

CHAPTER XIX

THE LOLLARD MOVEMENT

The movement led by Wycliffe was known as the “Lollards,” a pejorative term derived from the Latin *lolium*, which meant “a wild weed or vetch (often translated as ‘tares’) which can choke out wheat, as in the parable from Matthew 13:24-30.” (The Lollard Society)

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way... The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.” (Matt. 13:24-5; 38, 40)

Gail Riplinger portrays the Lollards as “Christian martyrs”:

“Purvey said that the Catholic practice of ‘...auricular confession, or private penance, is a certain whispering, destroying the liberty of the gospel, to entangle the consciences of men in sin, and draw their souls into hell.’ For such outspoken views and for their work on the Wycliffe Bible, both Purvey and Nicholas Hereford, editor of part of the Old Testament, were imprisoned and tortured. (Foxe, vol. 3, pp. 287, 286, 289)

“A prison (called Lollard’s Prison in Lambeth Palace in London) was built to detain Christians. It can still be seen today with the prisoner’s iron rings next to writing on the wall which reads, ‘*Jesus amor meus* (Jesus is my love)’” (*The Indestructible Book*, 1996, p. 80.). Purvey and Hereford were joined there by the ‘street preachers’ of the day. In 1382, a statute which forbade preaching, was directed at Wycliffe and other Christians.” (*Awe*, pp. 777-8, 791)

Recall that the Oxford scholars who translated the Vulgate into English ultimately repudiated Lollardy, a reaction which historian Malcolm Lambert attributed to their mature rejection of the extremist character of the movement:

“A small group of academically trained men—we may call them ‘proto-Lollards’—mediated the master’s late, radical ideas to a popular audience. Of these the best known are Nicholas Hereford, Philip Repton, John Aston and John Purvey, Wycliffe’s secretary in his last years. The first three had been attracted to Wycliffe’s ideas in Oxford... Repton was an Auston canon; the others were secular clerks. Their position was a little equivocal, for all at one time or another recanted or submitted to ecclesiastical censure, and two (Hereford and Repton) finally abandoned support of Lollardy for ever. ...they were men who desired reform, and had been swept away by Wycliffite ideas; counter-argument, more mature reflection and, perhaps, realization of the consequences of persistence in heresy detached them from their new beliefs... Hereford...not only recanted, but spoke against Lollardy... Repton...recanted before Hereford, and rose to be abbot of his house and finally bishop of Lincoln where he had to pursue the Lollards... Purvey recanted in 1401... Yet, even so,...he was considerately treated, and put on probation by being given the benefice of West Hythe, conveniently near the archbishop’s castle at Saltwood...” (*Medieval Heresies*, p. 234)

The Lollards appear to have been a politically-motivated landed gentry which exploited the lower classes in order to overthrow the established Church and eventually the monarchy. Lollards were behind the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 protesting excessive taxation for ecclesiastical endowments; their violence led to the murder of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Sudbury, who had summoned John Wycliffe to stand trial at Lambeth Palace in 1378. (*On the Truth*, p. 218) *A History of England* by Goldwin Smith portrays the Lollard movement and their leader, John Wycliffe, as dominating the political scene of England and mobilizing the masses through Wycliffe's preaching that the Church should be poor and subject to the secular authorities, even an arm of the State.

“The spirit of anti-clericalism reached its climax in the teachings of John Wycliffe, born in Yorkshire about 1320... In the interests of the state Wycliffe continued to preach loudly against clerical ownership of property. The civil authority, Wycliffe argued, had the duty and the power to take away the property of all clerics who had betrayed their trust by failing in their duties, abusing their authority, or falling from grace. Many nobles saw an advantage in confiscating church property, particularly if some of it should fall into their hands. John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, gave Wycliffe strong support...

“Wycliffe was convinced that in all temporal matters the king was superior to the clergy... In all his writings Wycliffe exalted the state at the expense of the Church. Kings, he held, came from divine appointment: the church and state would cooperate with each other. Wycliffe foreshadowed Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes in his conception of a national church subordinate to a national state. ...his writings were essentially aristocratic, in some respects an interesting combination of Plato's philosopher king and the judges of the Old Testament.” (*A History of England*, pp. 158-9)

The Plantagenet dynasty which ruled England during Wycliffe's era was originally the Angevin dynasty of France which had conquered England in 1154. (According to *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, “...the lords of Anjou-Plantagenet family were thus allied to the Merovingian bloodline. And the name of Plantagenet may even have been intended to echo ‘Plant-ard’ or Plantard.” (p. 302; see “The Merovingian Dynasty”) King Richard II (Plantagenet) employed leading Lollards as ‘knights of the crown’ and these Chamber knights were among the principal supporters of John Wycliffe — who led the anticlerical movement which also had its origins in the south of France. The mother of Richard II, Joan Plantagenet (Joan of Kent), was among Wycliffe's chief advocates, intervening in his trial at Lambeth and securing his release before he could be formally sentenced. Notwithstanding Wycliffe's steady stream of invective against the Catholic clergy, the “Morning Star of the Reformation” was never imprisoned or martyred, but lived in style quite securely and died peacefully in 1384.

Attila Bárány described Lollardy as centered in these knights of the court of the Plantagenet dynasty which, it will be seen, was allied with England's enemies in France:

“These prominent supporters of Wyclif were a fairly discrete and closely knit group of men, an intimate association under the patronage of King Richard. The nucleus of the Lollards were chamber knights and had been in royal household service for 20-30 years, being thus closely attached to the court for a long time...

“Wyclif found employment and patronage in a wide spectrum of people in the highest political quarters. He was also a protégé of the King's mother, the Princess of Wales. Most of the noble and knightly strata, disillusioned with the papacy on political grounds and with the church on moral grounds, were susceptible to Wycliffism – but rather to a vague anticlerical sentiment than to the specific doctrines on the Eucharist, which might explain why they were tolerated in the 1390s and 1400s. In his later years the Duke of Lancaster vehemently rejected Wycliffite doctrines, which, nevertheless, did not keep

him from launching assaults on clerical wealth and pretensions. He took Wyclif's strictures on the clergy as possessors of goods as a convenient political weapon. Nonetheless, even after Gaunt changed sides, the apostles of heresy continued to enjoy protection in high places. Lollardy remained enormously popular among the lesser nobility and the gentry: at the local level Lollard knights spread and defended Wycliffism. Even in the 1390s, when the court was overtly waging war against heresy, it could not make its policies felt at the local level.

