

# The Catholic Reformation – Part 1

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – An overview of the Catholic reformation, as a response to the Protestant movement
2. aim – To cause us to understand how Catholic thinking was cemented at the Council of Trent

### b. outline

1. The Impetus of the Catholic Reformation
2. The Council of Trent
3. The Results of the Catholic Reformation

### c. overview

1. the **response** to the Reformation
  - a. by the mid-point of the 16<sup>th</sup> C (and certainly by the mid-point of the 17<sup>th</sup>), the Protestant movement has broken away from the medieval church (**i.e.** the Catholic church) to form its own
    1. this was certainly *not* Luther's original intention – when he first came to his theological epiphany, his desire was to see “the” church reformed and restored
    2. but ... it became *inevitable* that the Protestant movement would need to “break away” from the mother church to form a new one
    3. and ... (unfortunately) this also produced “varying” church groups, based on differences between the various sects regarding the nature and progress of reformation itself
  - b. so ... how does the Reformation affect the *Catholic* church herself ... ?
2. the **titles** of this response to the Reformation
  - a. some call this period the **Counter-Reformation** (**i.e.** Protestants, mainly) = a period of time whereby the established Catholic church responds to the Reformation
    1. obviously, the Catholic church (in place for 1000 years) is not going to take this “lying down”
    2. there would have to be (by implication) a *response* from the hierarchal church; the popes and bishops would have to respond, especially given the *intimation* of the reformation (**i.e.** that the “mother” church was *no longer a true church*)
  - b. some call this period the **Catholic Reformation** (**i.e.** Catholics, of course) = a period of time in which the Catholic church begins to reform itself by bringing about a series of changes
    1. many of these changes designed to respond to calls for reformation that have been going on for *at least* 100 years (**i.e.** from the days of Wycliffe and Huss)
    2. and, many of the changes put into place will “solidify” the teachings and structure of the Catholic church down to modernity (**e.g.** the position of the church re: justification)
  - c. however ... *both are actually true* – the church *does* respond to the Reformation and it *also* makes a number of changes internally to root out corruption and establish its theology more specifically
    1. **note:** although I have entitled this “The Catholic Reformation,” I am sympathetic to the other term – especially as a *former Catholic myself!!*

## I. The Impetus of the Catholic Reformation

### Content

#### a. origins of the Catholic Reformation

1. reform of the Medieval Church had already begun as far back as the *conciliar movement* (**i.e.** that reunited the divided papacy in 1414)
  - a. **e.g.** the Fifth Lateran Council (**see before**) convened in 1512 and continued meeting to Leo X – it had been an “attempt” at reform, but had not accomplished much
2. the Renaissance popes were not immediately active in initiating reforms of the church, but there were movements all around trying to bring about reform *even before* Luther
  - a. in Spain, a reformation movement under Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros (from 1507)
    1. it included the reformation of the monasteries, the establishment of a university (seminary), and the development of the Polyglot Bible (printed in 1514, 2 years before Erasmus' version)
    2. but ... it *also* included the Spanish Inquisition – a special tribunal to bring suspected heretics to trial, particularly Jews and/or Muslims that “returned” their original beliefs and practices

