

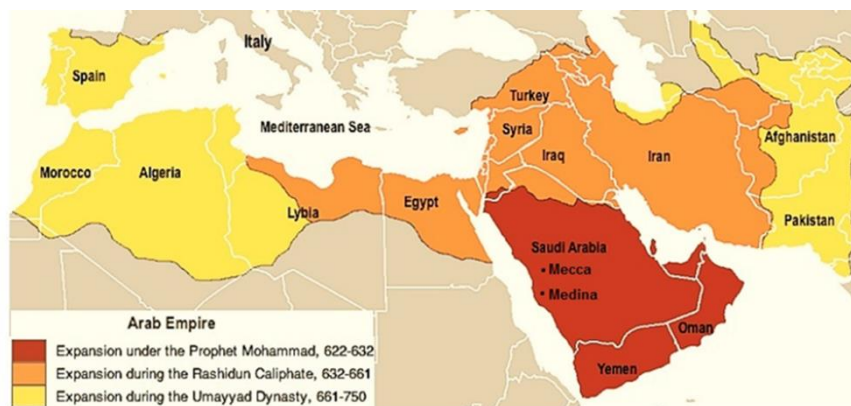
CHURCH HISTORY



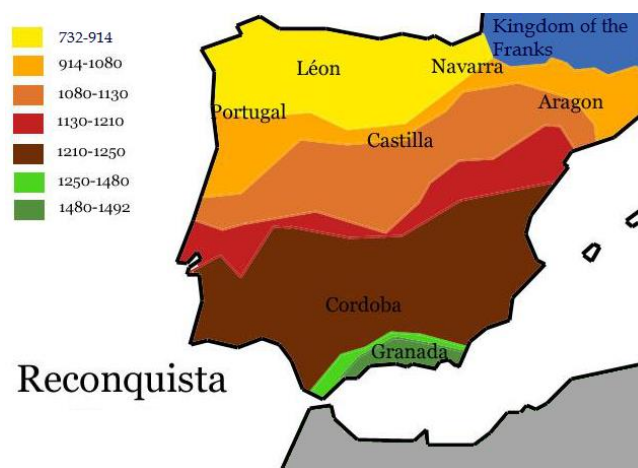
9. MORAL DECLINE OF THE CHURCH & THE REFORMATION

1. THE RECONQUISTA

- In our previous class we discussed the Crusades and looked at the five most important attempts at retaking the Holy Land in the name of Christ.
- There were numerous other attempts at crusading, some count as many as nine, but they were generally small and did not have much impact on the eventual outcome. There was however an important ongoing Crusade that had nothing to do with Jerusalem: Driving the Muslims in Spain out of Europe. This was known as the *Reconquista* (Reconquering).



- Going on crusade to Spain could also earn you an indulgence (while Crusading fever ran high) though it proved to be an enormously difficult task:



- The last Muslim state, Granada, only fell to the European 'Christians' in 1492, almost 800 years since they first arrived!
- If you know your world history, the year 1492 should ring a bell: It was the year Christopher Columbus, financed by the Spanish king and queen, set sail to find a sea route to India. Trade over land had become almost impossible due to these routes now being in Muslim hands.

- One of the most significant consequences of this gradual retaking of Muslim territory for Europe and Christianity was the discovery of Muslim learning. Muslims had been gained much knowledge in their conquest of far territories and this spread freely throughout their empire. This included:
 - Papermaking from the Chinese.
 - The Arabic numbering system (itself adapted from India). In Europe the tedious Roman numbering system (I, V, X, L, C, D, and M) had been used up to this point. The Arabs introduced the concept of the number *zero*, which was a revolution. Algebra, which still gives even some adults nightmares to this day, is named after a Muslim mathematician, *Al-Jabr*.
 - Greek philosophy and science. Almost all our knowledge of the Greek philosophers comes from the fact that Muslim scholars created libraries where they kept and translated these and other ancient writings into Arabic.
 - The world's first university, Al-Karaouine, was founded in Fez, Morocco in 859, almost 200 years before prestigious European universities such as Bologna and Oxford.
- The rediscovery of Greek philosophy had a profound effect on the Western Church, and many theologians once again (remember the Eastern Church more than a 1000 years ago) used philosophy to complement their theology. This movement was known as *Scholasticism*.