“Richard II, having grown up in a radical religious atmosphere, in the company of leading Lollard heretics – the three main personages among the Lollard chamber knights (Stury, Clanvowe and Clifford) were named executors of the Princess Mother's will – must have been sympathetic to these revolutionary issues. This might explain why the King, up to the 1390s, took no disciplinary action against the Lollard ‘knights of the crown’. Richard was much more than merely lenient towards the prosecution of the Lollards; and he gave no assistance to the ecclesiastical arm in its fight against heresy. Some English historians argue that over and above the tolerant attitude in high circles Lollardy was actually a court-centred movement, with the King being deeply influenced by it at least in the 1380s. The church was left alone in its anti-heretical efforts; the Crown was silent...” (“The Crown and the Lollards in Later Medieval England”)

King Richard II was supplanted and executed by Henry IV (1367-1413) in the “Revolution of 1399”. Henry IV's father was John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the third son of King Edward III (1312-77) who had reigned over England for 50 years. After the death of Richard II, the House of Plantagenet was replaced by that of Lancaster, which was a branch of the Plantagenets.

“Henry met with the exiled Thomas Arundel, former (and future) Archbishop of Canterbury, who had lost his position because of his involvement with the Lords Appellant, and Henry and Arundel returned to England while Richard was on a military campaign in Ireland... On Arundel's advice, Henry passed the *De heretico comburendo* and was thus the first English king to allow the burning of heretics, mainly to suppress the Lollard movement...” (Henry IV of England)

Richard's mother and Wycliffe's patron, Joan of Kent, was burned at the stake as a Unitarian Anabaptist by Henry IV, who issued the writ *De heretico comburendo* in 1401, allegedly to suppress the Lollard movement. An interesting aspect of *De heretico comburendo* is that it remained English law for almost 300 years until it was abolished by Parliament during the reign of Charles II, the king who established the Royal Society which had formerly been the Invisible College of the Rosicrucians:

“... William Sawtre (Sautre)... sometime priest at Lynn, who was convicted of heresy, publicly recanted, was condemned again and finally burned as a relapsed heretic at Smithfield, March 20, 1401, eight days before the passage of the fateful Act *De haeretico comburendo*, which condemned all convicted heretics to death at the stake and was not abolished until 1677. He was the first in England to suffer death for his religion.” (*A History of Unitarianism*)

In *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond present compelling evidence that William Sawtre was connected to a Lollard crime syndicate in London which was conspiring overthrow the monarchy. Also that Sawtre's demeanor during his own trial was “cheerful,” as if he had nothing to fear, and that this attitude was typical of the Lollards. Moreover,

“the statute *De heretico comburendo* has many unusual, even odd, features. Its language, diction, the somewhat confused circumstances of its passing, along with the record of

William Sawtre's trial, all suggest that this was not a measured response to a theological problem; it was not the long-planned thank-you of Henry IV to Arundel for effecting the deposition of Richard II, which is sometimes claimed. Indeed, Arundel was to emerge as the scourge of the Lollards only later in his reign." (p. 122)

It is frequently alleged that *De heretico comburendo* was a decree that "no man hereafter, by his own authority, may translate any text of Scripture into English or any other tongue by way of a book, pamphlet or treatise." However, this prohibition is found nowhere in *De haeretico comburendo*. To the contrary, the English monarchs who enforced this statute did so sparingly and not only permitted, but encouraged, the translation of Scripture into the English language.

The coronation of Henry IV took place on October 13, 1399, which would have been the 92nd anniversary of the purge of the Knights Templar on the Continent. The Hundred Years' War between England and France had been underway since 1337. Richard II, however, had maintained peaceful relations with France despite a formal appeal by the lords of the realm. The date of Henry's coronation may have been chosen to send a message to the Prieuré de Sion in France:

"...the Lords Appellant. The central tenet of their appeal was continued war with France against Richard's policy of peace... In 1397 Richard decided to rid himself of the Lords Appellant who were confining his power, on the pretext of an aristocratic plot. Richard had the Earl of Arundel executed and Warwick exiled, while Gloucester died in captivity. Finally able to exert his autocratic authority over the kingdom, he purged all those he saw as not totally committed to him, fulfilling his own idea of becoming God's chosen prince." (Richard II of England)

The Lollards plotted to overthrow Henry for some time after he executed Richard II. Sir John Oldcastle (d. 1419), a base character ('Falstaff' in Shakespeare's *Henry IV I&2*) became the Lollard's military leader and led the knights in various failed coup d'état, after which the Lollards were "persecuted" for their seditious activities:

"1413...Oldcastle now put himself at the head of a wide-spread Lollard conspiracy, which assumed a definite political character. The design was to seize the king and his brothers during a Twelfth-night mumming at Eltham, and perhaps, as was alleged, to establish some sort of commonwealth. Henry, forewarned of their intention, removed to London, and when the Lollards assembled in force in St Giles's Fields on January 10 they were easily dispersed.... Oldcastle was no doubt the instigator of the abortive Lollard plots of 1416, and appears to have intrigued with the Scots... His unpopular opinions and early friendship with Henry V created a traditional scandal which long continued..." (Sir John Oldcastle)

"Oldcastle escaped from the Tower of London and organized an insurrection, which included an attempted kidnapping of the king. The rebellion failed, and Oldcastle was executed. Oldcastle's revolt made Lollardy seem even more threatening to the state, and the persecution of Lollards became more severe." (The Lollards)

Here we see the early stages of a centuries-long plan—a series of seemingly unrelated plots by supposedly apolitical heretics—to overthrow the monarchy of England and establish a republican form of government, a Commonwealth. The Lollard plot to overthrow the monarchy would eventually succeed 200 years later, under the auspices of the Rosicrucians who beheaded King James' son, Charles I, installed Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate and established the English Commonwealth ruled by Parliament.

Hereafter, the powerless monarch of Great Britain was only a figurehead, and the British monarchy a mere tradition.

THE AVIGNON PAPACY

Gail Riplinger's deceptive treatment of Wycliffe's reform movement fails to mention a monumental event which radically alters the historical picture — the Avignon Papacy. For it was during Wycliffe's lifetime that the Roman curia and pope were forcibly removed to the Merovingian territory of South France, whence a Merovingian pope and papal court managed the Catholic Church for nearly 70 years. Appropriately called "the Babylonian Captivity of the Church," it was during this period that "papal supremacy" was declared, indulgences were first sold and anti-clericalism was launched—not from Rome but by the Merovingian pope and papal curia in the Merovingian stronghold of South France.

"But when from 1305 to 1378 the papal curia was at Avignon and the cardinals were nearly all Frenchmen, Englishmen were offended: and from 1378 to 1418 the two popes, at Rome and Avignon, caused scandal to all... Dr. Walter Ullmann, in his recent notable book on Medieval Papalism, quotes the fourteenth century papalists as asserting that the pope, in the fulness of his power, was beyond the reach of any mortal, emperor, king or any other... The pope could do and say whatever he pleased to do and say in all and everything: he was above the law, whether natural (and, as it were divine) or whether humanly devised... 'In the conception of the canonists,' Dr. Ullmann writes, 'the pope was truly God on earth.'..."

