

Core Seminar

Church History

Class 5: The High Middle Ages

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**Introduction**

* Common belief is that the Middle Ages was a truly horrible time period with no redeeming qualifies
* But the more we examine realize just how rich some of the theology was, and how important many of the people and events are during this time period.
* We touched on this briefly last week, but the state of political affairs in Europe and most of the rest of the Western world shaped church history in important ways.
* The centuries from AD950-1500 witnessed fearsome conflicts between the emperor and the pope, between church leaders and political authorities.
* This is important because the church as an institution would step in to fill the political void.
* This time period is instructive for us as we today still try and discern the proper relationship between earthly authorities and heavenly authority.
* It is also important as we see the destructive consequences of what happens when the church departs from God's Word.

**Roots of Conflict, Seeds of Renewal**

**Expansion and Disintegration**

* As I mentioned last week, Charlemagne united much of Western Europe. However, almost as soon as Charlemagne had succeeded in uniting Europe under his rule, a new wave of invasions began to flood the continent in the 800s and 900s – Vikings from the North [including Danes, then some of the world’s fiercest warriors], Muslims from the south, and Hungarians from the East. Over time, Charlemagne’s empire dissolved into numerous smaller kingdoms controlled by local barons and nobles.
* The common people began to look not to the emperor for protection, but to their more accessible and efficient local lords, who siphoned away the power of the imperial crown.

**Expansion**

* During these two centuries, the Christian faith also experienced a geographic expansion unlike any it had seen before or would see for several centuries.
* Just as the barbarian invaders of Rome had embraced the Christian religion of their new land centuries earlier, so now missionaries began preaching in those very lands from which the invaders had come to ravage Europe. In a short time, almost all of Scandinavia – Denmark, Norway, and most of Sweden – had come under the Christian name.
* Christianity also made great strides in lands such as Iceland, Russia, and Hungary, and even a Muslim tribe in Mesopotamia embraced the Christian faith.

**Feudalism-Investiture**

* The institutional church was not well from the late 9th century to the early 10th century. As feudal system [lack of strong central government; King owned all the land; leased parts to local lords; who leased to lesser nobles and so on to peasants] grew so did the grab for religious authority.
* The church was intrinsically enmeshed in the feudal system as a part of it. For example, a monastery could own land and those who farmed the land were paying not a local lord but the monastery.
* Individual churchmen, such as bishops, might be rich landowners in their own right. Religious appointments themselves were granted by lords, just as they granted the right to own or work land.
* The old issue of the relative powers of state and church was reappearing and confrontation was inevitable -- since the pope was hardly going to local warlords to decide who should minister to the flock. This was known as the 'investiture controversy'.
* In “investiture,” a king, baron, or noble would grant, or “invest” a property to a priest or bishop as a way of granting that church leader a position of religious authority.
* So while many clerics gained much wealth through accumulating these properties, they also lost their authority as independent ministers of God. [Example: Congress or Mayor of DC appoints Mark Dever as pastor of CHBC and gives him the church property]
* Meanwhile, the lords claimed the right to appoint bishops in their lands, and even lesser nobles usurped the authority of appointing parish priests within their domains. This practice brought many problems: Political leaders often selected clergy based more on cynical expediency than on spiritual integrity.
* More common was simony – the selling of ecclesiastical offices. The term “simony” comes from Simon Magus in Acts who thought he buy Gospel power from Peter.

**Worlds Collide--Papacy and Empire**

**Emperors and Popes**

* During 10th and 11th centuries a bitter struggle ensued between the Holy Roman Emperors, who held that they had the power to appoint popes, and the church leaders themselves, who cited centuries of precedent in their claim to that same authority.
* For decades, popes and anti-popes were appointed and deposed with staggering frequency, all of them, sometimes as many as three, claiming to be the legitimate successor to the chair of Peter. The powerful popes of the early middle ages had by this time give way to weak popes, little more than puppets of powerful Roman families
* .[Example: Benedict IX - a debauched reprobate who became pope at the age of 12 in 1032 and resigned at one point in order to sell the papacy to his grandfather (whom he subsequently had deposed) Pope Leo IX (r.1049-1054). This is also the high-water mark of corruption in the Papacy – a lot of debauchery and murder.

