

Chapter 21

The Catholic Church Recovers Its Spiritual Elan

As we have noted in previous chapters, for many centuries a common theme within Western Christianity was the need for reform - a reform of the entire community in "head and members". The reform of the clergy was the most obvious and probably the most needed.

There were some attempts to address these issues by the reform-minded popes of the 11th century, like Leo IX and Gregory VII, and in the 13th century with Innocent III who called the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. And whatever can be said of the Conciliar Movement of the 15th century, as expressed in the Councils of Constance and Basel, it was a desperate attempt to address the obvious need for reform. However, with the corruption of simony embedded in the Roman Curia and the failure or lack of interest in the papacy for reform, especially with the Renaissance popes of the 15th century, the stage was set for the dramatic events of the 16th century and its main characters, Luther and Calvin

The swift acceptance of the reformers like Luther, Zwingli and Calvin and the rise of the Free Churches seems somewhat of a sociological marvel. Three important explanations have been offered, first, the obvious fact that effective reform had been put off too long secondly, the ironic fact that some of the minor, successful attempts at internal reform at the local level had created high expectations and thirdly the rise of the nation states looking for independence and revenues. People were ready for any move toward reform.

As we move toward the great reforms initiated by the Council of Trent, it is important to note that these reforms were antedated by and succeeded by other significant reform efforts within the institutional Church. However, as the great Church historian H. Jedin remarked: "The Protestant Reformation owed its success to the fact that the attempts at reform which sprouted from the soil of the Church did not come to maturity". (*History of the Council of Trent* p.165)

In large part, the doctrinal reaction against Protestantism and the internal attempts at reform from within would come to maturity at the Council of Trent (1545-63). In addition to doctrinal clarification, it would mark a definitive moment in Catholic Church reform and practice. Given that the Council of Trent was not simply a reaction to the Protestant Reformation, but also and importantly a continuation of internal efforts to initiate reform in the Church, we shall briefly consider a few of these internal reform movements that began immediately prior to the Reformation.

Some Catholic Reform Movements Before the Council of Trent

Humanism -- Humanism has been mentioned only briefly in our study of the Reformation. However, many of the reformers inside and outside the Church were

affected by humanism. The term as used in the 16th century is probably more properly called “Christian humanism” as opposed to a different, non-theistic world view known as “secular humanism”. In general, humanism places its focus on nature, the physical world (including art and science) and natural powers of human beings. Its critics claim that it ignores the reality of sin and its effects on humans and the inability of living a good life without the gift of grace. It also fails to stress the ultimate goal of human life - heaven. Christian Humanism had its roots in the Northern Renaissance whose focus was on a return to the ancient texts of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers and away from the scholastic textbooks with their stress on philosophy and logic.

Perhaps Christian Humanism’s best known proponent at the time of the Reformation was Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469-1536). Erasmus and other humanists like Thomas More and John Colet were scholars who became disenchanted with scholastic theology and its lack of intellectual challenge. They turned to a study of classical Latin and Greek which they applied to a critical study of Sacred Scripture and the works of the early Church Fathers in an effort to stimulate Christian piety. Erasmus translated the New Testament into Latin and Greek which provided a much needed text for research based on ancient manuscripts. He created some controversy when he corrected a number of translation errors found in the standard Vulgate Bible, which was the approved version of the day.

While dedicated to Church reform, Erasmus remained a devout Catholic. He opposed Luther’s denial of free will and any concept of predestination. His work on Christian virtues, *The Enchiridion* (Handbook), was an attempt to explain the role of religion in everyday life. His satire, *The Praise of Folly*, called for a constructive reform of Christian piety and Church life. In this work he satirized the shortcomings of the clergy, theologians and philosophers as well as popular religious practices. He called for a genuine, internal spirituality. As Christ had criticized the Pharisees for their lack of internal spirituality, Erasmus attacked the current relics craze, pilgrimages and superstitious veneration of the saints. He supported reform efforts in the Church based on a knowledge of the primitive Church.