"...A word then about Wycliffe's anti-clericalism, a factor now so much stressed as one of the causes of the sixteenth century Reformation. Anti-clericalism did not begin with Wycliffe or in England: it existed in France at the beginning of the fourteenth century. It spread from the south French university of Montpellier, a great law school, which trained most of the anti-clerical courtiers and ministers of Philip IV..." (Deanesly, *The Significance of the Lollard Bible*)

The Avignon papacy in Wycliffe's lifetime and beyond seems to have been custom designed by the French Merovingians to agitate public opinion against the Church. It is also noteworthy that it was not the Church of Rome but the Avignon papacy in France which declared the "Immaculate Conception" of Mary to be a dogma of the Church. A late date of 1854 is often assigned to this heretical teaching which became Catholic dogma by the decree of Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*. However, its early history is documented, not only in the Catholic Encyclopedia, but in historical accounts such as Henry Charles Lea's *History of the Inquisition*:

"Up to the twelfth century it was not questioned that the Virgin was conceived and born in sin... With the growth of Mariology, however, there came a popular tendency to regard the Virgin as free from all human corruption, and towards the middle of the twelfth century the church of Lyons ventured to place on the calendar a new feast in honor of the Conception of the Virgin..., the celebration of the Feast of the Conception gradually spread. Thomas Aquinas tells us that it was observed in many churches, **though not in that of Rome**, and that it was not forbidden, but he warns against the inference that because a feast is holy therefore the conception of Mary was holy. In fact, he denies the possibility of her immaculate conception... There is a tradition that... the University of Paris... in 1222... declared in its favor by a solemn decree... the Church of Narbonne commenced, in 1327, to celebrate the Feast of the Conception, and in 1328 the Council of London ordered its observance in all the churches of the Province of Canterbury, we see how rapidly the new dogma was spreading." (Lea, *A History of the Inquisition*, Vol. 3, pp. 596-598)

Thomas Aquinas repudiated the false doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which was apparently the work of Franciscan theologian, John Duns Scotus, who developed a systematic theology that led to its proclamation as Catholic dogma:

“Blessed John Duns Scotus (1265/66 – 8th November 1308), besides being known as the ‘Subtle Doctor’, is also referred to as the ‘Marian Doctor’. It was he who presented a systematic theology of the Marian privilege of the Immaculate Conception, which the Catholic Church officially proclaimed as a Dogma of Faith in the Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus* of Pope Pius IX (8th December 1854), of which we are this year celebrating the 150th anniversary.” (“John Duns Scotus and His Defence of the Immaculate Conception”)

Interestingly, Christianity Today recently published an article promoting the theology of John Duns Scotus. On January 10, 2008, CT Editor, Philip Yancey, recommended that evangelicals reconsider the Catholic theology of Duns Scotus:

“More than two centuries before the Reformation, a theological debate broke out that pitted theologian Thomas Aquinas against an upstart from Britain, John Duns Scotus. In essence, the debate circled around the question, ‘Would Christmas have occurred if humanity had not sinned?’

“Whereas Aquinas viewed the Incarnation as God’s remedy for a fallen planet, his contemporary saw much more at stake. For Duns Scotus, the Word becoming flesh as described in the prologue to John’s Gospel must surely represent the Creator’s primary design, not some kind of afterthought or Plan B. Aquinas pointed to passages emphasizing the Cross as God’s redemptive response to a broken relationship. Duns Scotus cited passages from Ephesians and Colossians on the **cosmic Christ**, in whom all things have their origin, hold together, and move toward consummation...

“...Though most theologians tended to follow Aquinas, in recent years prominent Catholics such as Karl Rahner have taken a closer look at Duns Scotus. Perhaps evangelicals should, too.” (“Ongoing Incarnation”)

Duns Scotus taught at the University of Paris from 1293 through 1297, when he was expelled, allegedly for siding with the pope in his feud with King Philip IV of France. From Paris, the ‘Marian Doctor’ removed to the University of Oxford. According to Louis Israel Newman, author of *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements*, “The scholarly relationship between the Universities of Paris and Oxford for a long period was very close; it was first interrupted by the controversies during the time of Wycliffe and afterwards broken off by the wars in France and the civil wars in England.” (p. 90)

Lea’s *History of the Inquisition* stated that the Church in England was among the first to follow suit after the French declared the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The Avignonese Popes, all Merovingians who worshipped the Black Virgin, had devised a clever strategy to impose the pernicious doctrine of the Immaculate Conception on Christendom:

“...Juan de Moncon, a Dominican professor in the University of Paris, taught that the Virgin was conceived in sin. This aroused a great uproar, and he fled to Avignon from impending condemnation. Then, at Rouen, another Dominican preached similar doctrine, and, as we are told, was generally ridiculed. The University sent to Avignon a deputation headed by Pierre d’Ailly, who claimed that the papal decision had been in their favor... The Dominicans were expelled from all positions in the Sorbonne, and the Avignonese

Clement VII. was too dependent upon France to refuse a bull proclaiming as heretics Juan and all who held with him. Charles VI. was persuaded not only to force the Dominicans of Paris to celebrate every year the Feast of the Conception, but to order the arrest of all within the kingdom who denied the Immaculate Conception, that they might be brought to Paris and obliged to recant before the University...

“The University of Paris was the stronghold of the new doctrine... The belief...continued to spread... In 1438 the clergy and magistrates of Madrid...made a vow thereafter to observe the Feast of the Conception. The next year the Council of Basle...came to a decision in favor of the Immaculate Conception, forbade all assertions to the contrary, and ordered the feast to be everywhere celebrated on December 8, with due **indulgences** for attendance...

“A new article could not be introduced without creating a new heresy. Here was one on which the Church was divided, and the adherents on each side denounced the other as heretics and persecuted them as far as they dared where they had the power. In this the Dominicans were decidedly at a disadvantage, and their antagonists had greatly the preponderance and were daily growing in strength. In 1457, the Council of Avignon, presided over by a papal legate, the Cardinal de Foix, who was a Franciscan, confirmed the decree of Basle, and ordered under pain of excommunication that no one should teach to the contrary...” (Lea, *A History of the Inquisition*, pp. 599-600)

Cardinal de Foix would have been a Merovingian since the Counts of Foix were descendants of the Merovingian dynasty through Eudes, the Duke of Aquitaine. The entire region of South France had long been a stronghold of Mariolatry, being worshippers of the Black Virgin, who was the Egyptian Isis ‘Christianized’ as Mary Magdalene. The forcible introduction of Mary-worship into the Catholic Church, which formerly held no such doctrine, was a veritable tour de force of the Merovingian papacy at Avignon.

For over a century the Avignon papacy was diligently at work transforming the Church doctrinally and also setting in motion the events which would divide and conquer Christendom. This major turning point in Church history, which is known as the Great Western Schism, began in 1378 with two events: the death of Pope Gregory XI and the prohibition of passing judgment against John Wycliffe on the order of the Queen of England, Joan Plantagenet. The corruption of the Avignon Papacy was not limited to Catholic doctrine; the financial and administrative corruption of the Papal Court was so flagrant that in retrospect it seems to have been deliberate in order to provoke the popular revolt which inevitably followed.