**Henry III and Leo IX**

* In the middle of the turmoil, Henry III (1039-1056) became emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and determined to put a stop to the papal tug-of-war in Rome. In 1049, he convened a synod in Germany and strong-armed the resignation or deposition of all three rival popes and sponsored the election of Leo IX to the papal throne.
* Leo was already well-schooled in the thought of those who wanted to reform the papacy and take it out of the hands of the princes, so instead of taking his office immediately upon his election,
* Leo trudged from the synod in Germany all the way to Rome, dressed in a beggar’s clothes, refusing to take the office until his election was confirmed by the clergy and people of Rome. Leo was one among many reformers who refused to allow the papacy to be merely a creature of the Emperor.
* Upon Henry’s (III) death in 1059, a new pope named Nicholas II (1058-1061) issued the “Papal Election Decree,” which declared that henceforth the Cardinals, a select group of bishops designated by the pope, and not the emperors, would elect the popes. [NOTE: not until 4th Lateran Council (1179) where current pope election process is nailed down]

**Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) and Henry IV**

* Nicholas’s action was masterminded not by him, for he was not by any means an outstanding intellectual or spiritual leader, but by an archdeacon in the Church of Rome named Hildebrand. Hildebrand was widely influential in Rome through the reigns of more than one pope, and carried out his agenda of reform with unbending diligence.
* In 1073, upon the death of the reigning pope, Hildebrand was literally carried from his home to the center of Rome, where the cardinals quickly ran a formal election to install the deacon as pope. Hildebrand took the title Gregory VII.
* Over the course of his twelve-year tenure as pope, Gregory VII would make papal power unrivaled, he sought to rescue the papacy from the position of degrading servitude it had reached under successive warlords in Italy, which he did by proclaiming the rights and dignities of the pope more forcefully than anyone ever had before.
* The Papal Decree of 1075 stated that no one can judge the pope, that the pope alone can appoint and depose bishops, that he can depose kings and emperors, this is rule extends over earthly rulers – who must kiss his feet when they approach him – and that all popes (including himself, naturally) are automatically saints!
* Gregory's pronouncements were also a declaration of war against the practice of investiture. In the same year that he issues them, the pope deposed and excommunicated no less a person that the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV, for trying to overrule the papal choice for bishop of Milan.
* Henry responded by deposing the pope and suggesting that he go and be damned. Gregory secured the allegiance of many lords, and the emperor was forced to visit him in disgrace in 1076--made to stand barefoot in the snow for three days before being allowed inside to kiss the papal foot.
* Never before had the pope stood so unassailably superior to the secular prince, and though the great pope would die in exile in 1085, apparently a defeated man, this moment would remain a point of great pride for the popes for centuries to come.

**Innocent III (1198-1216)**

* After the death of Gregory VII, several powerful popes filled his position, such that the 12th and 13th centuries saw the papacy reach its pinnacle of authority. “The greatest” of these, and arguably the most powerful of any pope, was Innocent III, who reigned from 1198-1216.
* Innocent further solidified the pope’s claim to absolute spiritual authority. He declared that “the successor of Peter is the Vicar of Christ...he has been established as a mediator between God and man, below God but beyond man; less than God but more than man; who shall judge all and be judged by no one.”
* Innocent conceded that kings were given certain functions, but they derived their authority from the popes. As the moon only reflected the light of the sun, so royal power derived its dignity and splendor from pontifical power. A gifted diplomat and politician, he often played the rulers of Europe off one another and gained more and more power for the papacy. Innocent used his power to compel the King of France to take back a wife he had divorced, by placing all of France under an “interdict” (which prohibited the entire nation from participating in Mass) until the horrified people persuaded their king to recant.

**Were People Getting Saved During the Middle Ages?**

* All of these sordid details about the papacy and other things we talked about last week raises the question if people were being saved in the Middle Ages. Did God abandon the church for hundreds of years?
* We know from God's Word that the Gospel is always going forth in the world (Matt 24:14 – Gospel preached to all nations, then the end will come). Isaiah 59:1 – the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save. During the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, there were seven thousand people who stood firm against Baal worship ([1 Kings 19:18](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Kings 19.18)).
* We know God is always preserving a people for himself throughout history. So we have to accept that at some point, somewhere there were redeemed believers in Christ.
* Just because we don't have clear evidence for large numbers of Christians doesn't mean, for example, there potentially weren't scattered monks and nuns here and there with a right understanding and living out of the Gospel. We'll see some of these individuals later.
* Also we've talked mostly about Europe in this course but Christianity also persisted in persecuted communities in the Middle East – maybe some faithful Christians there. Also many theologians think human beings who die in utero or as young children go to heaven.
* Ultimately it's a chance for us to trust God in the way he guides history. Even if he doesn't appear to be working in a way that makes sense to us, we still trust what he's doing.
* Also reminds us what happens when people are illiterate of our Bibles – we drift from knowing what constitutes acceptance with God – repentance from sin, faith in the sacrifice that Christ performed on our behalf, the bodily resurrection, and living a new and holy life that reflects and is the proof of a true conversion.