Spanish Reform -- Another product of the Christian Humanist tradition was the Franciscan scholar, Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros (1436-1517). As a humanist scholar, Ximenes, produced a revolutionary edition of the Bible which consisted of Latin, Greek and Hebrew versions of the Bible listed side by side. It was called the Complutensian Polyglot Bible.

As part of his successful effort to reform the Spanish clergy, including the monastic orders, he founded the University of Alcalá. There clergy were trained in the classical languages as well as theology and law. Alcalá became a seminary for bishops and center for humanistic studies, which combined new knowledge and old theology in a new synthesis that combined reform with a respect for tradition. Alcalá provided many trained leaders for the Catholic Reformation that took place after Trent.

There was a dark side to Ximenes. In 1492, Spain had finally completed the *reconquista*

(reconquest *a la* El Cid) by conquering the Muslims and uniting Aragon and Castile. To promote religious purity Ximenes cooperated in expelling all Muslims who failed to convert and supported the tragic Spanish Inquisition that burned at the stake some 9,000 heretics and Jews.

New Religious Orders -- In 1497, the **Oratory of Divine Love** was founded in Genoa, Italy by Catherine of Genoa. It was dedicated to promoting personal sanctity of its lay and clerical members through prayer, the sacraments and works of charity. Its members included such reformers as Gaspar Contarini who started a reform movement in the Curia.

In 1524, members of the Oratory also founded the **Theatines**, an order dedicated to the reform of the parish clergy. These secular clerics were organized into communities dedicated to poverty, chastity and obedience. They were also dedicated to preaching, aiding the poor and general parish work.

An important reform movement within the Franciscan Order was the **Capuchins**. Founded in 1525, they wanted to return to a strict interpretation of the vow of poverty, to wear a coarse habit with a pointed hood (*cappuccino*) and lead a life of solitude combined with preaching.

While similar reform orders sprung up in the 1530's, the most famous and influential was the **Society of Jesus, the Jesuits**, founded by Ignatius Loyola in 1534. The Jesuits were recognized by Pope Paul III in 1540 and were given the mission to engage in active ministry for "the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine and the propagation of the faith".

Jesuit spirituality was based on the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius which display the following principles: 1) Christocentric - to develop a bond with Jesus of the Gospels; 2) to collaborate with God's efforts in the world for the well-being of the human family; 3) the use of spiritual discernment in decision making - discerning the will of God in various life circumstances; 4) personal generosity in the service of God; 5) fraternity and companionship in the service of God; 6) finding God in all things.

Their major efforts were in education and missionary activities directed toward Protestants and non-Christians throughout the world. With their stress on education they established many universities and produced some of the most important theologians in the history of the Church.

The Council of Trent (1545-63)

In 1518, on the eve of the Reformation, Luther had called for a General Council of the Church. He had been ignored. We can only speculate the course of history if a reform Council had taken place in 1518, rather than 1545. The reasons offered by historians for the reluctance of Rome to call a General Council in 1518 include: no felt need to deal

with reform; the fear of a resurgence of conciliarism as experienced at the Councils of Constance and Basel; the corruption and anti-reform attitude of the Curia; the hostility of the German princes; and the rivalry of France and Spain.

Pope Paul III Prepares the Way for the Council - The Church finally entered on a path of effective reform with the election of Alexander Farnese as Pope Paul III in 1534. Indeed, Paul III was still a pope in the Renaissance mold. His youth was marked with immoralities, but he later went through a conversion experience. Nevertheless, he was steeped in the humanist culture and indulged in such problematic practices as nepotism. However, he recognized the need for reform and started out on the road to reform by appointing reformed minded men to the College of Cardinals.

He knew that the reform of the Curia and the College of Cardinals must precede any reform Council. To that end, in 1536 he issued decrees that ordered the clergy to wear clerical dress and to say their office, to stay away from houses of prostitution, gambling establishments and theaters, to live in their parishes and to say Mass at least one a month.

On a more somber note, during this same time, Pope Paul III set up the notorious papal congregation of the Roman Inquisition in 1542, as the international center for all inquisition activities. This approach to the heresies of Protestantism left a black mark on the history of the Church.