“Popes, Cardinals, and officials of the Chancery and Apostolic Camera appointed bishops, collected taxes, and imposed disreputable political interdicts and excommunications throughout much of Christendom with greater abandon than ever before. They did so in tight association with countless princes and other representatives of the late medieval Establishment. Bankers were particularly welcome in their entourage. As Alvaro Pelayo, himself a fervent supporter of the Holy See, noted in *De planctu ecclesiae*, ‘Whenever I entered the chambers of the ecclesiastics of the Papal Court, I found brokers and clergy engaged in weighing and reckoning the money which lay in heaps before them.’ (Pastor, I, 72). / [was this the Templar treasure?](#)

“A myriad of astonishing abuses, many of them the product of exceedingly pro-papal canonists influenced heavily by Roman Law and purely utilitarian power considerations, became associated with the Avignon administration. Charitable covers for raking in illicit funds were multiplied. Sees were left vacant or filled in ways that furthered the increase of gross curial muscle and wealth. Legal cases were painfully delayed so as to milk more

loot from long-suffering plaintiffs and defendants. And, once again, all this was done in dangerous cahoots with locally important political and banker hacks.

“Even more destructive was the treatment of diocesan matters as property rather than pastoral questions. Bishoprics were assigned either to curial officials—to provide, from their endowments, salaries the Papacy could not otherwise pay—or to friends of political allies whose cooperative behavior needed to be rewarded. Since it was impossible for papal employees to leave their governmental positions in Avignon to tend to even one diocese—much less the two or more often entrusted to their misuse—episcopal charges inevitably entailed the same absenteeism already practiced by the pope himself. Perhaps the most bizarre long term development from such unfortunate policies was to be the creation of nominal ‘bishops’ who were often not even priests. Lay ‘bishops’ got the revenues from their ‘property’, and then employed some hireling to do the episcopal tasks they themselves could not legitimately perform.

“...Avignon’s abuses merely confirmed the convictions of those who already thought of the Church and her mission as a blasphemous work of Satan. This was the major reason why her scandals were so detested by orthodox believers.” (“The Great Western Schism”)

The outrageous conduct of the Avignon papacy marked the beginning of the decline of the Roman Catholic papacy.

“...The kings’ increasing ability to claim the loyalty of the local clergy and to collect church taxes helped create several quasi-national churches that officially were part of the Roman Catholic Church but were increasingly under royal control. The Babylonian Captivity, along with the Hundred Years War then going on, also triggered challenges to papal authority from two other directions: church councils and popular heresies.” (“Schism & heresies in late medieval Europe”)

Another factor in the decline of the papacy was the spectacle of warring popes during the Great Schism. At one point the Church had three popes who excommunicated one another!! This chaotic state of affairs divided all of Europe and permanently damaged the authority of the pope:

The Great Schism and Conciliar movement

“The resentment that the Babylonian Captivity aroused against the Church grew worse when the popes tried to move back to Rome. By the 1370’s, the turmoil of the Hundred Years War was making life at Avignon increasingly dangerous. The capture and ransoming of Pope Innocent VI by a company of English mercenaries (who had little use for a French pope, anyway) convinced Pope Gregory XI to move to Rome. However, at this time, Rome was a more dangerous place to live in during times of ‘peace’ than France was during war. It took Gregory three attempts to get into Rome, and once he got in, he quickly decided he wanted to leave and return to Avignon. Unfortunately, Gregory died before he could get out.

“For the first time in 70 years, Rome was the scene of a papal election, and the Roman mob clamored outside for an Italian pope. Under such pressure, the College of Cardinals elected an Italian, Urban VI, as the next pope. Unfortunately, Urban was something of a violent and bigoted man whose actions drove all but three cardinals back to Avignon where they elected a second pope. Thus began the Great Schism, a period of turmoil when the Church was divided in its loyalty between two lines of popes, one French and one Italian. To no one’s surprise, each pope refused to recognize the other and even excommunicated him and his followers. This led to enormous anxiety among devout

Christians, who found themselves supposedly excommunicated by one pope or the other. With neither pope willing to resign, something had to be done.

“The most popular suggestion was a general church council such as the ones summoned to solve major disputes in the past. There were several problems with this solution. First of all, popes traditionally called such councils, and neither pope was willing to call such a council. This made the legality of such a council questionable if not called by at least one pope. Second, different rulers in Europe supported particular popes, largely for political reasons. Such political divisions made it almost impossible to get people to agree on the site of a council, not to mention the deeper issues involved. Finally, the whole issue of a Church council raised the question: if a council could depose the pope, who was the real head of the Church? This was a question that lingered on long after the Great Schism had faded away.

“At last, a council was called at Pisa, Italy in 1409. It deposed the two rival popes and elected a third. Unfortunately, neither original pope recognized the council’s power to depose a pope, so now the Church had three popes. However, by this time, people were committed to the idea of a church council, and another one was called at Constance, Switzerland. All three popes were deposed, and a fourth, Martin V, was elected. Although one of the deposed popes held on in Avignon until 1429, the Great Schism ended here. Its effects did not, because it caused people all over Western Europe to question the authority of the pope in the Church. Although a single pope once again ruled the Church, his reputation and authority were permanently undermined.” (“Schism & heresies in late medieval Europe”)

“The Merovingian Infiltration of the Christian Church Through Monasticism,” of anonymous authorship, makes a compelling case that the Avignon Papacy was a planned conspiracy executed by the French monarch, Philip le Bel, who was a Merovingian. This accords with statements in Merovingian sources that the Templar Purge was orchestrated for the purpose of “downsizing” and relocating the Order to Scotland where they would enjoy the protection of the Saint Clair family and freedom they did not have on the Continent. In the British Isles, the Templars, under the protection and leadership of Henry Sinclair, would be at liberty establish the Order of the Rose Croix, Freemasonry, Unitarianism and Baptist churches. (See: “Anabaptist Unitarians”).

