



# The Christian Church Family Tree

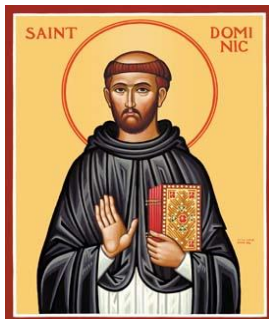
A Study on the History of the Church by Dr. Harley Ihm

## Lesson 7: The Holy, the Not-So Holy and the Inquisition AD 1206 – 1516

**Opening:** What are some of the craziest ideas you have heard of supposedly initiated by Christ? Tonight we are going to explore some really insane ideas and practices that began developing within Christianity.



**1. AD 1206 – St. Francis** – During the reign of Pope Innocent III, two great monastic orders developed. In 1206 a fun-loving Italian soldier called Giovanni Bernardone was told by a crucifix to ‘Go repair my falling house.’ He didn’t quite get the concept of the supposed vision and believed he was told to rebuild the ruin church. He did this with money stolen from his father. Two years later, he heard someone reading the Bible where Jesus sends out the disciples to preach, to good works, work wonders and take no possessions. He followed this literally as well. He took the name, Brother Frenchy, or Francis. He devoted himself to preaching, helping poor people, begging and singing. He rejected the idea of going into seclusion to become holy. Francis and his followers found God in his world and focused on the least of these. They worked alongside peasants and cared for lepers and grew enormously popular. Francis was the first known person to get stigmata, bleeding from the five points where Jesus was pierced on the cross. The Franciscan monks became the saints of the middle ages.



**2. The Dominicans** – The Dominican monks developed at the same time as the Franciscans, however, they were different. They became the secret police of the middle ages. They should not have been. Dominic’s passion was for missions, especially the mission to win back the Cathars to the faith. Dominic was having success among the Cathars, but it was short-lived because Pope Innocent got crusade happy and decided to start a crusade, not against Palestine or Muslims, but against the Cathars. Twenty years of war followed in southern France where the Cathars were dominant. The crusaders couldn’t tell them apart so they just killed everybody. In response, Dominic and his followers split up and went throughout Europe where many joined university staffs and decided to promote truth by teaching at strategic places of education.

3. **AD 1215 - The Fourth Roman Catholic Ecumenical Council** – Pope Innocent III's last achievement was calling this council in which he lay down the law for the Christian world. He established the doctrine of transubstantiation – where the bread and wine turn really and wholly into the body and blood of Christ – and the requirement to confess to a priest and take mass annually. The council called for a fifth crusade against Egypt. It condemned the Cathars and Waldensians and forbid any new monastic orders to be formed. Jews and Muslims were required to wear a badge so that Christians would know who to persecute. The same type of requirements had been implemented against Christians and Jews in Muslim countries. And just off the wall, any clergy was forbidden to wear green. The fourth crusade did not last long and had little success.

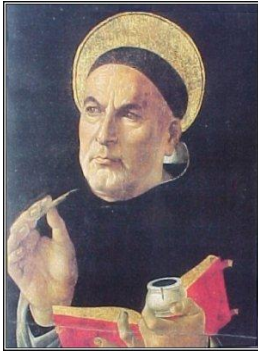


4. **AD 1231 – The Inquisition** – The Inquisition didn't happen all at once. It was a spirit of unholiness that grew in the name of seeking holiness. The groundwork for the Inquisition was laid by Pope Honorius III. He followed Pope Innocent III and took up his passion to root out the heretics. He recognized the Dominicans and brought them in to work for Rome. He used them to continue the work of hunting down and arresting heretics that Innocent had started. In the 13th century, Pope Gregory IX reigned 1227–1241. He assigned the duty of carrying out inquisitions to the Dominican Order. Inquisitors acted in the name of the Pope and with his full authority. Rome sanctioned torture, a standard medieval tool of law and order, to encourage confessions and accusations. Wherever they went, the inquisitors encouraged people to make confidential accusations against heretics. They took any accusation as proof of guilt. They did give the heretic a secret trial but allowed them no council. If they confessed, they were let off with a penance, which often included the confiscation of all their property. If they did not, they were tortured until they did confess. If they still didn't confess, they were burnt alive. This became a great way to finance the work of the church. A Grand Inquisitor headed each Inquisition. Inquisitions in this form persisted in parts of the world until the 19th century.