Paul III first called for a Council to meet at Mantua in 1537. This was made impossible by the war between Charles V and Francis I. Next the pope called for a Council to meet in Vicenza in 1538. The papal legates showed up for the Council, but Charles and Francis prevented any bishops from attending. Charles hoped that Lutherans and Catholics could still be reconciled if no doctrinal definitions were made by a Council. Francis feared that a Council might overthrow his control of the Church in France.

Again Paul called for a Council to meet in Trent in 1542, but the local princes made it impossible for the bishops to attend. Finally, yielding to pressure from Charles, Paul issued a new summons and the Council of Trent did convene in 1545. Only some thirty bishops were in attendance when the Council opened. It was to meet in three convocations: 1545-48; 1551-2; 1562-3 which comprised 25 sessions. In the end, it would prove to be one of the most significant Councils in the history of the Church.

The Council Fathers were divided on the purpose of the Council. Some wanted only doctrinal decisions, with reform left to the pope alone. Others wanted only reform, for they thought that the doctrinal concerns of the Protestants had some merit and that reconciliation could still be possible if doctrinal positions were not made in stone (this was also the position of Charles V). Finally, they agreed to work on reform and doctrine at the same time.

As noted above, the Council met in three sessions. The reason for the interruptions of the Council included Charles V's attempts to reconcile Catholics and Protestants through

dialogue; new political players with less interest in reform; a new Pope Paul IV (1555-59) who preferred direct papal action to a Council. For example, Paul IV strongly supported the Inquisition, vehemently opposed Protestants and Jews; and created the Index of Forbidden Books. It was left to Pius IV (1559-65) to reconvene the Council and ensure its teachings and decrees were accepted throughout the Catholic world.

The general format of the Council was structured to let initial discussion of doctrine or reform matters take place in a meeting of theologians called a “particular congregation”, with the bishops looking on as silent spectators. Then the conclusions of the particular congregation were debated by the bishops sitting alone in what was called a “general congregation”. Agreements were formulated in decrees which were promulgated in the formal meeting of the Council called a “session”, which was held in the Cathedral of Trent.

We shall now attempt to outline some of the most important results of the Council:

Session I (1545-48)

The first subject was a doctrinal issue concerning the rule of faith. The Nicene Creed was accepted in its western form (with the *filioque*) as opposed to the Orthodox Churches’ version. Against the Protestants, Scripture and Tradition were to have equal authority. The Latin Vulgate text was declared to be the authentic Catholic version of the Bible and the true interpretation of Scripture was declared to be the “business” of the Church.

The next topic was a reform issue dealing with the relationship between the regular clergy (non-monastic) and the bishops on the control of preaching. It was decided that the bishops would have control of all clergy, except in the churches controlled by the religious orders. It was also decided that, contrary to the long standing custom of absenteeism, the bishops should reside in their respective dioceses and make periodic visitations throughout the diocese.

Then there arose the hotly disputed question of whether bishops derived their power from divine law or from the pope. The implications for church governance were extremely important. Some saw the pope as merely the first among equals, others wanted a total supremacy of the pope. The exact relationship of pope and bishops was never fully resolved by the Council, but the medieval pyramid structure of the Western Church was never dismantled.

In defiance of Charles V, the next topic was doctrinal, the nature and consequences of original sin. Against Luther, the Council rejected the total depravity of mankind, stressing that Baptism eliminated original sin in its entirety. Concupiscence (desires of nature) remained, but was not itself sinful. This definition led to the discussion of a central doctrinal point - the nature of justification.

The Council’s definition of justification agreed with Luther that justification is through

Christ alone and that His freely given grace is necessary for salvation. However, after seven months of heated debate, the Council, against Luther, decreed that humans do have free will. Furthermore, while faith is fundamental, in itself it is not sufficient for salvation. The virtues of hope and charity are also essential. Charity requires good works (Epistle of James) and through them grace is increased - justification includes "sanctification and renovation of the inner man." Luther's notion of the total depravity of man was rejected.

