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Savonarola - I

Lead: In the Renaissance capital of Florence, Italy, the terrible and powerful voice of Fra Girolimo Savonarola was raised against corruption in both church and state. He also raised powerful enemies.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Having helped create and nurture European civilization in the long centuries since the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Church of Rome by 1500 was the single unifying institution on the continent. Millions, high and low, saw in the Church the

path to eternal salvation, worshipped in her precincts, contributed to her their treasure, and sought solace from a life that Thomas Hobbes would later describe as solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Despite the devotion of countless numbers, there was trouble in Zion. With clear justification, many considered the Church to be set at rot, absorbed by worldly obsessions, ensnared by political and military ambitions, hopelessly and morally bankrupt.

Seated on the throne of St. Peter was the exquisitely corrupt and powerful Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI, patron of the arts, nepotistic father of four, master of intrigue. Yet, in the mid-1490s he had

met his match. A powerful voice commanded the streets and churches of Florence, the northern Italian city-state that was the crown jewel of the Renaissance. Girolamo Savonarola held the city in his spell with a combination of clean, righteous living, careful Biblical scholarship, stiff-necked moralism, and exuberant, prophetic preaching. He was challenging the life choices of rich and poor alike, calling down God's wrath upon a society which in his view was desperately in need of repentance and reform and a return to simple living and that consistent with Christ's teachings. As his popularity grew, so did the number of enemies circling in for the fill. Next time: bonfire of the vanities.

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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Weinstein, Donald. *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970.

<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/savonarola.html>