**The Crusades**

* It is necessary to discuss briefly The Crusades. It is hard to get past these events; they were major events that defined whole generations of people.
* In 1009 the Fatimid Caliph of Cairo, Al-Hakim, who controlled Jerusalem at this time, ordered the destruction of the Holy Places. They were subsequently restored, but Christians who travelled on pilgrimage to Jerusalem were treated more and more harshly. In 1070 the Seljuk Turks conquered Jerusalem from the Fatimid’s, but they did not treat Christians any better.
* The Christian response came in 1095. Pope Urban II declared that Muslim dominance of the Middle East had to be brought to an end. Urban issues a call to arms in the cathedral at Clermont, France:

“I, or rather the Lord, beseech you as Christ's heralds to publish this everywhere and to urge all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that vile race from the lands of our friends. I say this to those who are present, it is meant also for those who are absent. Moreover, Christ commands it.”

* The following year a series of armies streamed eastward, by 1098 Edessa, Antioch and Jerusalem were captured, and put under Christian rule. For roughly 60 years following this "First Crusade" various efforts were made by both Western and Eastern Christians to keep hold of Palestine and some of the surrounding areas against Muslim armies.
* In one infamous period in history, the "Fourth Crusade" as it has been known, was ordered by Pope Innocent III (a guy we are familiar with above). In an effort to strike at the heart of Saladin, the feared and respected Muslim leader, the European crusaders were to head to Egypt. However, this crusade never reached the Muslim Middle East. Instead, the crusaders attacked Constantinople, captured it, massacred the population and installed a Catholic king.
* The fact that Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine Empire and therefore civilizationally Christian seems not to have deterred them. Although the Catholic rule of the city lasted only fifty years, and Byzantine rule was later reestablished, the whole incident was possible the worst point in the history of deteriorating relations between the Western and Eastern churches.

**Subsequent Crusades**

* Several other Crusades followed, though with little success. The Holy Roman Emperor managed to gain Jerusalem in 1229 by negotiation, but it fell to the Muslims once again in 1244 and would remain in their possession until the 20th century. All in all, the Crusades failed to achieve any of their goals.
* However, the Crusading attitude ingrained itself deep into the minds of Europeans. Crusades were launched against Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, against heretical sects, and even against fellow Christians whom the Pope deemed hostile.
* So Innocent also instituted the Inquisition, which represented the crusading attitude turned towards Christendom. It empowered church authorities to “inquire” into the orthodoxy of suspected heretics, and to take coercive and often severe measures, including torture and execution, against anyone who could not prove their innocence.
* The Inquisition was employed inconsistently and sporadically, often depending on the whims of ruler and region; its most notorious manifestation was the Spanish Inquisition of the late 15th century. The Crusades left other legacies as well, such as further enhancing the power of the papacy. They also had the unintended result of exposing western Christendom to Muslim scholarship, which in turn revived Aristotelian philosophy and deeply influenced thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas.

**Christians and the Crusades Today**

How should we as Christians today regard the Crusades? After all, they are frequently invoked by non-Christians as a favorite example proving the alleged hypocrisy and pretensions of Christianity. We should be mindful of a few points:

* + - 1. First, the Crusades left hardly anyone blameless, Christian or Muslim.
      2. Second, because we understand human nature to be sinful, we should not be surprised at the wrongs or even evil sometimes committed in the name of our faith.
      3. Our identity is rooted in Christ, not in the past actions of other Christians.
      4. Third, we should see the Crusades in the context of the many other problems plaguing the Medieval Church – corruption, confusion over church and state, medieval political power plays, and especially confusion over how we are saved – not by our efforts, no matter how strenuous, but by God’s grace.

**Councils**

* Monastic movements and powerful Popes weren’t the only means of shaping the church in the Middle Ages. Many people remembered the time we talked about a couple of weeks ago, when the great issues of the age were settled by calling a council. Called “conciliarism”, This was something that was occasionally tried even through the early Middle Ages. For example, when the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 said that it was acceptable to involve images in worship, Charlemagne called a council in Frankfurt that condemned the decision.