The next items scheduled for discussion were the Sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist. However, only the Sacraments in General were treated with the declaration that there are seven sacraments divinely instituted by Jesus. The rest would have to wait, because the bishops voted to move the Council to Bologna in March of 1547. This was to escape an epidemic of spotted fever and because of concern about the war between Charles and the Protestants. There was also fear that Charles would interfere with the agenda of the Council.

The Council had moved to Bologna against the wishes of Charles. Thus, Charles refused to let the German and Spanish bishops attend, therefore, no significant work was accomplished at Bologna, except to prepare for a definition of the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. So without issuing any decrees, the Council was dissolved in 1549. Pope Paul III died two months later.

Session II (1551-52)

Cardinal Del Monte was chosen as Paul III's successor in 1550 and took the name Julius III. He reconvened the Council at Trent in 1551. The attendance at the first session was very poor, neither the French nor German bishops could attend. This time Henry II of France was a problem. He feared a religiously united Germany and asked the pope to enter an alliance with him against Charles V. The pope refused and so the Council convened without the French bishops.

Charles had also refused to let his German bishops attend hoping to get permission for Protestants to attend with the right to vote. Pope Julius was willing to grant Protestants safe-conduct and the freedom to express their views, but he would not agree to their right to vote on the deliberations of the Council. When large numbers of Protestant theologians arrived at the Council, they refused to participate unless all the decrees of the first session would be reviewed and they would have the right to vote. This request was not granted.

With the Spanish bishops still advocating Charles' demand that only moral reform be discussed, progress was slow. However, doctrinal decrees were formulated on the Eucharist, Penance and Extreme Unction. The Council affirmed the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist bread and wine, thus rejecting the purely symbolic presence held by Zwingli and Calvin. In using the term "transubstantiation" to describe the Real Presence, the Council implicitly rejected Luther's term "consubstantiation". The Council

also held that God can be worshipped in the Eucharistic presence. They also affirmed that the seven sacraments are effective independent of the faith and/or virtue of the minister, in other words the Sacraments function *ex opere operato* (from the work done), ultimately God's salvific will is not dependent on human action or attitudes. Penance and Extreme Unction were also defined as sacraments.

Preparatory work was done on the doctrine of the Mass, but this was not to be published until the third session. Some reform decrees were issued on matters of clerical dress, the bishops' control of priests and other such matters.

When Henry II of France made an alliance with the German Protestants, Charles V asked that the Council be suspended. And when Maurice of Saxony neared Trent with his Protestant army, the pope agreed to suspend the Council for two years. The Council Fathers departed in haste in April of 1552.

Session III (1562-1563)

Cardinal Cervini was elected to succeed Julius III in 1555, but he lived only twenty-two days after his election. He was followed by Cardinal Caraffa, elected at the age of seventy-nine. He took the name of Paul IV (1555-59). He had no use for Councils and took on the reform of the Church by himself. Within days of his election he banished a cardinal from Rome and imprisoned a bishop for life -- with three months each year on bread and water. For Paul IV the solution for heretics was burning at the stake.

It was only upon the death of Paul IV and the election of Pius IV in 1559 that reconvening the Council could be reconsidered. Unfortunately there were difficult political issues to be faced. There were new political players on the field: Ferdinand, succeeding Charles V, was now emperor, Philip II was King of Spain and Francis II was King of France.

They each made near impossible demands for the reconvening of the Council, for example, Emperor Ferdinand demanded an end to the English - French war; representation of Christian princes from Denmark, England and Sweden; the personal presence of the pope; the reform of the clergy before the Council was reconvened; permission for the clergy to marry; and the Council to meet at either Cologne, Ratisbon or Constance. Francis II demanded that the Council meet at Avignon or he would call a national council, perhaps causing another schism.

Understandably, Pius IV hesitated to call for the Council to reconvene, but finally he did and it reconvened at Trent in 1561. Only four bishops showed up, but slowly they began to assemble and in January of 1562 the Council opened again. The numbers of bishops would increase to 255 for the final session in 1563.