“Merovingian king, Philip IV (la Belle), who arrested the Templars on Oct. 13, 1307 and who placed his cousin, Clement V, on the Chair of Peter as his accomplice, then insisted that the pope remain in France, rather than Rome. This began what is named the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, a 68 year period in which the Church was forced to remain in Avignon France. The next successive 6 popes would be French and Merovingian, the second of whom, Clement VI, began formulating the doctrine of indulgences, which later became the spark of the Protestant Reformation as planned! The majority of Templars who escaped the arrest in 1307 went to Scotland which was the first to break from the Church through the Declaration of Arbroath, the document on which the 1776 U.S. Declaration was based. One signatory of the letter to Pope John XXII April 4, 1320 (date NATO was later formed) was the grandfather of Henry Sinclair, Earl of Orkney and Shetland Islands for Norway who lived in Roslin Castle, Scotland. It was he who brought Templar treasure to Nova Scotia in 1398, 94 years pre-Columbus. The Sinclairs were bishops of Ross and hereditary Grand Masters of Freemasonry.” (“The Merovingian Infiltration of the Christian Church Through Monasticism”)

WYCLIFFE/LOLLARD BELIEFS

According to W.R. Cooper, editor of *The Wycliffe New Testament* (1388), Lollard beliefs included the Gnostic rejection of marriage and baptism ceremonies as well as all intermediaries. Intermediaries would include not only priests but elders who administer the ordinances commanded in the New Testament, such as baptism and communion:

“Although Lollard beliefs varied from place to place, and could include a dislike of all images (including the crucifix), and of all ceremonies (including marriage and baptism), one fundamental tenet of the Lollard faith was always present: the belief in a simple, direct contact between the communicant and God, without intermediaries. This belief survived through the underground artisan reading circles until the English Reformation of the sixteenth century, when the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church was removed totally.” (Introduction, *Wycliffe New Testament (1388), edition in modern spelling with an introduction, the original prologues and the Epistle to the Laodiceans*, edited for the Tyndale Society by W.R. Cooper, pp. vii-viii)

Although Wycliffe denounced the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation – that the bread and wine were changed into the literal flesh and blood of Jesus Christ by a priest, he never questioned ‘The real Presence’ of Christ – called “Consubstantiation” – that Christ is actually present in the bread and wine. For Wycliffe the elements physically remained what they were, but spiritually they were the Lord’s body and blood. Wycliffe wrote: “The truth and faith of the Church is that Christ is at once God and man, so the Sacrament is at once the body of Christ and bread – bread and wine naturally, the body and blood sacramentally.”

“Thus saith the Scripture, Matt, xxvi., ‘And as they were eating Jesus took bread,’ &c. and the same in Mark xiv.; Luke xxii.; and I Cor. xi Accordingly our church uses this form at the consecration of the host Qui pridie pateretur, &c. Corpus mettm, &c. In all these places the meaning is the same, though there is a slight difference in the terms employed. From a faith so authoritatively promulgated, I would argue as follows with heretics :—Christ, who cannot lie, said—that the bread he took in his hands was really his body ; in this he did not err, he did not assert what was false, accordingly it was truly so.” (*Tracts & Treatises of John de Wycliffe*, “On the Eucharist,” p. 134)

Wycliffe’s controversy was always with the Catholic priesthood, and his attack was not on the “Real Presence” of Christ in the Eucharist, but on the role of the priest as a *mediator* who changed the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. According to Goldwin Smith, “Wycliffe said that Christ was really present in the sacrament of the Eucharist, but not as a result of any words or action of the priest.” (*A History of England*, p. 160)

There were, among John Wycliffe’s intimate circle of Lollard knights of the Court and scholars at Oxford University, certain Unitarians. It was previously mentioned that Wycliffe was a protégé of the mother of Richard II, Joan (Plantagenet) of Kent, who was executed as a Unitarian Anabaptist. *A History of Unitarianism* by Earle Morse Wilbur, maintained that the aforementioned Sir William Sawtre, the London chaplain, follower of Wycliffe and the first Lollard “martyr,” as well as Wycliffe himself, were Unitarians:

“Leaving these early instances, we come nearer to the beginnings of an integrated movement when we reach John Wyclif, whose translation of the Bible into English late in the fourteenth century opened the Scriptures for the common layman to read and judge for himself. Using this freedom his Lollard followers inevitably tended to stray more or

less beyond the close fold of traditional belief, and thus came to be charged with sundry heresies. Some of them are said to have been tinged with Antitrinitarianism; indeed, William Sawtre just mentioned was said to be a Lollard. It is however less because he was a pioneer of Unitarian views than because he burst the stifling bonds of the traditional doctrinal system, and encouraged a broader freedom of belief in general (itself one of the prime characteristics of the Unitarian movement), that Wyclif deserves to be included in this reckoning. For independent study of the Bible must be regarded as the most fundamental of all the influences that combined in shaping the Unitarian movement. The leaven continued thus to work and spread, despite manifold persecutions, for a century and a half until Henry VIII, in declaring England's independence of the Pope in 1534, established the English Reformation, and thus opened the door to many on the Continent who were suffering from religious persecution and looked to England as a haven of refuge; for by the new law, passed in 1534, a sentence passed against a heretic might not be executed without the King's warrant, the right to deal with heretics being thus taken from the Church and lodged with the civil authorities." (*A History of Unitarianism*)

Whether or not Wycliffe was Unitarian in his beliefs, Unitarians claim him as the spiritual father of their movement. Malcolm Lambert notes in *Medieval Heresy*, "The doctrinal relation of Lollardy to Wyclif is complicated. ... Wyclif was...used as a figurehead for a movement that had grown away from him." (p. 246-7) Wycliffe's theology may or may not have been heretical, but Wycliffe's theology is not the main issue, despite a full chapter devoted to "Wycliffe's Views" by Gail Riplinger. For Wycliffe was not the translator of the "Wycliffe Bible" and the real issue is the theological views of the Lollard scholars/translators at Oxford University, a number of whom were heterodox and politically subversive.

Contrary to popular belief, the net effect of their translation was *not* to put the Bible into the hands of the ploughman but to give dissenters – even heretics – the authority of the Word of God to launch a subversive movement.

"To sum up, then: Wycliffe's translation of the whole Bible was an undertaking with a political side: the lay party could use it against the clericals: disendowment was in the air. But the spiritual side of Wycliffe's intention was much the stronger. He desired to put the clock back: to restore the Church to her poor and primitive state. He had no realisation that in destroying the institutions of the Church of his day he might be endangering the Christian religion itself..." (Margaret Deanesly, *The Significance of the Lollard Bible*)

The general belief is that Wycliffe translated the Scriptures so that the common man could own and read the Bible. Historical accounts tell us, however, that the common man of the 14th century was illiterate. Margaret Deanesly made a convincing case that the Lollard translation, inspired but not translated by Wycliffe, could have been read only by scholars and the educated elite but was inaccessible to the illiterate masses. The Early Version was slavishly literal and incomprehensible to all but scholars and the Later Version was not a literal translation at all, but a "dynamic equivalence" version:

"Wycliffe's intention in carrying through this complete translation can scarcely have been to render the Bible directly accessible to the masses. The manner of translation he selected was not one suited to pastoral work in general. The first Wycliffite version was a construe, and the decision to use such a method cannot have been accidental... 'Word for word or meaning for meaning': there was quite a controversy about it going on in Wycliffe's day, which was an age of translations: and he chose that his translation should be made word for word.

