

THE COUNTER-REFORMATION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.
(16th Century.)

Atwood N. H. Beeman.

References:

- Schwill, "History of Modern Europe."
- Johnson, "Europe in the 16th Century."
- Hausser, "Period of the Reformation."
- Walker, "Ten Epochs of Church History--The Reformation."
- Cambridge, "Modern History," Vol. 1.
- D'Aubigne, "History of Reformation."
- Symonds, "Renaissance of Italy," Vol. 2.
- Alzog, "Church History."

Outline.

I. Conditions leading up to the Counter-reformation:

- a. Renaissance.
- b. Demands of Wyckliffe and Huss.
- c. Immorality of clergy.
- d. Conflict of laws of Church and state.
- e. Mendicant friars.
- f. Italian influence.
- g. English separation.
- h. French Huguenots.
- i. The Reformation.
- k. Demands upon Rome.
- l. Opposition of popes to reform.

II. The Counter-Reformation:

- a. Accession of Clement VII.
 1. His plan of campaign.
 2. Mantua.
- b. Accession of Paul III.
 1. Roman Commission.
- c. Council of Trent.
 1. Platform.
 2. Organization of Church forces.
 3. Protestant claims and Catholic refutation.
 4. Vulgate.
 5. Other findings.

III. Protestant gains.

IV. Ultimate triumph of Rome.

THE COUNTER-REFORMATION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

(16th Century.)

In considering the Counter-reformation in the Catholic Church, it will be necessary briefly to look to the conditions of Church and people preceding that movement, and to the causes leading up to it.

The Renaissance had spread from sunny Italy to her European neighbors, opening to the people new avenues of thought and action. Having been hitherto under restraint, they sought to break away from the authority that galled them. Wyckliffe had stirred the English people with his utterances against the arrogance of the popes, declaring them to be antichrist (1377). He declared that Christ was the King of the Church. He denied the right of the popes to English territory. His teachings spread to the continent, and John Huss, in Bohemia (1412), demanded a reconstruction of the Church, after a thorough ^{search} of Holy Writ for the actual bases of Christianity, the Scriptures to be used as final authority. He insisted that an honest effort be made to satisfy all the requirements of soul and conscience.

He and others found many reasons why such demands should be made. The immorality and worldliness of the popes had again and again scandalized the Old World. The clergy had become a separate caste, making and administering their own laws. Exempt from lay interference, they could escape punishment for the most flagrant violations of state law. Yet they would not exempt the laity

from the laws of the Church, even though the power they now had and the privileges they enjoyed had originally come from the people, whom they now oppressed.

The laws of the Church were in many cases contradictory to those of the state, causing many conflicts between the authorities of each. The breach between pope and people was further widened by the neglect of the clergy, who, not satisfied to keep their subjects in ignorance of Church affairs, left them to be ministered to by a horde of mendicant friars, whose once legitimate object of existence had degenerated into systematic extortion, the proceeds of which they spent in riotous living.

The sale of indulgences to secure funds for the building of St. Peter's, Rome, caused additional discontent. In return for contributions pardons were granted, by means of which certain penalties for sins were removed, after the purchaser had contritely confessed his sin and received absolution from a priest. This eventually wrung from the Protestant forces, represented by Martin Luther, the claim that "Justification is by faith alone."

In Italy the people were generally disinterested in the Reformation. They cared little for Church affairs, preferring the easy, yet dissipated, life characteristic of the Italian. There was no desire to leave the Mother Church, but there grew steadily, with the circulation of books, a noticeably higher plane of living very inconsistent with such corruption as existed in the Church and among its dignitaries.

The English rebellion, under the young Henry VIII., was a severe blow to the power of Catholicism, and the most strenuous

efforts of the pope could not prevent final separation and renunciation, (1534), when Henry became supreme head of the Church of England.

In France the Huguenots and Guises were mixing religious fervor with political intrigue, with the advantage shifting from one side to the other, until the Treaty of St. Germain (1570) granted the largest toleration French Protestants had yet enjoyed.

With the famous Ninety-five Theses of Luther the Reformation began to assume definite proportions. By 1544 not only had two-thirds of Germany, with most of her nobility, revolted, but Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, had likewise thrown off the papal yoke and reformed their churches. In Denmark, England, Scotland, and later in Ireland and the Netherlands, at various times from 1530 to 1560, and by various means, the monasteries were dissolved, either of themselves or by the state, Church courts were abolished, bishops were silenced or restrained, images were removed from churches, private mass was forbidden, the mass itself purified, and the Church lands in these countries reverted to the various states in which located.