The Protestants refused to attend, but Ferdinand and Francis made a number of demands to attract them to later sessions. These included: Mass in the vernacular, communion

under both species, married priests, and a series of proposals to undermine or lessen papal authority. The French and the Spanish demanded a restatement of the Conciliar Theory. These demands were ignored.

The Council started by considering again the Sacraments and restating traditional sacramental theology. It affirmed that Christ was wholly present in both the bread and wine of the Eucharist; the pope was authorized to decide if the laity could receive under both species; the Mass was reaffirmed as a “propitiatory sacrifice”; Holy Orders was defined as a divine ordinance that confers an indelible character. Marriage was defined as a sacrament and for the first time a priest and two witnesses were required to be present for a valid marriage. Formerly valid “secret marriages” were now forbidden.

Next, the Council considered Purgatory, the cult of the saints (relics and images) and finally indulgences. On the problem of indulgences: the right and duty of announcing indulgences were now reserved to the bishop of the diocese and the giving of alms was never to be the necessary condition for the gaining of an indulgence. Indulgences could be applied to the souls in purgatory.

One of the most important reform decrees passed was one which established schools to train priests. Up until that time no formal training was required for entrance into the priesthood and uneducated clergy had been a serious problem for centuries. The cardinals’ committee said this about candidates for the priesthood: “The most ignorant of men...and sprung from the dregs of society, and even themselves depraved, mere youths, are everywhere admitted to holy orders.”

The Council directed that every bishop must set up a special college for candidates for the priesthood. Candidates must be at least twelve years old, preferably from the poor, able to read and write well and of legitimate birth. The college “will become a permanently fruitful seed-bed (*seminarium*)”, thus a new institution came into being - the seminary. The training curriculum prescribed for seminaries was very traditional (scholastic) and did not reflect the advances in biblical studies made by the humanists. This would not change until the middle of the 20th century.

Finally, the question raised in Session I about whether the bishops receive their power from the pope or directly from God was again on the table. This is an important theological point. There were powerful national delegations of bishops on both sides. Many feared a new schism over the issue. It was never formally resolved, however the power of the pope was strengthened in these ways: the Roman See was recognized as “mother” of all Churches; all Church dignitaries were to swear obedience to the Pope; given his care for the whole Church, only the Pope could summon Ecumenical Councils; the Council submitted all its decrees to the Pope for his confirmation.

Some bishops wanted the Council to continue, but with the ill health of the Pope some feared that if the Council remained open, upon his death the Council might elect one Pope and the cardinals might elect another, thus another schism. The Council closed on December 3, 1563.

Accomplishments After the Council of Trent

The Council had also commissioned the pope to carry out certain tasks after the closing of the Council. These included: establishing a new Index of Forbidden Books; the Tridentine Catechism; a new Roman Breviary; a revised edition of the Vulgate Bible; and a reformed Roman Missal.

Perhaps the most influential of these “tasks” for the everyday life of the Church was the reformed Roman Missal. This specified in detail how the Mass was to be celebrated. Many abuses, superstitions and eccentricities had crept into the Eucharistic liturgy without a standard format. The new Missal did not allow the vernacular nor was communion under both species allowed. These were popular with the laity, but considered to “Protestant” to be introduced.

This standardization of the Mass had the positive effects of eliminating abuses, symbolizing the universality of the Church and establishing a tradition. However, it introduced “unchangeableness” to the Mass that was not traditional and was not overcome until Vatican II. It also stifled participation, as few understood Latin and most parts of the Mass were said by the priest or Mass server. Many church-goers prayed other prayers - vernacular prayers - during Mass and attended a vast variety of nonliturgical devotions, especially Marian devotions, that were in the vernacular and allowed them to participate.