The two major councils to know from this time are:

* + - * 1. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Held on the Lateran Hill in Rome, this Council was originally called to reform the church (again, the old problem of how to fix the problems of the church) and ended up declaring as dogma several positions that had been debated throughout the Middle Ages, including the doctrine of transubstantiation.
        2. The Council of Constance: At the beginning of the 1400s, yet again you have three men claiming to be the legitimate pope, and yet again the Holy Roman Emperor steps in and deposes all three of them (so we see the balance has again shifted in the Emperor’s favor) and calls a council to sort out the issue and choose a new pope. The Council of Constance not only chooses a new Pope (Martin V), but also declares that councils have the highest spiritual authority in Christendom, and that there should be a new council at least every ten years (every five if possible) to deal with problems in the church. The council also “deals with” a heretic named John Huss that we’ll meet in a minute, (or next week if we don’t have time today). This particular approach to church reform fails when the council makes the mistake of leaving the Pope in charge of calling councils. They essentially say “we’re going to meet every ten years, so make sure you bring us back into session.” Which of course the Pope does not, and Martin V even goes a step farther and says that the Council of Constance, which had appointed him, only has legitimacy because he as Pope signs off on its decisions.
        3. So conciliarism dies a quick death in the mid-1400s. Councils are still used from time to time (Trent, and Vatican I and II, Westminster, and Dort being examples), but they never since have had the same authority and sway.

**Monks, “Schoolmen” and the roots of reformation**

**Monasticism**

* While popes like Gregory and Innocent tried reform from the top, most reform came from much lower, in the monasteries. The most important of these orders were the Cluniacs, the Cistercians, and the Franciscans.

**Cluniacs**

* The Cluniacs were founded in 910 with a grant of property by a duke guilt-ridden over murdering his brother, had a unique charter that kept them completely free from lay control. Their mothership monastery in France became the most influential in Europe. Cluniac monasteries, emphasizing separation from the world and independence, spread at a rapid pace and soon became quite wealthy in their own right. In a perpetual theme, this wealth soon led the Cluniacs to corruption, and calls for a new monastic order.

**Cistercians**

* In 1098, the Cistercians were founded, in large part as “anti-Cluniacs.”Cistercians, not surprisingly, emphasized simplicity, poverty, manual labor instead of scholarship, and private prayer over corporate. Cistercians also expanded at an astounding rate: from 5 monasteries in 1119, to 350 in 1150, to 647 houses in 1250.
* The most eminent Cistercian monk and perhaps the most famous church figure of his day, was Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153).
* Bernard served as a sort of spiritual director for much of Europe; his powers of persuasion were so compelling that it was said that mothers hid their sons, and wives their husbands, when Bernard came recruiting for his monasteries.
* He wrote “On Loving God,” which argued that the end of human life is love of God, whom we should love “for God Himself” and “without limits.” Bernard wrote the words to O Sacred Head Now Wounded. Bernard’s influence extended long after his death; John Calvin, for example, held him in very high regard.

**Cistercians**

* Finally, in 1209, Francis of Assisi founded the Franciscans, who took Cistercian frugality one step further by renouncing all worldly possessions. His order also experienced rapid growth, as new monks responded to his emphasis on God’s goodness and mercy, and Christ’s perfect humanity.
* As the Franciscans grew, Francis himself eventually renounced control of the order and went into seclusion. Francis is the one who allegedly said that quote about “preach the Gospel always, use words if necessary.” But this is almost certainly legendary.

**Scholasticism**

* Several historical streams had converged that made conditions ripe for the Reformation of the 16th century. Along with the moral decline of the papacy and the evolving political atmosphere in Europe, the popularity of monasticism and an outgrowth of an associated the intellectual movement, Scholasticism, also contributed to the roots of the Reformation.
* Scholasticism at its heart looks back to classical Greek and Roman texts, and principally Plato and Aristotle, to use rational principles of inquiry to reach conclusions about the world and especially the relationship of faith and reason.
* In one historical irony, Crusaders had encountered the work of Muslim scholars in studying and translating Aristotle, and had brought this recovered learning back to Europe.
* So you have the rise of the modern university.
* Also sets in motion going back to the sources – ad fontes – which is exactly what triggered the reformation as Luther began studying Romans for himself

