

# Reformation History

- This bible/historical study can only begin to scratch the surface of Reformation history and the influences that preceded, intersected and grew out of the Reformation.
- The videos and most of the material came from LHM's study **A Man Named Martin**.
- If you happen to miss a session the same series is being taught on Sunday mornings and Thursday mornings.
- Today we will set the stage for the Reformation going through a brief history of the church and what the religious landscape of the world looked like in 1517.

# History of a Church Divided

- We often think of the church as having a history of unity and relative peace up until the Reformation, but that would be wrong
- The church has suffered divisions almost from day one
- Read I Cor 1:10-13 and Gal 1:6-10.
- Read John 17:20-23
- How can we explain the apparent discrepancy between what our Lord wants and what we find in reality?
- The divisions didn't just happen in Corinth and Galatia but throughout the apostolic church and beyond, what we find is a history of disunity and mutual condemnations from opposing sides.

# Divisions Continue

- Around 144 AD a Bishop of Sinope in Turkey named Marcion
- As he studied the Scripture he concluded that many of the teachings of Jesus were incompatible with the actions of Yahweh, the evil creator of the Old Testament whom he called Demiurge, a lesser god.
- Marcion developed a dualist system of belief in which there was a higher transcendent God and a lower world creator and ruler—
- This allowed him to reconcile his perceived contradictions between God's actions in the Old Testament and the Gospel of the New.
- Marcion was the first to introduce an early Christian canon. His canon consisted of only eleven books: selections of Luke and ten epistles of Paul. He was excommunicated and his teachings died with him.

# Divisions Continue

- Also early in post-apostolic era the Gnostics, a disparate group of sects whose teachings bore similarities with each other, played a prominent role in maintaining divisions.
- Many held to Marcion's idea of dualism (one evil deity and one good deity) and they also taught that Jesus imparted "secret wisdom" which one needed to know to be saved (gnosis – hence gnosticism).
- Many of the gnostic heresies were addressed by the church father, Irenaeus in his books, *Against all Heresies*, around 170-180.

# Divisions Continue

- The greatest challenge to the early church came from a priest from Alexandria in Egypt whose name was Arius (256–336).
- Arius taught that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who was begotten by God the Father at some point in time – not coeternal.
- He is distinct from the Father and is therefore subordinate to the Father.
- The teachings of Arius and his supporters were opposed to the theological views held by Homoousian (same nature) Christians championed by another bishop of Alexandria – Athanasius.

# Divisions Continue

- The Arians were quite popular and powerful and caused a large disruption in the church.
- Ultimately, the controversy resulted in the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 which was called by Constantine to settle the dispute, the initial formulation of the Nicene Creed came from this council.
- According to Everett Ferguson, "The great majority of Christians had no clear views on the Trinity and did not understand what was at stake in the issues."

# Divisions Continue

- As we see from these quick facts on Wikipedia for Arianism:
- At the regional First Synod of Tyre in 335, Arius was exonerated.
- Constantine the Great was baptized by the Arian bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia.
- After the deaths of both Arius and Constantine, Arius was again anathematized and pronounced a heretic at the Ecumenical First Council of Constantinople of 381.
- The Roman Emperors Constantius II (337–361) and Valens (364–378) were Arians or Semi-Arians, as was the first King of Italy, Odoacer (433?–493), and the Lombards till the 7th century.

# From persecuted minority to state religion

- Constantine's assembly of the First Council of Nicaea ushered in a new era in the church.
- It was the first of seven ecumenical councils called by the emperor (not the church) to address heresy in the church.
- This new status for the church was occasioned by the Edict of Milan in 313 under Constantine which made Christianity legal, but did not make Christianity the official religion of the empire. That happened under Emperor Theodosius I in 380 AD.
- With its newfound status the church gradually accumulated more temporal authority which would have an impact leading up to the Reformation.