5. **Plato and Aristotle's Influence on the Church** Sadly, Plato's teachings had more influence over the church than most Christians. When great persecutions broke out and the Roman Empire was breaking up, the philosophers who had been persecuted took refuge in the Islamic lands. In the mid 1200's the Christians and Muslims were intermingling once again. It was at this time that Plato's student, Aristotle was discovered. Plato believed the spiritual realm is infinitely more real than the physical, matter is just a shadow of the eternal. We understand life and God simply by reason. We meditate on eternal truths. Aristotle, in contrast, accepted the physical realm as real. He believed that matter has meaning. We understand by observing with our senses. Truth comes not from divine revelation but through human investigation. Aristotle studied physics, biology and cosmology. He observed from those studies that there must have been a God to have set the universe in motion. He concluded that souls are mortal and the universe is immortal, disagreeing with Plato, his teacher. This was a serious challenge to traditional

Christianity. The pope and Paris University banned Aristotle. This is where Thomas Aquinas comes into the picture.



**6. Thomas Aquinas** – Thomas had plans to be a Benedictine abbot. Instead, while at the university he was attracted to the Dominicans and joined in with them to become a beggar for Jesus. His family was so outraged they had him kidnapped and locked in the family castle with a prostitute to teach him the kind of respect and holiness he should aspire to as a monk. What a dumb idea! However, Thomas spent his time locked away writing an essay on logic. Once free he rejoined the Dominicans. He taught throughout France, Germany and Italy, becoming the greatest thinker since Augustine. Thomas reshaped the Christian worldview. Reality had two stories: 1)

Nature: the realm of the five senses and 2) grace, the realm of God. That meant there were two kinds of knowledge: 1) Natural Knowledge – what humans can work out for themselves like the movement of the planets, the speed of falling objects and the existence of God. This was due to his influence by Aristotle; and 2) the Supernatural, what we only know because God tells us, like the Trinity, transubstantiation, etc. Oxford and Paris Universities banned him and his bishop condemned his writings as heretical. However, fifty years later he was made a saint.



**7. 1295 AD – Pope Boniface VIII** – Rome was ready for a new powerful, decisive pope. It looked like they had found it in Pope Boniface VIII. He revived the hard-headed politics of Pope Innocent III and others. However, Europe was changing and “We’re Not Gonna Take It” may have been there new theme song! Kings were gaining power and tired of Popes. In 1295, France and England went to war. Their kings needed money. In England, Edward I had to create the House of Commons, and both kings taxed their clergy. Pope Boniface was outraged! He threaten to have them both excommunicated. Then Philip IV of France cut off exports of gold to Rome. The Pope was forced to decide that kings could tax clergy after all. In 1301, King Philip put one of his top

bishops on trial for treason. Boniface made threats. So Philip created the French parliament, who gladly supported their king against Rome. Boniface issued an official proclamation, “It is absolutely impossible for anyone to be saved without being subject to the Pope in Rome.” All it did was get him arrested by Philip.



In 1305, Philip sets Clement V on the throne as Pope. To add insult to injury, the headquarters was moved from Rome to Avignon.





**8. 1347 AD – Divine Light and Black Death –** Mongols were besieging a Genoan trading colony in the Crimea began catapulting diseased bodies over the wall. The survivors of the siege came home, and within 40 years, a third of Europeans were dead, most within the first few years. England lost half its population and 1,000 entire villages to the Black Death. There were so few people left to work the land that hunger and poverty were rampant. Of course there is nothing like a fear of death to turn people to religion. All over Europe preachers poured

into the towns and traveling evangelists dressed as skeletons. Peasants would whip themselves and each other to appease God so the suffering would end and they would be blessed.