**Anselm (b.1033-d.1109)**

* One of the most important of the scholastics was Anselm, who lived from 1033 to 1109. Anselm initially had tried to join a monastery at 15 but was refused by his father, and it wasn't until the age of 27 that he made it in, after a period that included wandering over the Alps.
* He was the Archbishop of Canterbury, still the seat of the Anglican church today, an able administrator and a skilled theologian. Strongly influenced by Plato, Anselm held that faith must inform reason. His motto was "faith seeking understanding" (fides quaerens intellectum), which for him means "an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of God. “I believe, in order that I may understand,” he declared.
* He developed the renowned “ontological” argument for the existence of God. As Anselm put it, God is “that than which no greater can be conceived” and whose non-existence would be inconceivable. After all, “if a man’s mind could conceive anything better than [God], the creature would rise above the Creator and judge him, which is absurd.” He distrusted human senses, and rather urged taking the presupposition of God’s existence as a foundation for studying other realms.
* Perhaps his greatest work was “Why God became Man” (Cur Deus Homo) in which he connected Christ’s Incarnation with his atoning death. Anselm emphasized that our sin had so offended a perfectly holy God that no human effort could ever pay our penalty – it could only be paid by the death on the cross of the perfect God-Man, Jesus Christ.

**Aquinas (b.1225-d.1274)**

* Scholasticism reached its peak in Thomas Aquinas. Born into a wealthy Italian family in 1225, the young Thomas soon displayed a precocious gift for learning and a desire to enter a Dominican monastery. His horrified family strenuously tried to prevent this by tempting him with a prostitute, kidnapping him, and even offering to purchase for him the position of Archbishop of Naples. None of this availed, and Thomas followed his calling by pursuing studies in Paris, followed by a life of teaching there and in Italy.
* Aquinas used primarily Aristotelian philosophy to discuss the truths of Christianity. Unlike Anselm, Aquinas often took human senses and reason as a starting point, and believed that by working backwards from there, much could be ascertained of God. His great work is the *Summa Theologica* thirty very dry volumes in which arguments are presented and knocked down with counterarguments, then those counterarguments are refuted, and so on. Highly verbose and technical writing that is very hard to read.
* He is second only to Augustine for his theological importance pre-Reformation. Today he is regarded by RC church's greatest thinker and theologian.
* He developed the “First Cause” argument for the existence of God, contending that everything that existed needed to be caused by something and come from somewhere. Working backwards to its logical origin, this led to God as the original “prime mover” or “first cause” behind everything else in existence. He believed that since both revelation and nature were made by the same God, faith and reason were in no way contradictory to one another.
* Aquinas also further developed the notion of “natural law,” which holds that moral rules instituted by God can be known by human reason without special revelation and obeyed without special grace.
* Aquinas' thought abounds in even modern-day Catholic philosophers and others who submit that we can have an understanding of God through reason OR revelation. Question: what is the problem with believing that we can really “know God” through reason alone?
* This idea of natural law is somewhat different than the Romans 1 idea of natural law:

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1)

* Our reasoning process is tainted by sin.
* Provides a framework for more works righteousness and an approach to life that minimizes our need of grace – if we can know what's good just through our powers of reasoning and subsequently do it, we're minimizing our need of the Word of God and prayer.
* Over time, Aquinas’ optimism about human reason and human nature, which he himself had inherited from earlier Roman Catholic tradition, was developed by subsequent theologians into the notion of justification by grace through man’s cooperation with God.
* We know this isn't true – this is something of a re-articulation of the Semi-Pelagian arguments we learned about last week – also think about John Joseph's Good Friday sermon – the curtain was torn from top to bottom – God is the initiator of grace. There's still plenty of faithful Christians who might hold to a more Arminian viewpoint but this is the Calvinistic viewpoint.
* Luther would eventually be driven, first to despair, and then to the gospel of justification by faith alone, and thus bring about, finally, a true Reformation of the church.

**Forerunners to the Reformation**

**Intro**

* By the time Luther is born at the end of the 15th century, many had already condemned as heretics or given their lives in efforts to reform the church. If you’ve ever been to Worms [Vorms] in Germany, the place where Luther stood trial, you’ve likely seen the memorial to Luther that was put up in the mid-19th century.
* At the base of the statue of Luther are four figures, all of whom were considered to be forerunners to the Reformation: John Wycliffe, John Hus, Peter Waldo, and the more obscure Girolamo Savonarola. (Gee-ro-lah-mo Sah-von-ah-roll-ah)