Issues Not Resolved by the Council

We have noted above that the important issue of whether the power of the bishop came from God or from the pope was not resolved. Related to this were questions of teaching and jurisdiction. Was the Pope the ultimate teacher in the Church? What was the scope of the jurisdictional powers of the Pope? What is the exact nature of the primacy of the Pope? These questions were not completely resolved. The Council made no statement about papal primacy or papal infallibility. Bishops were given sole power in the matter of ordinations to their dioceses and most diocesan affairs were left to the local bishops.

While these questions concerning the papacy were not directly answered as matters of doctrine, in practice the papacy tended to act as it did in the days of Medieval Christendom. The pyramid scheme remained intact. Finally, in 1870, the dogma of infallibility would be defined.

What about the reform of the papacy? Certainly everyone acknowledged the need for papal reform. However, the matter was never directly discussed, not doubt in fear that the conciliar ideas might arise again. Papal reform did take place and it came about by the force of the personalities that came to the papal throne in the years after Trent.

The Significance of the Council of Trent

The major significance of Trent is threefold: first, it defined doctrine - justification, sources of religious truth (Scripture and Tradition), the nature of the sacraments, especially the Mass, and Purgatory and Indulgences. Secondly, it initiated reform by attacking long standing abuses like absenteeism, simony, pluralism nepotism, and irregular clerical life. Thirdly, it set Protestantism and Catholicism on an adversarial basis. This was not a Council of reconciliation, but of definition and separation of Catholic thought and practice from Protestant.

An unhappy side effect was that each side stressed its own positions: if the Protestants stressed Scripture, Catholics would stress Tradition; if Protestants stressed preaching and Bible reading, Catholics would stress the sacraments; if Catholic stressed Marian devotions, Protestants would set her to one side; if Catholics kept the cult of the saints, Protestants would remove statues from their churches; if Protestants stressed justification by faith alone, Catholics would stress the necessity of good works; if Catholics stressed the primacy of the pope, Protestants stressed the universal priesthood of the laity, etc.

This confrontational climate would endure until the Ecumenical Movement of the 20th century. This climate made advances in biblical studies and the development of doctrine difficult in the Catholic Church. Theology often took an apologetic and polemical approach defending set doctrines, rather than a search for a deeper understanding of faith.

Spiritual Renewal After Trent

Trent did engender a revival of spirituality. Granting the priority of God's grace, Trent stressed the value of good works and this resulted in a new spirituality that often expressed itself in works of mercy and charity, especially to the sick and poor. This active spirituality was also combined with a focus on meditative mental prayer. The writings of men like Ignatius Loyola (*the Exercises*), Francis de Sales and Vincent de Paul were popular and made accessible through the printing press. Works of charity combined with a deep prayer life did much to bring about a reform of both clergy and laity.

As noted above, stress was also placed on the sacraments and there was a revival of participation in the Eucharist and the sacrament of Penance. Rather than once a year, many now began to receive the Eucharist once a week and to confess regularly rather than just once a year.

This age also saw revivals in monastic life. Mystics like Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross were responsible for the reform and regeneration of the Spanish Carmelites. The great French bishop Francis de Sales gave spiritual direction to both laity and clergy and

his popular book, *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, helped make Christian spirituality relevant to people in all walks of life. This work would later inspire John Bosco to found the Salesians (Society of St. Francis de Sales) in 1859, who dedicated their lives to Christian education.

Intellectual Revival - At the leading Catholic universities of Salamanca, Rome, Paris and Louvain there was a revival of interest in the works of St. Thomas. Scholars like the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine (d. 1621) of the Gregorian University of Rome used St. Thomas as he took up the task of defending the doctrines of the Church as spelled out at Trent. As noted above, this type of scholarship was not so much focused on Anselm's dictum of "faith seeking understanding" (*fides quarens intellectionem*) as on a defensive and apologetic approach to Catholic doctrine against the Protestants. However, Bellarmine was not simply polemic, but systematic in his approach. He also helped revive biblical and patristic studies. He was involved in the Galileo affair and told Galileo that if he could prove his theories true, the biblical accounts of creation could be interpreted in non-scientific terms.

