

Church History - the Early Reformers Part 1 (Waldo & Wycliffe)

by David Guzik

This sermon explores the early reformers of the church, including the Waldensians and John Wycliffe, and highlights the importance of the apostolic approach to church reform.

Duration: 35:49

Scripture: Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Church History", "Spiritual Deception"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the default behaviors of evil curates. The first default is their obsession with wealth and material gain, while neglecting their duty to preach the gospel. The second default is their lack of willingness to go the extra mile to spread the word of God, despite the urgency of people's need for salvation. The third default is their role as agents of Satan, leading people astray and towards damnation. The preacher also highlights the simplicity and directness of the language used in older biblical texts, contrasting it with the more cautious and politically correct language of today.

Transcript

We're talking about this time of church history known as the Reformation. We're going to talk about the early Reformers. Basically, we're talking about Reformers before Martin Luther.

Now, for a long time before the Reformation, people noticed that the church was corrupt and needed change. Now, people weren't blind to this. They could see how corrupt the church was.

So, the attempts to reform the church was nothing new. Throughout the history of the church, though, there's been two basic approaches to reform. You have the prophetic approach.

The prophetic approach to church reform usually emphasizes a new word from God, right? A prophet comes on the scene and says, Hey, I'm bringing you a new word from God. We're coming into a new age, a new time. It's time to reform because of this.

If you want to say this is kind of a reformer along the lines of John the Baptist, right? When John the Baptist came, what was his basic message? We're coming to a new period. The Messiah is coming. Get right and get ready for him.

He was the messenger of a new age. If you want to say that without the, you know, occultic connotations, that happens. And so, there have always been in the church from time to time people who come up and have this prophetic approach to church reform.

One example of this in history is a guy named Joachim of Fiore. Now, Joachim of Fiore lived in the 12th century. He was a Cistercian monk who wanted to reform the church.

What he did was he had a teaching that divided church history into three ages. Each age had 40 generations. The first age was the period of God the Father bringing in the law, right? That's the time of Moses.

The second period was of God the Son bringing in grace. And then he counted off 40 generations from the time of Christ. And now, and he says, we're getting close to the time for the third one, the period of God the Holy Spirit, which brings in the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Basically, his message was, hey, the period of the Son of God is ending. We're coming into the time of the period of the Holy Spirit, and we need to prepare for this, so let's reform the church. This is a now-looking, a forward-looking approach to church reform.

Then there's the other approach. You have the prophetic approach, but then you have the apostolic approach. Well, if the prophetic approach says, hey, you know, we've got a new message, you know, God's doing something new, let's get in time.

The apostolic approach says, hey, we've got to get back to where the apostles were. We need to get back to the Bible. They say, we're not bringing anything new.

That's the problem, is that the church is new. We've got to get back to what it was before. We need to get back to the apostolic church.

Now, can I tell you one thing? There's a sense in which the apostolic approach to church reform is based on a romantic illusion. You know what the romantic illusion is? It's that everything was hunky-dory in the days of the apostolic church. I mean, if you think that the church of Paul and John and Peter was just one unending, beautiful, Holy Ghost, blissful day after another, man, there was heresy, there was immorality, there was division, I mean, they had all kinds of problems in the early church.

So in one sense, it's really based on a romantic delusion, this idea that everything was hunky-dory in the days of the apostolic church. But, at the same time, it's not a delusion, is it? Because the apostolic church, as many problems as they had, it was certainly an improvement compared to what came after it. Generally, the medieval Roman Catholic church thought that they had improved upon the apostolic church.

That's what they would say in the Middle Ages. They would say, we have improved upon the apostolic church. So there was a legitimate role, not just a romantic delusion behind the apostolic thing, because actually what they were saying is, you guys haven't improved on the apostolic church at all, you've fallen from it.

And even though the apostolic church was not perfect, look at what they had right, and we need to get back to those right things. Just to give you an idea, these two basic approaches. Now, most of the people, as a matter of fact, all of the people that we're going to talk about today, approached church reform, well,

let me ask you this, was Martin Luther a prophetic reformer or an apostolic reformer? Which approach did he use? Martin Luther was back to the Bible, back to this.

He was not the prophet of a new age. And that's what the whole Reformation was really about. I would suggest to you that any attempt at church reform that's based on the prophetic approach is going to be short-lived.

It may have a lot of excitement to it for a while, but it's going to be very short-lived. So I don't think that the prophetic approach is the right way to approach reforming the church at all. It needs to be the apostolic approach.