The people, while protesting against the corruption at Rome, were yet loyal at heart. They desired amicably to settle their difficulties, yet insisted that they be allowed a voice in the matter, all decisions to be based on the Bible. In the beginning Luther had no other idea than that of protesting against the sale of indulgences, but the opposition his theses aroused forced him to investigate Catholicism more closely, with the result that he found other teachings he could not accept.

In 1524 the Theatines and Capuchins were organized, also

the Oratory of Divine Love. These were religious organizations. They tried to exemplify the teachings of Jesus in their daily lives. They preached, taught, and cared for the poor and sick. These organizations had a strong influence in causing the popes to make at least an attempt at reform.

Though the powerful Charles V. had seconded the demand of the people for a general council, still the popes disliked the idea. To accede would mean a loss of power. A decreased revenue from the sale of indulgences would surely result. The pope feared he could not trust the bishops, and that to reform the Church would be to acknowledge the heretical Luther to be in the right, and Luther was still at large with the Edict of Worms yet unexecuted. Lastly, he would never yield to the demand that the people have an equal vote with ~~the~~ the clergy, nor any vote at all, for that would entirely upset the old idea of the divine inspiration attendant upon all acts of the clergy. He held that the people had no part in such things, hence were not competent to vote, and he never gave in.

But circumstances beyond the control of Rome gradually compelled the pope to acquiesce in the demand for the council. The growing strength of Protestant belligerent forces was not without its influence. A letter written by Erasmus to Adrian VI. may have had some weight. The threat of Charles V. to call a council himself, and to preside at its deliberations, if the pope did not call one, was doubtless a factor. Never losing sight of the vital principles he cherished, the ^{pope} began the plans for a cam-

paign which was a model of diplomacy.

On the accession of Clement VII. (1523-34) the people were given a promise of a general council, but it must consist of the pope's appointees, and contrary to German opinion it was not to meet in Germany. These last conditions were rejected, which was what Clement wished and expected, for he could now claim that he had offered what had been the rule since apostolic days, and its rejection was no fault of his.

The pope made the first attempt to carry out his plans by calling a council at Mantua, but this failed because the Duke of Mantua refused to allow it to convene in his territory. This and other things created a better feeling toward the pope, who now had opportunity to lay his plans more deeply.

Under Paul III. (1534-49) a commission of reform met at Rome to consider the situation. Four cardinals, three bishops, one abbot and the master of the palace were in attendance. They found much need for reform, in that there were abuses and corruptions in benefices, no care was taken as to fitness of appointees for office, revenues were misemployed, simony and pluralism existed everywhere, episcopal residence was seldom found, and the people were correspondingly neglected. They found that exemptions were sold from almost everything, the monasteries were disordered, the nunneries given to lewdness, the sacraments and religion itself contemptible.

They could not shut their eyes to these things. They considered the sale of indulgences to be demoralizing. They found a multitude of defects. Yet, unfortunately, they decided to allow the Church to go on in the same old way, and their good work

was thus worse than useless.

As the sixteenth century advanced, the need for a council seemed greater than ever. Appeals were made for it to the pope by princes and nations. Paul III., who was now pope, had been noted for appointing only learned and pious men to the cardinalates, and these men now framed the papal bull calling the first council in December, 1545.

In compliance with the wishes of the German people, Trent was finally decided upon as the place of meeting. This was in the territory of Ferdinand, close to the Italian frontier, and therefore of easy access to the pope. The German-French war kept these peoples from attendance at this first meeting, so that there were present only a few Italian prelates. King Ferdinand was in attendance, the emperor being represented by his chancellor, Graneville.

They met "for the propagation of the faith, the elevation of Christian religion, the uprooting of heresies, the restoration of peace, the reformation of clergy and people, and the overthrow of the enemies of the Christian name."

It would be a Herculean task to treat the sessions of the Council of Trent individually. Briefly, they covered a period of eighteen years, during which time twenty-five sessions were held, at intervals of from one month to ten years. They are generally considered to have been three in number, and are treated by historians as follows: First session, December, 1545, to 1547; second session, May, 1551; third session, January, 1562, to 1563. At one time (1547) the Council left Trent, going to Bologna, but returning to Trent later.

The first session was a failure. The pope refused to admit laymen, and the emperor, in retaliation, allowed nothing to be done. After weary weeks of delay and disappointment, the Council adjourned.

Having been, in a measure, defeated, the pope now proceeded to organize his forces and means for an effective campaign. The delays, therefore, while exasperating, were advantageous to him. Excitement died down and passion cooled. The Protestants reduced their claims to a more definite form, and the Catholics were thus enabled to prepare to refute them. The pope saw clearly that he could succeed only by cunning and diplomacy, and his appreciation of the situation contributed very largely to his success.