# Seven Ecumenical Councils

- The controversy started by Arius only bred new controversies that required more councils to be convened.
- The following list and descriptions come from Theopedia:
- First Council of Nicaea, (325): affirmed that Jesus is truly God and equal to the Father; repudiated Arianism, adopted the Nicene Creed.
- First Council of Constantinople, (381): affirmed that Jesus was perfectly man against the Apollinarians; revised the Nicene Creed into its present form which is used in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches; prohibited any further alteration of the Creed without the assent of an Ecumenical Council.

# Seven Ecumenical Councils

- Council of Ephesus, (431): affirmed that Jesus is one person against Nestorianism; proclaimed the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God, and also condemned Pelagianism. The Assyrian church of today is Nestorian.
- Council of Chalcedon, (451): affirmed that in Jesus there are two distinct natures in one person that are hypostatically united "without confusion, change, division or separation"; repudiated the Eutychianism and Monophysitism; adopted the Chalcedonian Creed. The Oriental Orthodox churches were anathematized here: Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopian, Eritrean and (Indian) Malankara
- Second Council of Constantinople, (553): reaffirmed decisions and doctrines explicated by previous Councils, condemned new Arian, Nestorian, and Monophysite writings.

# Seven Ecumenical Councils

- Third Council of Constantinople, (680–681): asserted that Jesus had both a divine and human will; repudiated Monothelitism.
- Second Council of Nicaea, (787); restoration of the veneration of icons and end of the first iconoclasm. It is rejected by some Protestant denominations, who instead prefer the Council of Hieria (754), which had also described itself as the Seventh Ecumenical Council and had condemned the veneration of icons.
- In the midst of these Councils a local council held at Toledo, Spain would sow the seeds of the greatest division in Christendom prior to the Reformation – the split between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

# The Great Schism

- In 589 at the Third Council of Toledo in Spain, not convened to dispute matters of the Trinity, added a phrase to the Nicene Creed:
- Original as confessed at Constantinople I in 381:
  - And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.
- Change at Toledo:
  - We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.
- It gained widespread acceptance in the West and was formally adopted into the Latin rite Nicene Creed in 1014.

# The Great Schism

- The East strenuously objected that the Creed had been changed without Ecumenical approval as was stated at the Council of Constantinople (third ecumenical council) in 381.
  - It is unlawful for any man to bring forward, or to write, or to compose a different Faith as a rival to that established by the holy Fathers assembled with the Holy Ghost in Nicæa. But those who shall dare to compose a different faith, or to introduce or offer it to persons desiring to turn to the acknowledgment of the truth, whether from Heathenism or from Judaism, or from any heresy whatsoever, shall be deposed, if they be bishops or clergymen; bishops from the episcopate and clergymen from the clergy; and if they be laymen, they shall be anathematized.
- The West (Rome) justified the insertion based on papal authority to change doctrine because he occupied the seat of Peter.

# The Great Schism

- By 1053 the East and West had reached an impasse.
- A papal legation had been sent to Constantinople to request the help of the Byzantine Emperor to help with repelling a Norman invasion of southern Italy and to refuse Cerularius (Patriarch of Constantinople) the title of "Ecumenical Patriarch" insisting that he recognize the Pope's claim to be the head of all the churches.
- Cerularius refused which resulted in mutual excommunications of each other – the breach has never been repaired.
- But the stage was set for the Reformation in that one of the main issues to be contended was Papal authority.