**Peter Waldo (1140 – 1218)**

* In the 12th Century in Southern France, a merchant named Peter Waldo gave everything he had to the poor and began preaching publicly against both the immorality and the bad doctrines of the church, especially the doctrines of transubstantiation and purgatory.
* While Peter Waldo himself is a bit difficult to nail down historically, his followers, called the “Waldensians,” developed through the 13th and the 14th centuries very clear doctrines that later Protestant reformers would pick up,
  + - 1. including the idea of Scripture alone as the source of authority both in the church and in the believer’s life,
      2. the idea that the Bible should be in the common language (Peter Waldo himself commissioned translations of the Vulgate into French),
      3. and the idea of voluntarily giving to the poor, rather than doing so in expectation of paying for sin.
* The Waldensian movement spread across Southern France and Northwestern Italy, despite cruel persecution on the part of both church and state. Their major contribution to the Reformation was that they provided the basis and the funding for Calvin’s French translation and publication of the Bible.

**John Wycliffe (~1328-1384)**

* In the late 14th century, an Oxford professor and English government official named John Wycliffe grew frustrated with the divisions in the papacy, which was at the time contested by two rival popes.
* Wycliffe argued that since God ordains authority, those in leadership should follow the example of Christ as humble servants, not greedy overlords.
* Furthermore, influenced by reading Augustine, Wycliffe held that Christ’s true church is not necessarily the pope and his hierarchy. Rather, the real Body of Christ consists of those elected by God unto salvation. This teaching had powerful implications:
  + - * 1. First, Wycliffe came to believe that the pope and many other church leaders were probably reprobate.
        2. Second, because all true believers comprised the church, it followed that they should be able to read the Bible in their own language, in order to know God’s will for themselves and for the church.
        3. After he died, Wycliffe’s followers translated the Bible into English [Wycliffe Bible translators].
        4. Finally, Wycliffe declared transubstantiation in communion to be false. Transubstantiation, which had only been declared an official doctrine of the church in the 13th century, held that the bread and wine actually become transformed into the body and blood of Christ. Wycliffe found this irrational and unbiblical, and while he held that Christ was physically present in the elements, they also retained their natural substance of bread and wine.
* Though not formally excommunicated, Wycliffe soon found himself out of favor with church authorities, and he retired to the margins of English society, followed by his death in 1384.
* His followers, known as Lollards, eagerly began to spread his teachings, as well as copies of English Bibles, throughout the land. Though many Lollards were put to death for their beliefs, they took Wycliffe’s writings as far as Bohemia, or present-day Czechoslovakia.
* In 1415 at the Council of Constance, Wycliffe was declared to be a heretic, and in 1428 his bones were dug up, burned, and the ashes cast into the river Swift. Wycliffe has been called “The Morning Star of the Reformation”, and one historian has said “They burnt his bones to ashes and cast them into Swift, a neighboring brook running hard-by. Thus, this brook hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed the world over.” (Fuller, Thomas. The Church History of Britain (1655))

**John Huss (1369-1415)**

* Wycliffe’s teachings found an eager audience in a Bohemian priest known as John Huss, who in 1402 became rector of the University of Prague. Huss’s original concern was moral. Disgusted by the degenerate church authorities, he sought to restore Christian leadership to its former ideals.
* Influenced by Wycliffe, Huss came to believe that only God’s elect people comprised the true universal church, and that the Bible provided the supreme authority by which all Christians are to be guided and judged – including the pope.
* Huss also warned his people against the widespread superstitions of the day, worship of images and relics, and misplaced belief in false miracles.
* About this time, Pope John XXIII, hoping to expand his power, proclaimed a crusade against Naples [of all places!] and decided to finance it by selling indulgences. Huss believed that only God can forgive sins, and that attempting to profit off God’s prerogative was profoundly wrong.
* He protested against the Pope’s cynical move, and in response, the Pope excommunicated Huss. A sympathetic emperor then invited Huss to defend himself before the upcoming Council of Constance.
* The duplicitous Pope John tricked Huss, however, and had him burned at the stake in 1415 at the Council when Huss refused to recant his beliefs. As he was being tied to the stake, Huss prayed aloud “Lord Jesus, it is for thee that I patiently endure this cruel death. I pray thee to have mercy on my enemies.”
* After he died, Huss’s outraged followers vowed to carry on his legacy, despite crusade after crusade sent against them by the Pope. Pockets of Hussites persisted throughout Europe for the next century, until the actions of an obscure German monk brought them new hope.

**Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498)**

Rennaissance Friar who called for Christian renewal in an era that was characterized by a lot of evil stuff around Florence.