**9. Purgatory –** This practice gave rise to the idea of a place called Purgatory. The wealthy left money to monks to sing masses for them which would cut down their suffering time in purgatory. This teaching has crept into the church and is considered by the Roman Catholic Church as pointed to in the book of 2 Maccabees. 2 Maccabees is, in the Christian tradition, not a book that was to be considered part of the Bible. It focuses on the Jews' revolt against Antiochus IV Epiphanes and concludes with the defeat of the Syrian general Nicanor in 161 BC by Judas Maccabeus, the hero of the work. It says, "This passage is taken from the Apocrypha which is recognized by the Roman Catholic Church and a few Protestant denominations as an integral part of the official canon of scripture. It talks about living persons praying for the dead. One could reason that there

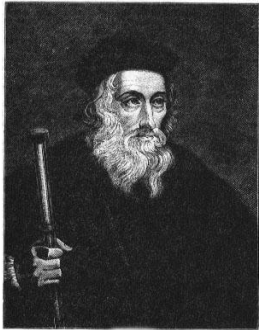
is no need to pray for the deceased if they are in Heaven; they have already received their reward. If the deceased is in Hell, then prayer would again be meaningless because they would be beyond help. One might surmise that there must be an intermediate state or location where a person's soul could be helped by the prayer of others" 2 Maccabees 12:39-45. Some of the early church fathers bought into the idea of course. Nowhere is it mentioned in the Bible. So, we see some more new branches developing in the family tree once again.



Francesco Petrarch

**10. AD 1320 - The Renaissance –** Christianity was the chief source of art. From the icons of Constantinople to the cathedrals in France the art was magnificent, but it was simply considered part of worship. In 1320, Francesco Petrarch enrolled at Avignon University in Avignon, France. He learned theology and philosophy. He studied the ancient Roman writers to learn more about grammar and rhetoric, the art of persuasion. He believed nothing so magnificent had been written in the last 1,000 years. He read everything he could get his hands on. He and his friends began to write poetry in the classical Latin style. Copying the early writers they had studied, he and his friends began to write not about the glory of God and the church,

but about life, love and people behaving badly. Artists began to depict the saints as looking like real people in actual landscapes without the halos. This was the beginning of what would become the, “Renaissance.” The introduction to humanism, the study of human life as a focus for both study and the arts started placing more emphasis on creation rather than the Creator.



John Wycliffe

**11. Jon Wyclif** – The bishop of Rome has been in France for 70 years. The church had a reputation of being worldly, corrupt, luxurious, cynical and even immoral. In 1377 the Pope finally returned to Rome to find it in ruins. In 1378 he died. The cardinals were mostly French and wanted to go home to Avignon. The Romans forced them to stay and choose an Italian pope. They couldn’t stand the one that was elected, so they picked a French one and set him up back in Avignon. There were now 2 popes and the people each followed their pope and so there was a 50/50 division in the church. The respect for the office of pope was non-existent. Wyclif was a theologian and a university professor at Oxford. He was a radical bent on reforming the church and ended up with a fairly rebellious group of followers called the Lollards. Wyclif is considered the founder of this radical group. In 1382, he had the audacity to declare that the Latin bible should be translated into the common English of the people so they could understand for themselves. That was not popular with the church. He argued that whatever political or religious authority church leaders had was based on moral authority, so the decrees of an immoral pope were worthless and to be ignored. He believed the head of the world-wide church was Christ alone. He ended up concluding that the popes had become so unlike Christ, they were in fact the Antichrist! The church wanted no translations of the Bible. Wyclif cried out that to forbid the Word of God in any language was heresy! The church might have squelched his ideas, but a princess from Bohemia married the English king and the Bohemian students came to Oxford to study and took Wyclif’s beliefs back home when they graduated. Bohemia belonged to the Roman Empire so this was a new problem. Things were just starting to heat up.



**12. Jan Hus** – Bohemia was made up of the German elite and Czech natives. The principal of Prague University was Jan Hus. He was a powerful preacher. He embraced Wyclif’s ideas and the Czech’s rallied behind Hus. One of the by now 3 popes excommunicated Hus to silence him. However, that just threw gas on the fire and started a riot. In 1411, one pope declared a crusade against another and offered forgiveness of sins to anyone supporting his crusade financially. Hus condemned that pope and the Czechs burnt the crusade decree in the streets of Prague. Three of Hus’ followers were executed. The pope then excommunicated all of Prague and Hus had to leave the city. Finally, a great council is called and they removed 2 popes and were back to one. However, they declared that the church would be the council, not the pope from now on. The ex-pope from Avignon moved to a well-armed castle in Spain and declared they were now the one true church. They were ignored.