Although there are some things that are legitimate about the prophetic approach. I'm just saying all in all. All right, let's talk about some early reformers or early reform movements.

The first one I want to talk to you about are the Waldensians. I have difficulty pronouncing this. If I'm pronouncing it incorrectly, somebody can probably clue me in on it.

I'm frightened to consider who this tape might be going out to. But the Waldensians are the followers of a guy named Peter Waldo. Peter Waldo was a wealthy businessman in Lyon, France.

He's one of the early reformers. Peter Waldo lived in France towards the end part of the 12th century. So we're talking about the 1100.

About the year 1170, he hired a priest to translate the four Gospels and a few other scripture passages from Latin into French. You go down to the Bible bookstore today and say, I want a Bible. They say, well, what version? And you go there, there's a million of them, aren't there? I mean, they seem to come out with a new version of the Bible every six months.

Well, let me tell you, back in the days of Peter Waldo, there was one version of the Bible. Anybody know what it was? The Latin Vulgate. No, not Greek.

No, no, no, no, no. The Latin Vulgate. Translated by Jerome.

I mean, in this, Jerome, what, in the 5th, 6th century? I mean, this is an old word. The Latin, that was it. You were a Frenchman? You wanted to read or study the Bible? You had to do it in Latin.

German? Had to do it in Latin. Now, in one sense, this wasn't an impediment because Latin was a common language among anybody who was educated. By the way, that's how it was in the world, I would say, up until 70, 80 years ago.

If you were educated, you knew Latin. I mean, it used to be in school systems that, you know, elementary and junior high and high school kids, they learned Latin. I have commentaries written from 100, 150, 200 years ago.

And you'll be reading them, and you know what they'll do? They'll just spin off a paragraph in Latin, quoting somebody. And they just assume, look, if you're an educated person reading this commentary, you're going to know Latin, right? They don't even translate it for you. Why should they? Because you know Latin.

You're reading the book, aren't you? It's like, oh, great. I wish I knew Latin. So anyway, what happened with Peter Waldo when he got the scriptures in French? You know, he hired a priest.

Hey, you know, I'll give you a few bucks, translate this for me. So the priest did. He started to read the Bible in his own language.

It revolutionized his life. He just got, what? We would just say he got born again. His eyes were open to the truth.

He began to realize that the scriptures alone were the foundation of the faith. And they were more important than the decrees of any church or any religious leader. He learned that the saints should not be worshipped.

He learned that there's one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. And he learned that there were only two valid sacraments. I mean, when you start reading the Bible, there's two things you notice.

I mean, if you were born into a... Let's say you're born and live in this religious system, but you never read the Bible. Now you read the Bible. And what do you do? Well, first of all, you notice what's in the Bible, right? Secondly, you notice what's not in the Bible.

You go through and you look for the sacrament of penance. You look for, you know, the sacrament of confirmation. These things aren't in the Bible.

You say, I find two things in the Bible. I find baptism and communion. That's it.

And so, you know, this is what happened in Peter Waldo's life. Now, in the year 1177, Waldo formed a society which became known as the Waldensians. These were a group of like-minded people who were committed to spreading these truths from the Bible.

And they lived simple, poor lives. And they're very clever. They usually went about from city to city in groups of two, basically going undercover.

They would travel as peddlers. And, you know, you'd get a knock at the door. Hi, you know, Fuller Brush, man? Can I come in and show you the brushes? Yeah, and then you'd sit down at the table and you'd say, let us tell you about this from the Bible.

And people were blown away because they had never read or heard stuff right from the Bible before. I mean, the people were ignorant of the Bible. Most priests were ignorant of the Bible.

This was like bringing the Bible to people who had never, ever heard it before. They also, as they went out all around, they also weren't hesitant to criticize the church, or they saw that the church was wrong. So the Waldensians spread all throughout France and into Switzerland and northern Italy.

They gathered like-minded people who worshipped together in secluded places. They came over time to become pretty persecuted. But they did what they could.

They distributed Bible portions in the native languages and other works by Christian writers. At first, the Waldensians were not persecuted. The churches were pretty lenient towards them.

But after a while, they came under severe persecution. In the year 1229, in response to the growth of the Waldensians, the Council of Valencia, not Valencia out here, Valencia, Spain. The Council of Valencia forbade men who were not priests from reading the Bible.

