder of the Brethren of Common Life, which was a key influence on Thomas a Kempis and Luther. He helped the poor, started schools and was a powerful preacher, who also preaches abuses of the clergy. It was then the Pope forbade non-clergy form preaching the gospel. So, Geert just continued helping the poor and sick. He died of plague while helping plague victims.

**Jan Hus** of Bohemia (modern Czech Republic) has been called the Morning Star of the Reformation. Following Wycliffe, the Hussites emphasized following the Bible and were against corrupt clergy. At this time, around 1415, the Council of Constance was called to settle the dispute of three rivals all claiming to be the pope, and The Emperor invited Hus to come and they could discuss his views. But Hus made sure he had a promise of safe conduct both to and from the conference before he agreed. Once he got there, the church officials said Hus had and agreement with the Emperor, not with them, and they throw him in a dungeon and burned him at the stake.

The Bohemians rebelled and the Emperor invaded with an army of mounted knights. However, the peasants harvested hay, with plenty of long poles with curved blades on the end. They fought the armored knights, and the peasants defeated them! Unfortunately, the Hussites later fought among themselves, and then were defeated.

# Where They Went Wrong

**Thomas Aquinas** (died 1274) was one of the most intelligent theologians to appear since Augustine of Hippo. He moved philosophy in Europe from Plato to Aristotle. Modern Protestants today, such as Norm Geisler, as well as Catholics admire Aquinas. However, his philosophy had the wrong basis, as it says that the chief end of religion is our well-being.

John Duns Scotus Erigenus and Dionigi di Borgo San Sepolcro were a couple of many who wrote Commentaries on the *Sentences of Peter Lombard*. Peter Lombard’s Sentences were a commentary on the sayings of earlier Christians. They wrote their interpretation of the Bible. But let’s study God’s holy word directly, instead of a commentary on a commentary on interpretations of God’s holy word.

They were interested in trivial theological questions: hence the rhetorical question “how many angels can dance on the head of a pin?” came from scholastic theological discussion. But is advancing theological light very important when thousands of Jews and other non-Christians are being killed? Many were more interested in the power of the church, and various questions, than in following Christ. But during this dark period a few did have a strong emphasis on the being Christlike, and they stood out in this time.

**Verses to Remember Them By**

“But know this: that in the last days, grievous times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, not lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding a form of godliness but having denied its power. Turn away from these also.” 2 Timothy 3:1-5

“Do all things without complaining and arguing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without defect in the middle of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you are seen as lights in the world,” Philippians 2:14-15

(World English Bible)