**13. AD 1444-1516 – Protest** – The Byzantines visited Florence which was the hub of the Renaissance. This was a gift for the humanists. They persuaded some to stay and teach Greek. Finally, westerners read the New Testament in the original language and could begin interpreting for themselves. Lorenzo Valla condemned the Latin Vulgate of Jerome, which had been read in every Catholic service for a thousand years, as inaccurate. He proved the Apostles' Creed was not written by the Apostles. He was investigated by the Inquisition but was saved by becoming apostolic secretary to Pope Nicholas V. Nicholas bordered on humanistic. As pope he used the wealth of church to draw new art and build new architecture in Rome. He collected 1,200 manuscripts and started the Vatican Library. The pope and Rome became the patron of the Renaissance. The arts would begin draining the money from the church. This was the time when the Gutenberg family of Germany invented the printing press and books of every type. The first book to come off the press was the Bible. 92 different editions of the Latin Bible were produced in the 1460's & 1470's. New translations came out in German, Italian, Dutch, French and Spanish. Ordinary Christians read the Bible only to discover there was no pope, no purgatory or pilgrimages mentioned in the bible. Sadly humanistic books were also printed and rapidly multiplying. The world was entering a new era of information. Some of it would be a blessing and some of it a curse.



**14. Ferdinand and Isabella** – Spain has driven out the last of its Muslim rulers and becomes a united monarchy under Ferdinand and Isabella. In 40 years it has went from nothing to a major superpower. They dominated Italy and ruled Austria, the Netherlands and the Holy Roman Empire. After defeating Islam they expelled all Muslims and Jews from the nation who would not convert to Christianity. Hundreds of thousands were driven out. The pope gave Ferdinand

and Isabella authority to enforce reformation of the church, rooting out corruption and immorality, reforming monasteries and educating priests. It was a new inquisition burning Christians of Jewish or Moorish decent who were suspected of backsliding. They burned all Spanish Bibles. 2,000+ people died at the hands of Tomás de Torquemada, the leader in charge. The popes were not concerned ruling Europe or being the spiritual leaders of the world, but instead were focused on splendor and luxury. It was a time when taxation went through the church roof and sales of indulgences were skyrocketing.



**15. AD 1492 Pope Alexander VI** – No one did more to fuel the coming Reformation than Pope Alexander VI. He became pope through huge bribes. He was 61 years old and had a 19 year old girlfriend. The celibate pope had 8 children. Critics were assassinated. He made assassination a standard fund raiser for the church. He commissioned work from Renaissance illuminati like Michelangelo and staged vast sex shows at the Vatican. He died at age 72, allegedly in a botched attempt to poison one of his cardinals.



**16. Erasmus** – “If elephants can be taught to dance...surely preachers can be taught to preach.” – Erasmus. Erasmus was a great scholar but also a satirists. He hated the moral and ethical failure of the church leaders and the lack of knowledge among the priests. He wrote a tract *Julius Barred* that showed the great pope being turned away by St. Peter at the gates of Heaven. He and his followers made fun of the ignorance of the local clergy. They despised the superstition of relics, indulgences, pilgrimages, rejected the asceticism practiced for the last 100 years. Their motto was, “Back to the sources.” They wanted to recover the faith of the Apostles.

Erasmus published the west’s first Greek New Testament. Suddenly John the Baptist is calling people to ‘Repent’ instead of to ‘Do Penance’ as the Latin writers had corruptly added to the Scripture. Erasmus mission was to educate, making priests competent in the Word of God, people aware of truth and religion to be sensible once again. He dreamed of Bibles being read by farmers, tailors, masons, prostitutes, pimps, travelers and the Turks. Now the solid foundation is laid that would bring on the Reformation.