2. SCHOLASTICISM

- There were various atonement theories (understandings of why Jesus died on the cross) present throughout Church history:
 - Recapitulation. As the New Adam who succeeds where the original Adam failed, Jesus had to experience all the different stages of human life then die and rise in order to lead us from death to eternal life. (This is why Irenaeus thought that Jesus was 50 when He died). The Eastern Orthodox Church still holds to a form of this view.
 - Ransom. By his death Jesus paid the required ransom to the Devil in order to buy us back for Himself. This view is faulty for many reasons: God owes no-one anything. There is an unhealthy focus on the Devil's "authority", and none on God's righteous anger at sin.
 - *Christus Victor*. A form of the ransom theory that is closer to Biblical truth. By His death and resurrection Jesus achieved victory over sin, death and the Devil and made us free. This seems to be the majority view of the Church Fathers, yet it also misses the idea of God's righteous anger at sin.
 - Moral influence. Jesus died as the ultimate demonstration of God's love; this act was so powerful that it can change the hearts and minds of sinners who hear about it, causing them to turn to God.
 - Satisfaction. Developed by Anselm of Canterbury in the 11th Century. By rebelling and sinning against God, humans have robbed Him of the glory due to Him. By dying in our place, Jesus repays the Father the honour we robbed Him of. This became the dominant view in the Western Church and was later refined by the Reformers into what we today know as *penal substitutionary* atonement, which we will define later.
- The most important Scholastic theologian was undoubtedly St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274). If one were to draw up a list of the most influential theologians in Church history, it would probably read like this:

- Augustine of Hippo
- Martin Luther
- Thomas Aquinas (Roman Catholic) / John Calvin (Protestant)
- His book, *Summa Theologica*, remains very influential today. Some protestants argue that he belongs on our side.
- He took Anselm's theory of the atonement and developed the *Treasury of Merit*: This was the idea that one drop of Jesus's blood was enough to satisfy God, yet he gave all of his blood, which means that he has extra merit to give to those who fall short. The good works of the saints and especially Mary are also deposited there. The Church had the right to withdraw grace from this treasury and give it to those who lacking good works. This became the explanation for how buying indulgences are able to shorten one's time in purgatory: the good works of Mary and the saints become the good works of the person holding the indulgence.
- Thomas learnt the very recently translated philosophy and physics of Aristotle and sought to use the truths he found there to better understand God and strengthen arguments for God's existence.
- The Roman Catholic Church had long taken communion to be the literal body and blood of Jesus, yet the bread stayed bread and the wine stayed wine. It was using Aristotelian physics that Aquinas was able to provide a sufficient explanation of what is known as *transubstantiation*.
 - Aristotle believed that in the *geocentric* model of astronomy (as many Greek philosophers did): the earth is the centre of the universe and the sun and planets revolve around it.
 - He also argued that all matter was made up of *substance* and *accidents* (note how this word has changed in meaning over the years).
 - Substance defines an object: human beings, for example.
 - Accidents are what distinguish objects of the same substance (shape, colour, features): Some humans are tall, others are short; some have black hair, some have blonde hair; yet they all share the same substance.
 - Aristotle argued that it is possible to change the accidents of an object but not its substance: No matter what changes you make to a human, they always remain human; they never become a cat, a tree or a rock.
 - So, the great miracle of transubstantiation, according to Aquinas, was that by the power of God the opposite happens of what Aristotle argued: in the mass the *substance* of the bread changes into the body of Christ and the *substance* of the wine changes into the blood of Christ, yet the *accidents* of the bread and wine remain unchanged. In other words, the substances have changed, but they don't look or feel or taste any different.
- This is critical to understand, because many sceptics point to an incident 400 years later as proof that "the Church has always been anti-science": In 1633, they would say, the Roman Catholic Church excommunicated Galileo Galilei and placed him under house arrest for daring to publish a book that argued that the solar system was *heliocentric*: the earth rotates around the sun. In fact, when Galileo invited the Bishops to peer into his telescope they flatly refused, showing themselves to be primitive and superstitious.
- The Roman Catholic Church did call Galileo's view a heresy (which Pope John Paul II formally overturned in 1992, only 359 years late), but not because the Church was anti-science! By denying that the earth was the centre of the universe, Galileo said that Aristotle was wrong. And if Aristotelian physics was wrong then the doctrine of transubstantiation collapses. That was the issue!