“A version ‘meaning for meaning’ would have been more suited for popular use. Two centuries earlier Peter Waldo at Lyons had had translations of the Sunday gospels made in this manner, and his followers learned them by heart from a teacher, committing long portions to memory. In Wycliffe’s day, by far the larger part of the population was illiterate (and with the excellent, unspoilt memories of the illiterate): all classes of lay people up to the social grade of knights and lords and ladies would be illiterate: and their only chance of profiting by an English Bible would be by committing passages to memory. Now a construe is not easy to commit to memory: and even the Bible-reading lords and ladies would have found a translation ‘meaning for meaning’ more understandable, it would seem. But no: the Wycliffite translation was made from letter to letter word for word.

“These two facts: the translation of the whole Vulgate, and the choice to translate from word to word, rule out, it seems to me, the explanation of the translators’ intention, to make the scriptures easily accessible to all men for devotional purposes. Not many people owned an English Bible, for the cost of a Latin or English Bible written on parchment was quite prohibitive. Even parish priests, as examination of contemporary wills show, could not afford one: only the higher clergy, bishops, deans, archdeacons, bequeathed a Vulgate in their wills, and that very rarely. An English Bible would have been as expensive. In 1222 the council of Oxford laid down that the stipends of vicars ought to be at least five marks a year, except in Wales, ‘where vicars are content with less, by reason of the poverty of their churches’. A Vulgate in those days might cost as much as the vicar’s annual stipend. And in Wycliffe’s days, not much less: how then could the parishioners be expected to buy such a book?

“The method of learning scriptural passages by heart was the only possible way for the villagers, and was in fact the one practised by the later Lollards, for whom a second translation, from meaning to meaning, had to be made, and was made by 1395. Even then, the records of Lollard trials show them oftener as learning from ‘a book called James’, ‘a book called Luke’, a single book in fact, than from a whole New Testament. If popular use by the masses had been the translators’ main intention, it is difficult to see why the first version was not made ‘from meaning to meaning’.” (*The Significance of the Lollard Bible*)

That the Wycliffite-Lollard translation was available only to scholars, many of whom were heretics or conspirators, is never disclosed by those who perpetuate the false notion that the “common man,” thanks to John Wycliffe, now possessed his very own Bible which he could read for himself. According to the Unitarian version of this fiction, the outcome was that the “common man,” having read the Wycliffe Bible, then decided in favor of the Unitarian heresy!

“The roots of the Unitarian movement in England began with John Wycliffe, a professor of theology at Oxford, who championed the cause of an English translation of the Bible. Sometimes called ‘the Morningstar of the Reformation,’ Wycliffe was well ahead of his time, foreshadowing the views men like Luther and Calvin would espouse two centuries later. Having a Bible in English allowed many folk uneducated in Latin to read and interpret it for themselves, and because of this opportunity many later reached the conclusion that belief in the Trinity is not supported by the scriptures. Of course, it was also the reaction to Wycliffe’s apparent heresy that led to the passage of laws allowing for the burning of heretics, a common form of punishment in continental Europe but unprecedented in Britain. This leads us to another important date—March 20th, 1401, when the first such burning occurred on British soil, when one William Sawtre was burned at the stake in the city of Smithfield.” (Unitarian Universalist Congregation)

It would be more accurate to say that, having a Bible in English allowed many heretics to promote the false teaching that the Trinity is not supported by the scriptures. For using the Bible as a higher authority than the Church gave religious respectability to a powerful aristocracy that planned to overthrow the established Church as well as the government of England.

JOHN WYCLIFFE

Several entries in Tragers' *People's Chronology* reveal the political nature of Wycliffe's work, his position within the highest echelon of government, his close relationships with the rich and powerful, chiefly the Plantagenet Dynasty which ruled England, and his negotiations with representatives of Pope Gregory XI regarding the payment of English tribute to the Papacy. If Wycliffe did not translate the Bible, what role did the Reformer play in the turbulent events of his century?

“It was not as a teacher or preacher that Wycliffe gained his position in history; this came from his activities in ecclesiastical politics, in which he engaged about the mid-1370s, when his reformatory work also began. In 1374 he was among the English delegates at a peace congress at Bruges. He may have been given this position because of the spirited and patriotic behavior with which in the year 1366 he sought the interests of his country against the demands of the papacy. It seems he had a reputation as a patriot and reformer; this suggests the answer to the question how he came to his reformatory ideas.”
(Greatsite.com)

Is it possible that Wycliffe, who founded and led the Lollard movement, intended to use an English translation of the Vulgate as a political tool? Surely, a political conspiracy could be greatly enhanced by a version of the Bible in the vernacular language. With English translation in hand, the Lollard preachers were able to mobilize the illiterate masses to rebel against the Church.

The question is whether or not Wycliffe himself was an agent provocateur whose mission was to foment rebellion against the Avignon Papacy, a Merovingian front doing their best to destroy public confidence in the Church. According to historian Margaret Deanesly, the anticlerical movement began, not in England with Wycliffe, but in southern France:

“A word then about Wycliffe's anti-clericalism, a factor now so much stressed as one of the causes of the sixteenth century Reformation. Anti-clericalism did not begin with Wycliffe or in England: it existed in France at the beginning of the fourteenth century. It spread from the south French university of Montpellier, a great law school, which trained most of the anti-clerical courtiers and ministers of Philip IV.” (*The Significance of the Lollard Bible*)

Surely the enormities of the Avignon papacy demanded reform of the Church, yet few anticipated that disendowment of the papacy and the clergy would not purge Christendom of the recent heresies, but would instead jeopardize the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, even the deity of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. For the central confession of the Christian faith is that Jesus Christ is God come in the flesh, and it was this doctrine, rather than Mariology or papal infallibility, that would be undermined by the plethora of Anti-Trinitarian sects unleashed by the pre-Reformation.

History proves that revolutions do not necessary improve conditions; for the “powers that be” are ordained by God and no one can predict (except the conspirators) what type of “new order” will supplant the old. There are always unforeseen consequences and the rampant spread of heresy during the Reformation, of which Wycliffe is said to be the “Morning Star,” undermined the Faith itself. Deanesly perceived this threat:

“To sum up, then: Wycliffe’s translation of the whole Bible was an undertaking with a political side: the lay party could use it against the clericals: disendowment was in the air. ... He had no realisation that in destroying the institutions of the Church of his day he might be endangering the Christian religion itself...” (*The Significance of the Lollard Bible*)

The purge of the Knights Templar occurred from 1307 to 1314, the very years the Pope and his curia were setting up their new headquarters in Avignon. John Wycliffe was born in 1327 and entered the political scene around 1376, at the close of the Avignon Papacy and onset of the Great Schism. Is this sequence of events mere coincidence or is there evidence that Wycliffe may have been an agent of the network of the secret societies that Henry Saint Clair had established on the British Isles?