# The Stage is Set

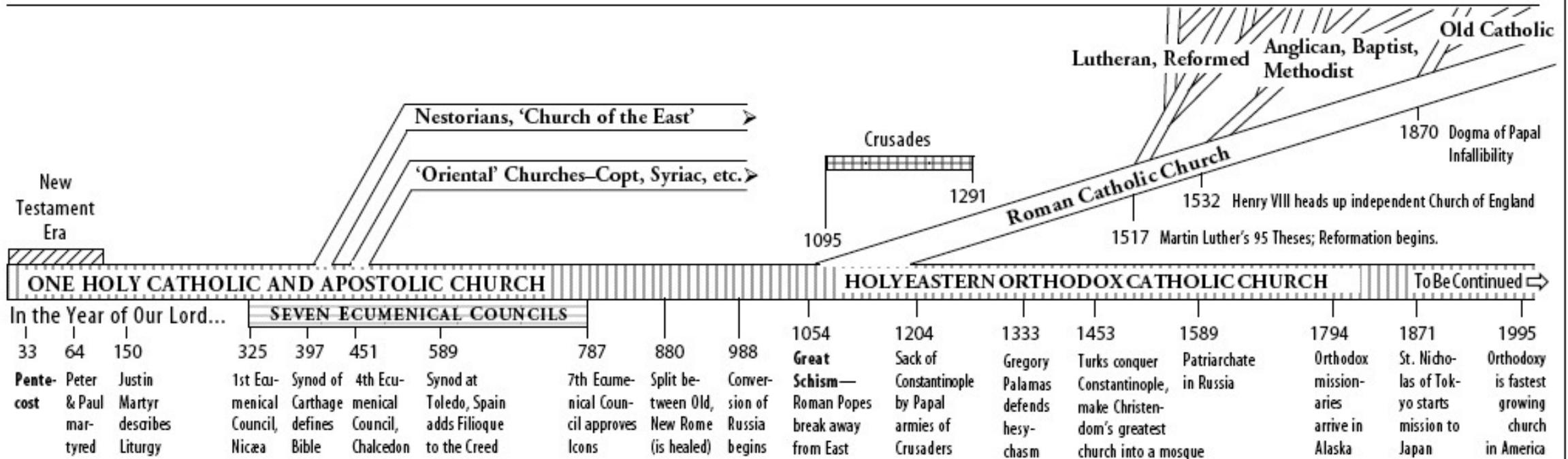
- For the next 500 years the Roman church would have sole authority in the West to define Christian doctrine and practice. It also accrued vast sums of wealth and political power.
- There were others who predated Luther who echoed similar concerns
- John Wycliffe (c. mid-1320s – 31 December 1384) was an English scholastic philosopher, theologian, Biblical translator, reformer, and seminary professor at Oxford.
- He was an influential dissident within the Roman Catholic priesthood and advocated for translating Scripture into the vernacular, translating the Bible into middle English in 1384.
- He is often referred to as the Morning Star of the Reformation.

# The Stage is Set

- Jan Hus was a Czech priest who lived between 1369 – 6 July 1415.
- Hus spoke out against indulgences, asserted that no Pope or bishop had the right to take up the sword in the name of the Church, and man obtains forgiveness of sins by true repentance, not money.
- He realized there was a gulf between university education on one hand, and the life of uneducated country priests and the laymen entrusted to their care on the other.
- He wrote many texts in Czech, such as basics of the Christian faith or preaching, intended mainly for the priests whose knowledge of Latin was poor. (Luther did too hence the Small and Large Catechisms)
- He was burned at the stake for his “heresy”. At his trial he refused all formulae of submission, but declared himself willing to recant if his errors should be proven to him from the Bible.

# TIMELINE OF CHURCH HISTORY

inspired by a timeline from Conciliar Press



Note: All Christian churches can be traced back historically to the Orthodox Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ.

# The Stage is Set

- So at the dawn of the Reformation what we see is not one unified church but almost constant doctrinal squabbling that resulted in at least four main church bodies: the Roman Catholic Church in the West, the Orthodox Church in the East, the Nestorian churches of the Middle East and the Oriental Orthodox churches in Africa.
- What they held in common was a concept of authority in the church – Scripture and Tradition and in Rome’s case the Pope.
- Beginning with Hus and intensified in the Reformation was the call for all authority in matters of doctrine and practice be based only on Scripture (*sola scriptura*).