3. CORRUPTION IN THE CHURCH

- Thanks to *Christendom*, if you lived in Europe, you were a Christian, by default. But just to be sure, *Inquisitions* became common practice.
 - These were trials held by different kingdoms to root out suspected heretics, Jews and Muslims. Hmm, the state punishing heretics, where have we heard that before? Augustine! His justification of calling the army to put down the Donatists resonates throughout history.
 - The most infamous of these inquisitions was the *Spanish Inquisition*, which ran from 1478 to 1834 and resulted in the death of ± 3000 people. It is often mentioned in the same breath as the Crusades as the kind of atrocious acts that make it impossible for people to believe in the Christian God. Meanwhile, how many people today say that Communism (which killed more than 100 million people worldwide in the last century) is a “misunderstood system” that “just hasn’t been applied correctly yet”?
 - Killing in the name of Christ is an abuse of Christianity. Killing in the name of Communism ... is Communism.

With the rise of the Popes (and the Church) through political influence and power rather than the preaching of the Gospel, corruption in the church reached new heights:

- The offices of priest and bishop were sold to people who could afford to pay for it (a practice known as *simony*, after Simon in Acts 8) or given to family members.
 - This gave the recipients influence and a source of income (*benefice*) for performing priestly duties.
 - The only training required to be a priest was learning how to say the mass in Latin (in order to perform the miracle of transubstantiation). There was some preaching, but very little and mostly very basic.
 - Some people realised that there was money to be made in being priest of more than one church, because you acquired additional priestly benefices. They then paid others a portion of their benefices to conduct the priestly duties at churches on their behalf (basically subcontracting them).
 - Many men became quite wealthy using this method.
 - It left many churches without shepherds, and often in the only place in a town or city where one could find a (Latin) Bible, it was not even being read.
- Continuing the practice of selling indulgences.
 - With the Crusades coming to an end one would think that the Church would give up this line of income, but of course there were always new projects or urgent crises that need funding.
 - With Thomas Aquinas developing the Treasury of Merit, indulgences grew in popularity.
 - Unlike during the Crusades, plenary indulgences from the Pope became a rarity. Rather, they only reduced the amount of time you would spend in purgatory. Because for most Christians it would take millions of years to cleanse you of your sin, you could buy as many indulgences as you feel a sinner like you would need.
 - Soon, you could buy indulgences not just for yourself but also for dead family members and friends who were already experiencing purgatory. Emotional manipulation proved to be a very effective source of income.
 - Johann Tetzel (1465 - 1519), the used car salesman of selling indulgences, was commissioned by Pope Leo X to raise money for the construction of St. Peter’s

Church in Rome. He had a famous jingle: “When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs”. His extreme methods and bad theology came to the attention of Martin Luther and played a key role in the Reformation.

- Priests and Bishops disregarding priestly celibacy.
 - They held to it in theory as it was an official teaching of the Church, but many were living with concubines openly, some even appointing their children to Church positions in later years.
 - They would rather live in adultery than marry, because priests could not get married.
 - To the Roman Catholic Church Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 7:7-8 indicate that celibacy is the ‘most spiritual’ position to hold as a Christian and therefore the standard for priests and bishops.
 - Being unmarried meant that priests and bishops were mobile and could be sent to another village/town more easily.

- Popes openly became warmongers.
 - A few Popes who were deposed for scandal or heresy could call on kings aligned to them to send their armies to help them reclaim their office. These threats of war were very successful and left the Church with no choice but to reinstate these condemned Popes.
 - Popes would play kings off against one another to further their own agendas, leading to war and bloodshed.
 - Martin Luther was sent to Rome to deliver letters in 1510 and thought he was going to experience Christian paradise on earth, only to see, among the moral corruption in the city, ‘The Warrior Pope’ Julius II (he named himself after Julius Caesar the Roman general) riding his horse through the streets of Rome, wearing full armour.

- In response to this corruption in the Church, monastic life, which had been around for centuries, became a popular alternative for devoted Christians. Different orders were established, each with their own focus: Augustinians, Benedictines, Bridgettines, Carmelites, Dominicans, Franciscans, etc.
- Some orders shunned all learning and earthly possessions, others trained friars to go the towns and villages to preach the word of God and provide children with education. The Cistercians were crucial in the copying and translating of Biblical and other texts.
- In the 5th Century, the famous St. Patrick went to Ireland and established a monastery that sent missionaries all over that country. This monastery preserved a lot of the scriptures and biblical writings in an age when the Western Roman Empire was in decline. These precious manuscripts and documents were later shipped back to Europe.
- Most orders spent a great deal of their time cultivating land and farming, and so monasteries proved to be a source of relief during times of famine.
- Monasteries sheltered the traveller, fed the hungry and cared for the sick, and so made an impact on the world through *cruce, libro et atro* (“the cross, the book and the plough”).
- Female monastic orders were also established and provided women, who in general had no real prospects in the world, with the opportunity to receive an education, flee unwanted marriage arrangements and to enter full-time service of the Lord.

4. BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY & ANOTHER GREAT SCHISM

- Some Popes overestimated their political strength and paid dearly for it.
- In 1303, after a bitter dispute with Pope Boniface VIII over taxing the Church, king Philip IV of France sent an army to Rome and kidnapped the Pope. He was brought to France, but the ordeal had been so shocking to him that he died shortly after. His successor elected in Rome did not last long, possibly due to being poisoned.
- Through his political scheming and showing himself to be a military threat, King Philip IV surely had a hand in the election of a French Pope, Clement V in 1305.
- In 1309, Clement stunned Europe by announcing that he was moving the seat of the Pope from Rome to Avignon in France. This caused consternation for many reasons:
 - With the Pope under his sovereignty and direct influence the king of France became the most powerful man in Europe overnight.
 - Rome was supposedly the seat of Peter and the source of the Pope's authority. How could you even talk of the papacy without Rome?
 - The Pope could freely pack the college of Cardinals with Frenchmen, ensuring that this change would endure.
- From 1309 to 1376, the Popes remained at Avignon in what is today called the *Babylonian Captivity* of the papacy.
- The Cardinals in Rome realised that something had to be done, and through a complicated process in 1378 managed to elect a Pope who promised to take the papacy back to Rome. Once elected however, he changed his mind and refused to move.
- The Cardinals in Rome deposed him and elected a new Pope who took residence in Rome. Now you had two Popes, who each promptly excommunicated the other. Two people who at the same time were the heads of the Church and equally God's representative on earth, kicking each other out of the Church. This is known as the *Great Schism* of the papacy and was a source of great embarrassment for the Church and signalled the end of the Popes as the effective rulers of Europe.
- Support for the Popes came almost exclusively from political reasoning and spared little thought for their theological views: The French king supported the French Pope. The Holy Roman Emperor supported the Roman Pope. The English supported the Roman Pope because they disliked the French. The Scots supported the French Pope because they didn't like England!
- The Church knew this could not continue, and so called for a council. Both Popes were told to resign so that they could elect a new Pope and heal the schism. A new Pope was elected, both reigning Popes refused to resign and now you had *three* Popes. Once again, they wasted no time in excommunicating each other.
- It was not until 1417 (40 years later) that the schism was finally healed, and you once again had a single Pope reigning from Rome.
- The division of the papacy thoroughly discredited the Church and was criticized by those demanding reform, notably John Wycliffe.

5. BEGINNINGS OF REFORMATION

- John Wycliffe (1328-1384) and Jan Hus (1372-1415) planted the seeds of the Reformation. Wycliffe, an English university lecturer, wanted the Bible to be taught in church and viewed it as the ultimate source of authority to which even the Pope must bow.
- He denounced transubstantiation and said that the Church's interpretations of the Bible were skewed towards protecting the Papacy. The Latin Vulgate was very different to the original version by this time.

- The Church needed to abandon its quest for riches and influence and return to the preaching of the word and the Gospel.
- People needed to have the word of God available to them in a language that they could understand. He (with a team of students) began to translate the Bible into English from the Latin, an act which was illegal at the time. He was spared because he had rich patrons who kept him safe. He was condemned after his death as a heretic at the Council of Constance in 1415; his bones were dug up, ground to powder and thrown in the river Swift.
- His teachings spread to Bohemia where Jan Hus became the spokesperson and called for the reform of the Church. Hus did not have the protection that Wycliffe had and was arrested on his way to defend himself before the same Council of Constance. He refused to renounce his view and was burnt at the stake as a heretic. Hus means 'goose' in Czech and this is the origin of the phrase 'your goose is cooked'.
- With the fall of Constantinople in 1453 much Greek learning flooded into Europe as people fled the city. and the outbreak of the *Renaissance* (rebirth). The motto of the Renaissance was *ad fontes* ('to the source') as scholars and artists gained access to ancient documents and knowledge and began to build upon these foundations anew.
- Many Christian scholars began to look to the newly rediscovered Greek and Hebrew texts rather than the Latin.
- William Tyndale (1494–1536) was martyred for translating the Bible into English. His version, unlike Wycliffe's, was translated directly from the Hebrew and the Greek and became the first mass produced Bible in English.

