

The Catholic Reformation – Part 2

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 **reality** of the Catholic Reformation
 - a. **IMO**: the *vast majority* of Protestants are either 1) unaware of the nature and teachings of the Catholic Church or 2) believe that the Catholic Church is simply one of the “branches” of Christianity (**i.e.** that Catholics are Christians who only believe *differently* than we do)
 1. **e.g.** Catholics agree with the substance of the Apostle’s Creed (**i.e.** the nature of God, Jesus as the Son of God, the resurrection, etc.)
 - b. however, this *fails to account* for the most *significant difference* between the Roman Church and those who were part of the Protestant Reformation: the *fundamental point of disagreement*
 1. **i.e.** the *specific* response of the Medieval Catholic Church to the **material principle** held by Protestants would “cement” the church into an organization *that ceased to be the church of Jesus Christ*, and became nothing more than an “ecclesiastical” group holding to some of the original tenets of ancient Christianity, but **denying its substance**
 - c. and ... the most significant element of the **Catholic Reformation** was the Council of Trent ...

II. The Council of Trent

Content

a. the calling of the Council (review from before)

1. the Council of Trent was convened in 1545, and met (off and on) until 1565, *20 years in total*
2. Paul III issued a papal bull convening the council in May 1542 – it eventually came together in 1545
 - a. it continued to meet off and on *in three separate phases* over the next 18 years
 1. 1545-49 under Paul III; 1551-52 under Julius III; 1562-63 under Pius IV
 2. **note**: *none* of the convening popes ever attended the council; they sent *legates*
 - b. it would produce legislation “greater in bulk than the total left by all previous General Councils”
 1. Protestants were never invited to attend, even though the emperor had insisted it be so
 - a. some were promised safe passage, and a few from Wittenberg and Strasbourg attended
 - b. however, Protestants were *refused* any voting rights in the Council, thus any Protestant “cooperation” was non-existent (**i.e.** the Council became *utterly Catholic*)
 2. thus, Trent became simply the *definition* and *enactment* of various Catholic positions – it was never “ecumenical” in attempting to address the issues raised by Protestants
 3. the final decrees were signed in 1563 by 255 members, the highest attendance of any of its three phases – in fact, no more than about 60 prelates were in attendance when passage of its most important decrees occurred (**see below**)
 4. and, the last minute inclusion of a decree on sacred images was rushed into place as a French initiative, although never discussed or referred to council theologians
3. so ... the Council of Trent was the single greatest act of “reformation” in the Catholic church
 - a. everything about the church *as we know her today* flows out of that council ...

b. the intentions of the Council

1. to condemn the principles and doctrines of Protestantism – to clarify the doctrines of the Catholic Church on all disputed points (**i.e.** not to address whether those positions were *wrong* [biblically], but to simply *clarify* what the Church believed *against* Protestantism)
 - a. **e.g.** the Council promoted the theology of Thomas Aquinas as *dominant* in the church
2. to effect a reformation in discipline or administration – to address the various forms of corruption in the management of the church herself

- a. the council *did* address a number of administrative corruptions and practices:
 1. bishops were ordered to remain in their sees; pluralism of office was condemned; the use of relics and indulgences were regulated; it ordered the founding of seminaries, etc.
 - b. the council *also* addressed some other matters relating to the *life* of the church:
 1. the Council approved a plan to correct the errors of the *Julian* calendar and for a more consistent and accurate scheduling of Easter (**i.e.** the first Sunday after the first full moon after the *vernal* equinox) – **i.e.** the adoption of the Gregorian calendar (based on the request of Pope Gregory XIII)
 - c. but ... the bulk of the Council was simply to *affirm* the “traditions” of the Church, cementing the Church to be *even what it is to this day* ...
- c. the substance of the Council**
1. **session #3 (Apr, 1546):** the reaffirmation of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed
 - a. **i.e.** affirming the nature of God as a Trinity of Persons, and Jesus as fully God and fully man
 - b. **note:** this is where most *modern* Protestants make the mistake of thinking that Catholics believe the same as they, because of these most *foundational* matters being similar
 2. **session #4 (Apr, 1546):** the Holy Scriptures
 - a. the decree that the deuterocanonical books (**i.e.** the Apocrypha) on similarly authoritative as other books of the canon (both Old and New)
 - b. the decree that the Latin Vulgate is “the” authoritative text of Scripture
 - c. the decree that the traditions of the Church are “on par” with the Scriptures as a rule of faith (*i.e.* denying *sola Scriptura*, and establishing *sola ecclesia*)
 3. **session #5 (Jun, 1546):** the doctrine of original sin
 - a. the decree that original sin is the natural inheritance of every person in Adam, and that baptism is the *effectual means* by which is removed rendering a person *morally right* (**i.e.** justified)
 1. however ... a *morally neutral* state will require the sacraments of the Church in order to remain “in place” – **i.e.** justification *starts* with a sacrament and *continues* with them (**see below**)
 4. **session #6 (Jan, 1547):** the doctrine of justification
 - a. the decree that justification is offered on the basis of human cooperation with divine grace

“If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved *and also increased* before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause *of the increase thereof*; let him be anathema.”