Do you believe that? Yeah. A church council that said, if you're not a priest, you can't read the Bible. And they said, any scripture portions or prayer books or anything that we give to the laity, to lay people, they have to be in Latin, never in the vernacular language.

You see, this was a big thing. The church didn't want people to read the Bible. Check this out.

At this time, and matter of fact, it's still true to this day, that the Roman Catholic Church has this list. They have a list called the Index of Forbidden Books. At this time in church history, the Bible was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books.

So this shows the kind of influence that the Waldensians were really having. They did suffer greatly under persecution. I mean, they lasted a long time.

Even after the time of the Reformation, the Waldensians continued in Europe. And since they mostly lived in Catholic countries, right? France, Switzerland, Italy, parts of Spain. These were countries that were not successful in the Reformation.

Since these were people who lived in countries that were still Roman Catholic, they were persecuted even after the time of the Reformation. Matter of fact, on one very famous occasion, Oliver Cromwell, the Protestant protector of England for a while, that's a very interesting story all in itself. He greatly worked to assist the Waldensians in Europe and did a lot to help them because they were being persecuted.

There's one famous case of when 400 women and children of the Waldensians were finding shelter in a cave because their men were out trying to arrange a place to stay or this or that, and they were discovered and the persecutors came and burned them all to death in the cave. They just lit a fire at the front of the cave and had it spread in the back. And this kind of persecution continued among the Waldensians or against the Waldensians.

So this was one famous example. Now, sometimes people ask, during this time of great darkness in the Roman Catholic Church, were there any real Christians? Well, this is an example. This is an example of real, genuine Christianity existing outside of the walls of the church.

Another example of an early Reformer is a guy named John Wycliffe. You'll find his name spelled different ways. Sometimes it's spelled like that, W-Y-C-L-I-F.

Sometimes it's with two Fs. The way I'm spelling it most commonly is with two Fs and an E. But you'll find it spelled different ways. As a matter of fact, sometimes you'll find it spelled with an I instead of a Y there, but you get the idea.

John Wycliffe. He lived from 1325, or 1324 I think it is, to 1384. Sixty-one years.

And he lived through the turmoil. Remember what we talked about last time? The Avignon Papacy and the Great Schism. This time when you had two and then three popes, and they were all excommunicating each other and all this business.

He could see the corruption of the papacy. I'll tell you something else that John Wycliffe lived through. The Black Death.

That was like 1350, something like that, 1340. The Black Death that swept through Europe. Man, if that wasn't the judgment of God, I don't know.

Can you imagine, let's just say in Ventura County, one quarter of everybody in Ventura County dying from a disease. I mean, within a matter of months. In a period of three months, one quarter of the population of Ventura County is dead from disease.

Just amazing the impact that the Black Death had. Anyway, Wycliffe was educated at Oxford. Then he taught at Oxford.

He was supported by the church. I mean, he was a priest. He was supported by the church.

Now, he began his protest against the church in a political way. Remember, this is a time when the popes and the kings are battling back and forth. So the pope wanted to levy some taxes against the king of England.

The king of England didn't want to pay it. And Wycliffe supported the king of England against the pope. And so, you know, you have this battle back and forth.

So in his beginnings, his protest against the church was a political one. But later in his life, Wycliffe really began to emphasize a doctrinal and theological protest against the church. Wycliffe was very heavily influenced by Augustine's teaching.

He believed very strongly in predestination. You would ask him, who belongs to the church? Well, the elect belong to the church, the ones chosen by God. Who knows who the elect are? Only God does.

So you can't really locate the true church on earth. It's ridiculous to say, England's a Christian nation. If you're born in England, you're a Christian.

Wycliffe would say, if you ask Wycliffe, why is a man saved? He'd say, because he's chosen by God. If you would ask a Roman Catholic, why is a man saved? He'd say, because he's done the seven sacraments. You see the difference in the way of thinking? Now, because of a lot of his philosophical outlooks and stuff, Wycliffe also had a big problem with the idea of transubstantiation.

Do you remember what transubstantiation is? This is the Roman Catholic teaching. I may as well write this down. Transubstantiation.

This is the theological term that refers to what the Roman Catholics consider to be the transformation of the bread and the wine into the actual, real body and blood of Jesus Christ. You might say, well look, it still looks like bread. It still tastes like bread.

How can you say that it is actually the body and blood of Jesus Christ? And what they would say is, bread is just its outward form. Its inward reality is the body of Jesus Christ. Now, this was based on a philosophical concept that said that there could be a difference between something's outward form and its inward reality, right? Wycliffe didn't agree with that.