6. THE REFORMATION

- Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk who struggled greatly to understand what God required of humanity. He would beat himself with a whip, sleep on cold, hard floors and deny himself any pleasures in life and yet he still didn't find relief for his sense of guilt. He would spend hours in confession, only to feel convicted that he didn't really mean it and so would spend the next few hours confessing that.
- The change in his life came when he became a lecturer at the university of Wittenberg and began to study the Bible in more depth in order to teach it to others. The Psalms seemed to capture his struggle with God and sin, and yet the Psalmists were clearly true believers. It was in reading Romans 1:16 – the Just shall live by FAITH, and reading in the Greek 'repent' over against 'do penance' in the Latin that Luther realised that all that God requires of Christians is faith, not good works to earn salvation.
- Luther's visit to Rome, along with Johann Tetzel's appearance in Germany led Luther to believe that the Church needed reform.
- The 95 Theses which he nailed to the Church door (which served as the local bulletin board) was specifically with regards to the *abuse* of indulgences. It is very important to note that at least initially he was not against the Pope or the Roman Catholic Church. He did not mean to start a new church movement. His 95 Theses were written in Latin in order to ensure that lay people could not read it.
- Someone took this document, translated it into German and it spread like wildfire.
- Resistance from the Church hierarchy to Luther's attempts at reform alienated him. Some accused him of being a follower of Jan Hus and so he began to study Hus's works in a new light. He began to push for the Bible to be translated into the language of the common people, and to preach that salvation as by grace alone through faith alone and not by works.

- He was finally summoned to appear before the Holy Roman Emperor and Church officials at the Diet of Worms in 1521.
- Luther thought that he would be given chance to defend his views, but instead was told to renounce his teachings and get back in line with Roman Church doctrine.
- After asking for 24 hours to consider, Luther made this famous statement on his refusal to renounce his teaching:

If, then, I am not convinced by testimonies of Scripture or by clear rational arguments—for I do not believe in the pope or in councils alone, since it has been established that they have often erred and contradicted each other—I am bound by the Bible texts that I have quoted. And as long as my conscience is captive to the Word of God, I cannot nor do I want to retract anything when things become doubtful. Salvation will be threatened if you go against your conscience. May God help me. Amen.

- Luther was excommunicated and in order to protect him from persecution, he was secretly taken to the Wartburg Castle and lived there while he translated the Bible into German.
- His influence spread to Geneva where John Calvin became prominent and to Zurich, where Huldrych Zwingli became the spokesman for the Reformation.
- The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1440 meant that Protestant literature and most importantly Bibles could be printed in days where it used to take months to copy books by hand. The Church could not control this spread of the Reformation.
- The Council of Trent (1545-1563) was called in order to counter the Reformation, and this was where most of what is modern Roman Catholic doctrine was reaffirmed.
- The Reformers did wonderful work, but they were not perfect:
 - Luther and Zwingli agreed on every point except Communion – Zwingli’s view was close to our view today, while Luther held that Christ was present in the bread and wine. Based on this one disagreement, Luther refused to call Zwingli a brother in Christ.
 - They held to infant baptism as one’s entrance into the faith and rejected a movement that called for Christians to receive *believer’s* baptism, by threat of death or imprisonment.
 - If God could only use perfect people, He could not use you or me.

We have spent some time on Protestant theology that came out of the Reformation, but it is worth revisiting some points:

1. The priesthood of all believers: equal access to God for all. Therefore, all jobs/work is equal in importance to that of the clergy. They give ordinary people purpose: Work and do your best to the glory of God. The birth of capitalism!
2. Ensuring that all Christians are free to own a copy of the Bible in their own language.
3. Making sense of our desire to sin even when we are Christians. We don't fall in and out of salvation; we are made new, yet we still struggle with our fleshly desires. *Simul justus et peccator*. At the same time justified and a sinner. God does not expect moral perfection from human beings for salvation, He gives us His grace.
4. John Calvin was responsible for requiring pastors to study Greek and Hebrew at seminary so that they can properly exegete and teach the Scriptures. We now benefit from this gift every time we hear a Sunday sermon.