 1. **i.e.** that *sola fide* is a “vain confidence” in divine mercy, and that *no man* can know who has received the grace of God, and that the grace of God can be “forfeited” through *mortal sin*
 2. **anathema:** cursed *eternally* = having no hope of God’s mercy *forever* (**i.e.** a belief or action that causes a person to be *permanently banned* from the hope of the presence of God himself)
 3. **ironically:** it is the *same word* that the Apostle Paul uses to condemn the Galatians who have embraced a gospel *by works* (**Galatians 1:6-9**)

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be **accursed**. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be **accursed**.”
 - a. **note:** Galatians is a *strong polemic*, written as Paul’s *first letter*, to one of the first *missionary churches* in the world, *at a time* when the issue of justification was being *questioned* by the Judaizers (**i.e.** that justification was by *keeping the Jewish rituals and customs*)
 - b. **i.e.** the Catholic Church *anathematizes* anyone who embraces *sola fide*, in *direct* contradiction to Paul’s own teaching that justification can be received *by faith alone*
 - c. **i.e.** the Catholic Church teaches that justification is wrought *both* by the initial act of baptism *and* by the continuing acts of keeping the sacraments (along with *final purgation*; **see below**)
 4. **LOW:** in Catholicism, justification is an *infused* state into the soul of a man by virtue of his *obedience* to the teachings and practices *of the church* – contra the Protestant view that justification is an **imputation** of Christ’s righteousness *by faith alone* (**the Material Principle**)
 5. **session #7 (Mar, 1547):** the sacraments (**the greatest weight of material**)
 - a. the decree that the church embraces seven (7) official sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, confession, marriage, holy orders (ordination), and extreme unction
 1. ordination was (later; session #23) defined to imprint an *indelible character* on the soul of the one being ordained (**i.e.** the priest is *forever* a priest, even if he should fall into gross sin and be “defrocked”; this becomes the *basis* for the modern difficulty of “removing” a priest)
 2. ordination was also defined to be the continuation of the *Levitical* priesthood, not the priesthood of Melchizedek to which *Christ himself* is likened in Hebrews 7 (**i.e.** a priesthood that *supersedes* the Levitical one by encompassing *all generations by faith*; see Abraham)
 - b. the decree that baptism is the proper mode by which one is justified before God, *but the other sacraments* are the necessary *continuing action* to “hold” that justified state (**see next**)

- c. the decree that the Eucharist is a *true propitiatory sacrifice* (**i.e.** a *re-presentation* of Christ's sacrifice) by an *alter Christus* (**i.e.** a sacerdotal priest) under the *actual* elements of the body and blood of Christ (**i.e.** in *transubstantiation*)
 1. **i.e.** that the actions of Christ upon the cross did not "complete" the sacrifice for sin, but that it must be *continually remade* for the sins of the people (**e.g.** see the imagery in the crucifix)
 2. **i.e.** the "continuation" of the OT sacrificial system, using a priest, and altar, a tabernacle, and a sacrifice offered to atone for sin (temporarily)
 3. **i.e.** although the sacrifice of Christ is "perfect" (*per se*), it cannot *once for all* complete the atonement of those *who continue to sin after they have been baptized* (**contra Heb. 10:11ff**)
"And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified."
 4. **ironically:** the Council also confirmed withholding the cup from the laity and that the Mass should only be spoken in Latin (**i.e.** a language *unfamiliar* to most)
 5. **IOW:** in Catholicism, justification is an *infused* form of righteousness through sacramental obedience, thus the Eucharist becomes the means by which the Catholic continually offers to God a sacrifice of Christ which he/she "hopes" will provide atonement and propitiation for sin – *contra* the Protestant view that salvation is entirely by faith *in the completed work of Christ* and that the ordinances are simply a **testimony** to what Christ has already wrought
 6. **BTW:** this is why Baptists *insist* on renaming these rituals as *ordinances* – the term "sacrament" implies within it something *tangible* being transferred to the participant *in the ritual itself*, rather than pointing "away" to Christ *alone*
6. **session #25 (Dec, 1563):** the Catholic dogmas
 - a. the decree that purgatory, the invocation of saints, the Treasury of Merit, the efficacy of indulgences, and the veneration of relics were all reaffirmed as dispensaries of the Church (with some cautionary recommendations)
 1. **i.e.** since justification through sacramentalism is (by necessity) "impossible" to achieve (by the ordinary man), then it stands to reason that other "means" would be necessary to complete it
 2. **e.g.** going to a place of "final purgation" to *purge* the remaining effects of sin, or to have the merit of "others" added to your own in order to "enhance" your standing before God

III. The Results of the Catholic Reformation

Content

a. the results of the Catholic Reformation

1. the decrees of Trent have *never* been repudiated by the Church, although the later Vatican I and Vatican II would *mollify* some of its teachings (**e.g.** the Mass in the native tongue)
2. thus, for nearly five (5) centuries, the Church has maintained these theological positions *and there has been no attempt at theological reform* within the church since then
 - a. the "reforms" under John Paul II were to push the church towards the political; Benedict XVI was a strong *conservative* for the continuation of Catholic doctrine; Francis I has continued in the path of John Paul II in moving the church "left", but has not repudiated any of the *soteriology* of Trent
 - b. **IOW:** the Catholic Reformation (**oxymoron**) *did nothing of the sort* – it responded to Protestantism by *hardening* its teachings against the biblical doctrines recaptured by the Reformers
 - c. **IMO:** the Catholic Church is neither 1) a church, nor 2) Christian – Trent "locks" the individual into positions that make it *virtually impossible* from which to be redeemed, by arguing that Rome is the only ground of "truth" and the only "church in which a person can be saved"