He goes, looks like bread, tastes like bread, it's bread. That is not the flesh of Jesus Christ. It could represent it, it could symbolize it, it could picture it, but that is not the flesh of Jesus Christ.

You see, you have to have a certain way of thinking to be able to say it looks like bread, it tastes like bread, but it's actually the body of Jesus. Wycliffe wasn't going along with that. He goes along with the duck.

You've heard that, right? It walks like a duck, talks like a duck, it's a duck. Well, that's how Wycliffe would say it. He goes, listen, this is something that came along as an invention.

By the way, something interesting here. What is the scriptural basis in the Roman Catholic thinking for the doctrine of transubstantiation? It's Jesus' words, for example, in Matthew 26, 26. This is my body.

That's what Jesus said. This is my body. The Roman Catholic says, you know what? If he says it's my body, then it's his body.

Period. End of story. Now, the Latin phrase for this is my body, you know, they wouldn't read this is my body in the Bible, right? They would read a Latin Bible.

This phrase in the Latin Bible is hoc est. Let me make sure I get it correct here. Hoc est corpus meum.

This is my body. Or, you know, this is body, mine, is actually what it is literally in, you know, corpse, body. You know, this is body, mine.

Now, what's interesting about this is this is what the priest would say at the mass, when he was celebrating the mass, at the time when the bread was being transformed in the Roman Catholic thinking from bread into the body of Christ. He would call this out. And they still do it in the Latin mass today.

Hoc est corpus meum. Well, there came a phrase from the way that lay people would look at the priest saying this and transforming something magically from one thing into another. And you know what the phrase is? Hocus pocus.

That's where the thing of hocus, hocus pocus, a magical phrase that you say to change something into one thing or another. That's the way people heard it, you know, and there were probably a lot of sloppy priests who just slurred all this in Latin and stuff. And so they thought, man, that's hocus pocus.

You're changing something from one thing to another. So, Wycliffe was not down with that. He said no, no way.

Now, Wycliffe was also big on the idea of sola scriptura, a Latin phrase which means, sola, what does that mean? Only scriptura. Scriptures. Only the Bible.

That's it. Sola scriptura says, this idea, this way of thinking says, you know what? The Bible is the final authority. Not a pope.

Not a council. Not a creed. The Bible is the final authority.

Wycliffe's greatest work was his translation of the Bible into English. Remember I told you that this amazing transformation came in Peter Waldo when the Bible came from Latin into his own language? Well, Wycliffe did an amazing work. He brought forth the first English translation of the Bible.

And it took England by storm. Well, or as much as it was spread abroad, it took England by storm. I mean, England by storm.

This is from Wycliffe's Old English. From the parable of the prodigal son. And he said, A man had a two sons, and the younger of him said to the father, Father, ye me the poor shun of cattle that faileth to me.

And he departed to him the cattle. And not after many days, when all things were gendered together, the younger son went forth in pilgrimage to a fair country. And there he waited his goods in leaguings, it's supposed to be living, you know, that's the word, leaguings, lecherously.

And after that he had ended all thingies, a strong hunger was mad in that country. And he began to huneed. And he went and drove him to one of the citizens of the country.

And they sent him to his town to feed swine. And he coulded, he wanted, coulded, to fill his womb with the codis that the hoggies eaten. I love that, hoggies, eaten.

And no man gave him. And he turned again to himself and said, How many hered men in my father's house and plenty in Lewis, and I, that's how you say it, I perish here through hunger. I shall rise up and go to my father and he shall see it to him, Father, I has sinned into hean, heaven, and before thee, and now I am not worthy to be clipped thee soon, make me own of thine hered men.

And he rose up and came to his father. You know, that's English from 14th century. That's how they read it.

It's amazing how much the English language has changed. And I mean, that's the whole character of languages. They change over time.

If you heard somebody from back then read it, it would sound a lot more like our modern English than you think. So this was Wycliffe's, oh, his great work, was to translate the Bible into English. It's almost hard to underestimate what a great accomplishment this was.

Now, he also had another significant accomplishment, and that was establishing an order of people to go out and spread the Scriptures. Just very much like Peter Waldo, he gathered together like-minded people who were willing to live a simple lifestyle and go out and spread the Word, and these were people known as Lawlords. You say, why Lawlords? Well, we really don't know.

We really don't know what the name means. Some people think that the word is derived from the Old English word lollin' or lollin', meaning to sing softly. And the idea might be that they went about singing softly the Scriptures wherever they went.