Without the knowledge of Charles V., the pope suddenly called the second Council of Trent. He sent a large majority of Italian clergy, who were put under orders of a cardinal as to how to vote. Papal legates were given precedence, and they alone had the privilege of proposing resolutions. By means of a system of couriers, all important matters to be voted upon were first submitted to the pope, who gave his orders for or against. A number of the brightest of the Italian tools of the pope were detailed to ridicule and otherwise obstruct and intimidate speakers who were not in sympathy with their views, by asking irrelevant questions, and so forth. Some were even sent as spies to private meetings of the opposition.

The pope knew that the Germans would either refuse to recognize this second Council or would come too late. He determined, therefore, to put and carry certain matters in their absence, thus securing an advantage he was able to maintain throughout by reason

of his majority of votes.

One of the first things done was to decide which, among several versions, was the authentic Bible. The Vulgate was accepted, it being the translation by St. Jerome at the close of the 4th century. Its origin was claimed to have been in Africa. Jerome translated the Old Testament from Hebrew and Chaldaic, and the New Testament he revised from an older Latin version. The Council also showed the relation of the Holy Scripture to the teachings of the Church, and explained the rule of interpretation, that which was most in accordance with the rulings handed down by the Church from age to age to be the chosen principle. The people suspected treachery, however, and this session, except for the advantage gained by the pope, was also a failure.

Under the pope's able lieutenant, Cardinal de Monte, the papal interests were more than well looked after. All matters were discussed, settled, and decisions announced in public sessions. Some of the questions decided were:

That Adam, by his fall, had deteriorated both in soul and body, the effects of which were transmitted to posterity, and these were removed by the merits of Christ and His grace in the sacrament of Baptism.

That, in direct contradiction to Luther's claim that justification is by faith, hence of the inner man, justification comes from the works done, therefore is external and superficial, coming from the mere performance of the duties of the Church.

That Christ is really, truly, substantially, present in the sacrament of Holy Communion at the altar.

That Communion is not necessary to the salvation of little children.

That the sacrament of marriage is indissoluble without sufficient cause. Two witnesses were required to all marriages, thus to prevent secret marriages.

That the Church had received of God the power to grant indulgences.

The doctrines of penance, extreme unction, baptism and confirmation, and the holy sacrifice of the mass, were settled. Various decrees on reformation, on enforcing episcopal residence and visitation, and on regulating the holding of benefices, whereby the candidate had to show previous fitness, were promulgated.

It is safe to say that no former gathering ever handled so extensive a business, over/so extended a time, with such great ability, nor so precisely and prudently defined so many doctrines. Conservative and radical met on common ground, each holding the other in check.

The Protestants lost a powerful weapon when the reforms were inaugurated in the Church. The Church, on the other hand, paid more attention to religious doctrines and less to politics, resulting in a unification of all her adherents, thus preventing compromise with the Protestants and giving her an advantage in the battle with the enemies of Catholicism.

The papacy had powerful helpers in the Jesuits (1534), whose immense numbers of thoroughly loyal adherents of the Church invaded the revolted realms of Protestantism as preachers and confessors, winning back hundreds of men to the Catholic faith. No less potent a factor was the work of the Inquisition at this critical period. No book could be published without its leave. It could punish with imprisonment, confiscation, or death, against which

there was no appeal except to the pope. The penalty was executed by the civil authorities. In Italy and Spain, particularly, it practically crushed the tide of rebellion against Rome wherever it appeared. The Church greatly strengthened herself and her cause in the enrichment of her services by introducing congregational singing, by more frequent sermons, and the translation of the Bible into popular tongues and its circulation among the laity, thus enthusing the half-hearted and making sure the loyal.

The results of the Council, to the Church and to the world at large, were very far-reaching. Now the clergy do not pass laws and enforce them upon the laity with spiritual censures. The priests now suffer for crimes as other men. Cross-questioning, fining, imprisoning, or burning, for religious views, are things of the dead past. The weapon of excommunication, once so potent, is now held in check by libel laws. Indulgence venders are no more.

The greatest result, perhaps, was a doctrinal equilibrium giving a necessary steadiness and a needed mental rest in an age filled with cruelty, devastating wars and inquisitorial tortures.

The popes of the sixteenth century:

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Leo X. (1513-21) | Paul IV. (1555-59) |
| Adrian VI. (1522-23) | Pius IV. (1559-65) |
| Clement VII. (1523-34) | Pius V. (1566-72) |
| Paul III. (1534-49) | Gregory XIII. (1572-85) |
| Julius III. (1550-55) | Sixtus V. (1585-90) |