For this information we turn to a blueblood of the Merovingian “Royal House of Stewart”— Prince Michael Stewart, President of the European Council of Princes, said to be a constitutional advisory body to the European Union. Prince Michael is also the Knight Grand Commander of the Chivalric Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem (Knights Templar), the Head of the Celtic Church of The Sacred Kindred of Saint Columba and “Fifty-seventh Archpriest and Temporal Head of Scotland’s Ancient Druidic-Christian Church of the Culdees.” (*The Forgotten Monarchy of Scotland*, pp. 2, 308)

According to Prince Michael, following the Templar purge on the Continent, the Celtic Church of Scotland welcomed the refugee Knights Templar who then formed the Order of the Rosy Cross. And the first order of business of the Knights of the Rosy Cross was...to meet with the Pope at Avignon!!

“The established Roman Church may have betrayed the Templars, but in Scotland they found something far more trustworthy and tangible: a sacred royal house, and a Priest-King of the Celtic Church succession. ...the Knights became part of the Scottish Government as the appointed Royal Bodyguard, with the Order established as ‘Guardian of the King of Scots by day and by night’ ... A new order was then formed, called the Elder Brothers of the **Order of the Rosy Cross, and several of the Rosy Cross Knights then sailed to France for a meeting with Pope John XXII at Avignon.**

“Many historians have presumed therefore that the Knights Templars must have been disbanded in Scotland, but this was not the case; it was simply that [Robert the] Bruce had contrived the secret Order to become even more secretive. Indeed, the Order of the Knights of the Rosy Cross...was a very successful cover.” (*The Forgotten Monarchy of Scotland*, p. 65)

So having formed the secretive Order of the Rosy Cross in Scotland, the Templars sent a contingent of Rosy Cross Knights to France for a meeting with the Pope at Avignon. This is documented with a footnote: “The Vatican Archives, Rome” What would prompt the persecuted Templars to return to the very headquarters of the Catholic Church which had slaughtered many knights of their Order? Prince Michael offers this feeble excuse: “...this new Order was not apparently Templar to outsiders, and since the Pope held the international reins of Chivalric Orders, a meeting was necessary for registration.” Furthermore, “...the Pope agreed to issue a Charter so long as his own nephew, Jacques de Via, became the operative Grand Master.” (Stewart, p. 65)

Surely this high-level meeting between the fugitive Templars and the Avignon Pope reeks of collusion. The Templars’ newly-formed Order of the Rosy Cross had been absorbed into the Celtic Church of Scotland, and it is with the Celtic Church of Scotland that a connection to John Wycliffe is found. On the website of The Bible Museum, Inc., a source for rare and antique Bibles, is a chronological history of the

English Bible. A section of this history, titled “The Pre-Reformation History of the Bible,” states that a secret society known as the Culdees “chose John Wycliffe to lead the world out of the Dark Ages.”

“On the Scottish Island of Iona, in 563 AD, a man named Columba started a Bible College. For the next 700 years, this was the source of much of the non-Catholic, evangelical Bible teaching through those centuries of the Dark and Middle Ages. The students of this college were called ‘Culdees’, which means ‘certain stranger’. **The Culdees were a secret society**, and the remnant of the true Christian faith was kept alive by these men during the many centuries that led up to the Protestant Reformation...

“In the late 1300’s, the secret society of Culdees chose John Wycliffe to lead the world out of the Dark Ages. Wycliffe has been called the ‘Morning Star of the Reformation’...

“...It was not as a teacher or preacher that Wycliffe gained his position in history; this came from his activities in ecclesiastical politics, in which he engaged about the mid-1370s, when his reformatory work also began. In 1374 he was among the English delegates at a peace congress at Bruges. He may have been given this position because of the spirited and patriotic behavior with which in the year 1366 he sought the interests of his country against the demands of the papacy. It seems he had a reputation as a **patriot and reformer**; this suggests the answer to the question how he came to his reformatory ideas.” (Greatsite.com)

According to The Bible Museum, Inc., the name “Culdee” means “certain stranger,” however, according to the Ancient Order of the Culdees of Iona, the word means “Chaldea,” as in ancient Babylonia: “Origin of the word Culdee. The name Culdee comes from Chaldee, (Chaldeans pronounce the word Chaldee as Kaldee or Culdee), in the sense that it alludes to Abraham the Chaldee, who left his home, worldly wealth, kindred and idol making to find the Promised Land.” The 1611 King James Version used the word “Caldees” with reference to the Babylonians or “Chaldeans,” which was the updated spelling in later editions.

Verse(s)	Reading of the Authorized Bible	Variation of later editions
Genesis xv. 7	Caldees (Chaldees, ch. xi. 31)	Chaldees, 1629
2 Kings xxv. 4, 5, 10, 13, 24, 25, 26	Caldees	Chaldees, 1744
2 Chronicles xxxvi. 17	Caldees	Chaldees, 1638
Nehemiah ix. 7	Caldees	Chaldees, 1638

Although the Bible Museum identifies the Culdees as a “secret society” which kept alive the Christian faith, the truth is that the Culdees were the remnants of the pagan Druids. James Bonwick wrote of their pagan origins and ways in *Irish Druids And Old Irish Religions*:

“An old statistical work says, ‘the Druids undoubtedly possessed Iona before the introduction of Christianity.’ It must be admitted that the Culdees wore a white dress, as did the Druids, [and the Essenes] and that they occupied places which had a Druidical reputation. They used the Asiatic cross, now called that of St. Andrew’s.’ Notably, in an Irish version of the gospel of St. Matthew, the phrase ‘there came wise men from the east’ is rendered ‘the Druids came from the east.’ [fn. James Bonwick’s *Irish Druids and Old Irish Religions*] In like manner, in the Old Testament, Exodus vii. II, the ‘magicians of Egypt’ are made ‘Druids of Egypt.’ [fn. Rev. John Williams Ab Ithel, *The Traditionary Annals of the Cymri*, 1867, p.166.]...

“In Tirechan's *Life of St Patrick*, *Cele-de* came from Briton to Ireland in 919; but in 811 some were said to have been miraculously conveyed across the sea. Bede, who opposed them, whether from Ireland or Scotland, was shocked at their holding his religion ‘in no account at all,’ nor communicating with his faithful ‘in anything more than with pagans.’ He banished those who came to his quarter. He found these Irish, Welsh, and Scotch Christians to have, in addition to many heresies, the **Jewish and Druidical system of hereditary priesthood**. Property of the Church even descended from father to son; and, says Dr. Reeves, ‘was practically entailed to members of certain families.’ He adds that they were understood in the 12th century as ‘a religious order of clerks who lived in Societies, under a Superior, within a common enclosure, but in detached cells; associated in a sort of collegiate rather than œnobical brotherhood.’ Giraldus, as well as Bede, complained of their hereditary priesthood. The same principle prevailed in the Druidical region of Brittany, and only yielded to the force of the Council of Tours in 1127.” (*Irish Druids & Old Irish Religions*, pp. 280-1, 285)

In ancient times, the priests of Baal in the land of Canaan were called Druids:

“The beliefs, rituals and practices of the Druids have a great deal in common with those of the early Hebrew prophets and certain esoteric groups in biblical Israel.” (Tim Wallace-Murphy, *Rossllyn*, p. 43)

“Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.” (1 Kings 18:19-26)

In the Middle Ages, the Druids were the high priests of Baal who officiated in the pagan rites of the early “Celtic Church”:

“By Celtic reckoning, the actual Beltaine celebration begins on sundown of the preceding day, April 30, because the Celts always figured their day from sundown to sundown. And sundown was the proper time for Druids to kindle the great Bel-fires on the tops of the nearest beacon hill (such as Tara Hill, Co. Meath, in Ireland)...” (Pagan Alliance: Beltaine Ritual)

Barry Dunford traces the Druid/Culdee tradition in Celtic Britain to the Druid and Essene monks who claimed that their messiah was St. John the Divine, who, they say, was an Essene monk. From *The Holy Land of Scotland: Jesus in Scotland & the Gospel of the Grail*:

“Can we trace any specific links between the Druid/Culdee tradition in Celtic Britain, particularly Scotland and Ireland, and the Essenes and other monastic traditions of the Middle East and Egypt, such as the Egyptian Coptic Christian Church? The monastic Culdees appear to have had their origin in the roots of Celtic Christianity in the British Isles dating back to the early centuries A.D., with possible apostolic connections. Indeed, **the Culdees appear in some respects to have carried forward elements of an earlier pre-Christian Druidic tradition**, and they have been called ‘Christian heirs of the Druids’. [fn. *Ward Rutherford, Celtic Lore: the History of the Druids and their Timeless Traditions, 1993, p.114.*]

“Many of their monastic sites and settlements overlaid earlier pre-Christian Druidic sites of worship, Iona being a prime example, which was known anciently as the ‘Druid’s Isle’. Moreover, **the Culdees claimed that the tenets of their teaching derived directly from the disciples of St. John**, who would have come either directly, or indirectly, from the Middle East.

“The Essene-Culdee connection is confirmed by the researches of the 19th century antiquary, Godfrey Higgins, who in his erudite work *The Celtic Druids* (1829) states: ‘The result of all the inquiries which I have made into the history of the **Culdees is, that they were the last remains of the Druids**, who had been converted to Christianity, before the Roman Church got any footing in Britain. **They were Pythagorean Druidical monks, probably Essenes.... . The fact of the Culdees having succeeded by hereditary descent, is extremely important. It is so very different from the practice under the Christian religion, that it tends strongly to confirm the suspicion that these people were Druids.** It is nowhere to be found except where the Druids have been.’” (Celtic History)

Note that the Druids had a hereditary succession, which is a strong indicator of Merovingian lineage. In fact, Dunford’s history reveals that the Celtic Church was a front for the Merovingians to spread their heresy under the guise of “Johannite Christianity” whose patron saint allegedly received from Jesus esoteric revelation not imparted to the other apostles. This “secret doctrine” is said to have been preserved in a secret Grail text, the “Book of St. John the Apostle” which was a central feature in the spiritual worship of the Cathars.

“Identifying the roots of the Celtic Church with the medieval Grail mythos, Francis Rolt-Wheeler says: ‘The Legend of the Holy Grail, in its origin and in its development, is essentially Christian.... It is agreed by all writers and keepers of holy legend that Joseph of Arimathea had naught to do with the apostles. The Christic teachings and certain particular rites, given him by Jesus in spirit-visitation, were exclusive. He was divinely ordered to leave Palestine immediately after his liberation, bearing with him the Holy Grail and holding in memory the Mysterious Words, rightly to fulfil his light-bearing mission on the border of the western world. Such a mission, mystic and spiritual, could not be realized in the Orient; to the present writer, this seems a point too often overlooked by commentators on the Legends of the Grail. In order that the mysticism of the Holy Grail might flower and fruit, it was essential that Joseph escape all legalistic influences: as much the rabbinic jurisprudence of Jerusalem as the canonical jurisprudence of Rome. **Neither among the Jewish nor the Latin peoples was such a mystic development possible; it needed the special nature of the Celtic race, whose soul is a harbourage of Mystery.** It is often asked why the Holy Grail should have travelled so far, finally to home in Brittany; in the south-west of England, and in Wales. The answer is of the simplest. These are the countries of the Celtic race. Moreover, in these countries shone the light of the Celtic Church, as ancient as that of Rome, known as ‘The Church of the

Holy Spirit' and, later, 'The Church of the Grail' ...(*Mystic Gleams from the Holy Grail*, c.1940s)”

“Johannite Christianity” is a perversion of the true Church that is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” (Eph. 2:20) “Johannism” was the form of esoteric Christianity embraced by all of the heretical sects of the Middle Ages who found it expedient to cloak their pagan teachings and practices in Christian terminology. Francis Rolt-Wheeler noted the “nexus between the Celtic Grail mythos and the Knights Templar.” In *Morals & Dogma*, Albert Pike revealed that Johannism was a Gnostic and Kabbalistic construct of the Templars designed to conceal their heresy and occultism from the Roman Catholic faithful:

“Thus the Order of the Knights of the Temple was at its very origin devoted to the cause of opposition to the tiara of Rome and the crowns of Kings, and the Apostolate of Kabalistic Gnosticism was vested in its chiefs. For Saint John himself was the Father of the Gnostics, and the current translation of his polemic against the heretical of his Sect and the pagans who denied that Christ was the Word, is throughout a misrepresentation, or misunderstanding at least, of the whole Spirit of that Evangel.

“The tendencies and tenets of the Order were enveloped in profound mystery, and it externally professed the most perfect orthodoxy. The Chiefs alone knew the aim of the Order: the Subalterns followed them without distrust.

“To acquire influence and wealth, then to intrigue, and at need to fight, to establish the Johannite or Gnostic and Kabalistic dogma, were the object and means proposed to the initiated Brethren. The Papacy and the rival monarchies, they said to them, are sold and bought in these days, become corrupt, and tomorrow, perhaps, will destroy each other. All that will become the heritage of the Temple: the World will soon come to us for its Sovereigns and Pontiffs. We shall constitute the equilibrium of the Universe, and be rulers and Masters of the World.

“The Templars, like all other Secret Orders and Associations, had two doctrines, one concealed and reserved for the Masters, which was Johannism; the other public, which was the *Roman Catholic*. Thus they deceived the adversaries whom they sought to supplant. Hence Free-Masonry, vulgarly imagined to have begun with the Dionysian Architects or the German Stone-workers, adopted Saint John the Evangelist as one of its patrons, associating with him, in order not to arouse the suspicions of Rome, Saint John the Baptist, and thus covertly proclaiming itself the child of the Kabalah and Essenism together.”

CHAPTER XX

“CHRISTIAN ROSENKREUZ”

CONTEND FOR THE FAITH: THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS

<http://watch-unto-prayer.org/TR-0-intro.html>

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