Other people think that it comes from a kind of a derisive word that means lazy people, and that, you know, these people, they just wanted to sit around and read the Bible all day. They didn't want to work. So it's hard to know exactly where the term Lawlords comes from.

But these were people who were hardcore and dedicated followers of Wycliffe's principles, and they even presented their criticisms to the Church. It didn't accomplish much of anything, but their big things were just what Wycliffe would say, too. They rejected transubstantiation.

They rejected celibacy among the clergy and religious orders. They rejected clergy who held political office. They rejected image worship as idolatry, and they rejected the necessity of the sacrament of

confession.

Here's some of Wycliffe's writings to give you an idea. It says, How the office of curate is ordained of God. Now, curate, you know what probably we would call a curate today? A pastor.

It's someone who has the care over souls. So that's what we would call a curate. So you could just say, and I'll substitute the word pastor for every time it says curate.

It says, The office of pastor is ordained of God. Few do it well, and many full vile. Therefore, we test their defaults with God's help.

Number one, They are more busy about worldly goods than virtues and good keeping of men's souls. For he that can best get riches of this world together and have a great household and worldly array is held to be a worthy man of holy church, though he know not the best point of the gospel. Such one is praised and borne up by the bishops and their offices, that the curate or the pastor that gives himself to study holy writ and teaches prisoners to save their souls and live in meekness, penance, and busy labor about spiritual things and cares not about worldly respect and riches is held to be a fool and a destroyer of the holy church.

He is despised and persecuted by high priests and prelates in their offices and is hated by other pastors. This makes many to be negligent in their spiritual cures and to give them occupations and business about worldly goods. Et cetera, et cetera.

Look at number two. The second default is that they run fast by land and by water in great peril of body and soul to get rich benefices, but they will not knowingly go a mile to preach the gospel. Though christened men are running to hell for want of knowing and keeping of God's law, certainly they show indeed that they are foully blind with covetousness and worship false gods as St. Paul says.

Number three. The third default of evil curates is that they are angels of Satan to lead men to hell. There's something that's really refreshing about reading this stuff in these days.

These guys didn't mess around when they wrote. You know what I mean? They have a directness that's... I mean, you just can't talk this way today, right? Believe me, if John Wycliffe or Martin Luther could get in the time machine and come up and preach in our churches, people would run them out on a rail. They'd say, you can't talk like that to us.

You know, you can't say that. Even if they weren't talking to you, they were talking about other people. You can't say that about them.

They'd say, oh yeah? Well, you just watch me. I mean, that's the way these guys talked. Number nine.

The ninth error is that they waste poor men's goods on rich furs and costly clothes and worldly array, feasts of rich men and in gluttony, drunkenness and lechery. For sometimes they pass great men in their great furs and precious clothes. They have fat horses with gay saddles and bridles.

St. Bernard crieth, whatever curate's hold of the altar more than a simply livelihood and clothing is not theirs but other men's. Antichrist labor to destroy holy writ. That's a good little section there.

He says, As our Lord Jesus Christ ordained by the writing of the four evangelists to make his gospel surely known and maintained against heretics and men out of the faith, so the devil, even Satan, devises by

Antichrist and his worldly false clerks to destroy holy writ and Christian men's beliefs by four accursed ways or false reasons. And then he goes and he lists the four ways. Again, if you notice there, in the place that says the trilogous, that's where he really deals with this whole issue of indulgences and the Pope being able to have the authority to give indulgences.

You know, we'd have to say Wycliffe isn't being strictly biblical here because the idea of penance is doing something to repay your sin. It's doing something to earn forgiveness. Wycliffe is here still thinking in the old, but he just wishes people would get back to that instead of the money thing.

Look at this on page three here. The propositions of Wycliffe condemned at London and at the Council of Constance. Now, this is what Wycliffe's opponents said he taught and they condemned.

They said that he taught that the material substance of bread and the material substance of wine remain in the sacrament of the altar. In other words, Wycliffe said it's still bread. It's still wine.

And they said, we condemn that teaching. This is the next one of his teachings that they condemned. That Christ is not in the sacrament essentially and really in his own corporeal or bodily presence.

They said that Jesus is bodily present in the sacrament. And they condemned Wycliffe's opposition to that. They condemned this one.