- b. in Italy, a reformation movement under the *spirituali* – committed Catholic reformers who *themselves* had come (somewhat) to Luther's understanding of justification by faith and saw the need for the church to be reformed
  - 1. **e.g.** Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542) – he had a similar epiphany as Luther realizing that he could not atone for his sins through his own efforts (c. 1523)
    - a. Contarini became a spiritual advisor to Pope Paul III – Paul had “reformed” his own lifestyle as a bishop, and when elected pope, placed the papacy itself at the head of a movement for churchwide reform
    - b. he appointed the Papal Reform Commission c. 1536
  - 2. the Papal Reform Commission presented its findings in March 1537 (**brutally honest**)
    - a. it laid much of the blame for corruption at the feet of the popes themselves – it declared that papal authority was still in place (and praised Paul III for his commitment), but it condemned without mercy the practices of simony (**i.e.** selling ecclesiastical positions)
    - b. it also criticized the cardinals for their worldliness and failure in spiritual matters, including bribery, evasion of canon law, laxity in the monastic orders, and abuse of indulgences
  - 3. Protestants rejoiced at the report (Luther published a German translation of it)
    - a. but (of course) many in the conservative majority in the College of Cardinals saw this report as a threat to their vested interests, and worked to frustrate the work of the Commission
    - b. and, Paul III failed to pursue the called reforms vigorously, although he did appoint Contarini to reform the papal bureaucracy
- 3. so ... by the late 1530s, the Catholic reformation was well underway
  - a. the *spirituali* hoped to find a way to reconcile Protestants back to the church – others believed that *suppression* was the only way to deal with them
  - b. Charles V (trying to bring about internal peace) convened the Colloquy of Regensburg (April 1541) as an Imperial Diet to bring the two sides together – Calvin and Bucer both attended
    - 1. the participants *did* reach an agreement on the doctrine of justification – the Protestant position that justification was entirely *by faith* was agreed to by the Catholics, as long as the Protestants were willing to agree that such a justification then produced works of righteousness
      - a. not in the James sense of works *flowing out* of justification, but two *different* kinds of righteousness within the believer
      - b. **LOW:** a “double righteousness” = one imputed by faith, the other inherent: an inner righteousness brought about by the Holy Spirit through good works
    - 2. neither side was *completely* happy with the arrangement – Luther saw it as a “patched up” thing, while Catholics saw it as a threat to merit and purgatory (and rightly so!)
      - a. **e.g.** the issue of *transubstantiation* was not resolved
      - b. so, the Catholics (particularly Contarini) called for a general council to by the Holy See to take up these matters *once and for all* (he did not live to see the council called; **see below**)
      - c. and, the Catholic hard-liners decided that the best approach was *suppression*, and to that end they embraced some of the methods of the Spanish Reformation mentioned above ...
- 4. **Ignatius Loyola** (1495-1556)
  - a. Loyola was a Spaniard; he was from Basque nobility, the youngest son of a large family
    - 1. originally intended to be a priest, he became a courtier in the court of King Ferdinand
    - 2. after being wounded in battle, during his convalescence, he began to think of himself along the lines of Francis of Assisi, and spent a year in seclusion at Manresa (as a monk)
  - b. Loyola struggled (like Luther) with his sinfulness and tried to rid himself of his guilt by mortification of the flesh (**i.e.** praying for hours on end, fasting and scourging himself)
    - 1. but, unlike Luther, he did not come to the same conclusion about forgiveness through faith
    - 2. instead, he devised a method (called the *Spiritual Exercises*) to discipline every aspect of life
    - 3. the work became the founding document of the *Society of Jesus* (**i.e.** the Jesuits), who became some of the most effective agents of the Catholic Reformation
    - 4. the order was formally established in 1540 by Pope Paul III (**see above**) as a force for reform
  - c. the Jesuits were a highly disciplined order, establishing many colleges and seminaries, working to turn the hearts and minds of Protestants back to the dogmas of the church through “good arguments from Scripture, tradition, the councils and the doctors” of the church
    - 1. **LOW:** the Jesuits believed that Protestants could be won back by good argumentation, using “the same diligence in healing that the heretics are using in infecting the people”
  - d. Loyola was plagued with poor health at the end of his life
    - 1. his successor as superior general of the order was Diego Lainez, who helped assure that the Council of Trent did not make any compromises with the Protestant view of justification

## II. The Council of Trent

### Content

#### a. the calling of the Council

1. the Council of Trent was convened in 1545, and met (off and on) until 1565, *20 years in total*
2. the idea of a council was first put forth by Luther in 1518 to address his issues with the church
  - a. and many others had looked for a council to resolve the schism of Protestantism
3. however, there were a number of political rivalries that prevented it during the early 16<sup>th</sup> C.
  - a. **e.g.** the emperor and the papacy having different goals for such a council
    1. Charles V wanted an *ecumenical* council that would focus on moral and disciplinary reforms
    2. the pope wanted a purely *Catholic* council (controlled by the papacy) that would address the failures of the conciliar movement without threatening papal power
    3. the Curia (**i.e.** the cardinals) were concerned about preserving their privileges
    4. eventually, they all agreed to discuss matter of *both* theological *and* reform issues, but to do so *alternately* over time (**i.e.** a little of this, a little of that, back and forth)
  - b. **e.g.** where the council would meet – in Germany, under the control of the emperor; in Italy, under the direction of the papacy
    1. the choice was Trent – in northern Italy but still within the boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire
4. Paul III issued a papal bull convening the council in May 1542
  - a. however, war between France (under Francis I) and the Holy Roman Empire delayed the first meeting for 3 years – it eventually came together in 1545
  - b. the original meeting had only 31 bishops and 43 theologians in attendance (mostly Italians)
  - c. however, it continued to meet *in three separate phases* over the next 18 years
    1. it would produce a body of legislation “greater in bulk than the total left by all previous General Councils of the Church”
5. so ... the Catholic Reformation was (in many ways) just that: an attempt by the Catholic church to reform herself, and (along the way) address the issues raised by the Protestant movement
  - a. the Council of Trent will be the single greatest act of “reformation” in the Catholic church
  - b. everything about the church *as we know her today* flows out of that council, and it will (from our perspective) “doom” the church to being solidly “unreformable” from that point forward ...