That if a bishop or priest be in mortal sin he does not ordain, consecrate, or baptize. Now, this is kind of an interesting issue if you want to debate it along. Wycliffe looked at the corruption of the church and he said, that bishop is so corrupt that it doesn't count if he ordains somebody.

It doesn't count if he lays hands on somebody. Now, that's an interesting issue. We might say that Wycliffe was wrong on that point, but you can at least see why he said it.

Number five, that it is not laid down in the gospel that Christ ordained the mass. That's what Wycliffe would say. Where do you find it in the gospel that Jesus said to celebrate the mass in the way that you do it? They said, we condemn Wycliffe's assertion of that.

And I like number 14, so I included that one as well. That any deacon or priest may preach the word of God apart from the authority of the apostolic seer or Catholic bishop. In other words, Wycliffe said, preach the word.

Go out there and preach it. And Armageddon says, no, we condemn that. You can only preach the word if you're specifically given permission by the pope, basically, or a Catholic bishop.

And then, if you look here at the Lawlord Conclusions from 1394, that this was a list of, I don't know if you want to say complaints or assertions, corrections that they wanted to make. And the Lawlords did a great job. You know, they traveled among the common people.

They lived simply. They lived on the freely given gifts of people. The common people loved them.

And they did much to spread the gospel and prepare the ground for later work in England. Now, at times, institutional and political leaders would support the Lawlords because the Lawlords were against the institutional church, right? And so were the kings a lot of times. A lot of times, the kings were going, yeah, Lawlords, this is great.

But other times, they were not. Some of the Lawlords were even martyred. And this is a significant occasion.

In the year 1401, so you're talking about some 15, 16 years after Wycliffe's death. 1401, William Sawtree was martyred for being a Lawlord. For being a follower, for believing what the Lawlords believed, for being a follower of the biblical teachings brought forth by John Wycliffe.

What's interesting about William Sawtree who was martyred in 1401, this is the first known. I mean, there may be unknown. But this is the first known Christian martyr on English soil since the time of the Roman Emperor Diocletian around the year 300.

That's pretty significant, isn't it? You've got some 1100 years where England's a Christian nation and people aren't dying for being Christians. William Sawtree was the first Christian martyr to die on English soil for some 1100 years. But let's remember something.

This happened in England. The English Church didn't want the Pope's help because the English Church was trying to distance itself from the Roman Catholic Church. Basically, at this time, the attitude of the Church in England, the attitude of the English Kings was we don't have any problem with Roman Catholic doctrine.

That's fine. We just don't want the political control of the Pope. This was the attitude.

Now, this eventually culminated in Henry VIII. But it wasn't so much the Pope that said go out and get the Lawlords, though he would be in full agreement with getting them. This was done by English kings, English bishops, English officials, and very much so, they were forced underground during this time of persecution.

And the persecution would come up and down. That's exactly what the Lawlords did. They went underground and hid themselves the best they could.

And they survived as a movement for a long time. Now, what's sad is you have to say, I guess it has to do maybe with some of the makeup of the people. John Wycliffe was not a tremendously bold and courageous man.

He was the kind of guy who could talk big, and we read some of his big talk. But you know what? He was kind of a fraidy cat. He wasn't a Martin Luther who would go right into the teeth of the lion and say, bring it on.

Personally, John Wycliffe was not a man of tremendous, let's just say this, he was not a man of extraordinary courage. Martin Luther was a man of extraordinary personal courage. John Wycliffe, no.

He was probably somebody just like us. You know, not of tremendous courage. The Lawlords didn't seem to be of people's extraordinary courage either.

There are plenty of cases where they brought in Lawlords and said, recant or we'll torture you. And they recanted. And it probably has something to do just with the dynamic of a movement, I should say, taking on the character of its leader, of its originator.

And I'm not trying to put down the Lawlords. I'm just saying that this was a movement that was strong, was good, but it was not noted for its extraordinary courage in the face of persecution. That just wasn't one of

the features of the Lawlords, though they survived.

And that is a tribute just in and of itself. Wycliffe died a natural death. He did not die a martyr.

He died a natural death. The Church wanted to kill him, but Wycliffe was skilled enough to associate himself with political people who could protect him. And that's what he did.

But this is what's interesting about Wycliffe. Near 1415, the Council of Constance condemned John Wycliffe as a heretic. And they demanded that his body be destroyed.

Well, the guy had been dead for more than 20 years. So this was finally fulfilled in 1428. In 1428, they dug up the bones of Wycliffe's body, burned them at the stake, and scattered his ashes in a river.

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