Bellarmino had a juridical view of Church governance, but his concept of papal power asserted that the primary power of the pope is spiritual and papal use of temporal power can only be justified if it directly relates to spiritual concern. While this teaching influenced the formulation of the doctrine of papal infallibility in the 19th century, in his own day his work barely escaped being put on the Index of Forbidden Books.

Another Jesuit scholar, Francis Suarez (d. 1617), helped renew interest in Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy and metaphysics in general. He defended the Catholic position of the relationship between grace and free will. He was also a political and legal theorist and investigated the relationship between Church and State. He rejected the divine right of kings. His work on the natural communities of nations and the law of peoples made him one of the founders of international law.

Missions - We noted earlier in this chapter the beginning of the Jesuit Order. The Jesuits not only promoted an active spirituality, but they also had a missionary spirit. They "reconverted" many areas from Protestantism to Catholicism and they would send their missionaries throughout the world.

The Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries introduced Christianity into Japan, China, North America, India, Malaysia and Indonesia. It was their peculiar genius to adapt themselves, their message and rituals to the local cultures - Ricci in China, Nobili in India and Xavier in Japan. As early Christianity had made the transition from a Jewish culture to the Hellenized (Greek) culture of the Roman empire, in like manner these Jesuit missionaries attempted the same process in these non-European cultures. In China this included inclusion of certain forms of Confucianism, ancient names for God and ancestor worship.

This innovative process has come to be called "inculturation". It is a process that calls for the missionary to learn a foreign culture through experience, observation and instruction.

It is also a process by which the gospel is adapted to a particular culture. This includes an effort to reformulate Christian life and doctrine within the thought-patterns of each people.

As Roger Haight explains:

Inculturation does not mean that the gospel message is accommodated to human culture, but rather that the substance of the gospel is allowed to take on the form of a local culture. 'Inculturating the Gospel means allowing the Word of God to exercise a power within the lives of the people, without at the same time imposing alien cultural factors which would make it difficult for them truly to receive that Word'. (Jesus Symbol of God p. xi)

Early in the seventeenth century, Pope Paul V (1605-21), of Galileo fame, promoted Church reform and encouraged missions. He approved the Jesuits' use of the vernacular in Chinese liturgy. However, by the middle of the century, Pope Innocent X (1644-55) opposed the use of the Chinese ritual in the liturgy of that country.

In somewhat of an about face, the next pontiff, Pope Alexander VII (1655-67), again permitted the Jesuits in China to use Chinese rites and even dispensed Chinese priests from praying the Divine Office in Latin. The rest of the century saw a mixture of weak and strong popes. In 1700, Clement XI (1700-21) was elected pope. Clement was a relatively ineffective pope who was preoccupied with political troubles in Spain. It was he who finally settled the long running argument between the Jesuits and the Dominicans by siding with the Dominicans and again forbade the use of Chinese rites. A prohibition not to be lifted until 1939 by Pius XII.

The same thing happened in India where Robert de Nobili (1577-1656) had made innovative missionary advances by adapting Catholicism to the native customs. His methods were approved by Pope Gregory XV (1621-23) and gave rise to the so-called Malabar rites. These rites were also suppressed in 1744 by Pope Benedict XIV. Thus foreign missionary efforts were severely crippled by Rome's insistence on European forms of worship and theology. Many missions simply closed.

Political Influences After Trent

With a reformed papacy and the intellectual and missionary efforts of the religious orders like the Jesuits, large parts of Protestant Europe were returned to the Church in the latter part of the 16th century and continuing into the 17th century. During this time Poland and large parts of Germany, France and the southern Netherlands reunited with Rome.

However, political forces also played a large role in determining which political

territories were Catholic or Protestant. One consideration: governments who returned to Rome would have to give up their power over Church affairs in their territories and perhaps return or refrain from confiscating vast tracts of Church property. This was an important factor in the decision to return to Rome or not.

Spain - Philip of Spain was a strong defender of the Catholic Church. The attack of the Spanish Armada of England in 1588 was, in part, an attempt to restore England to Rome. Elizabeth, Queen of England used political means to ensure that England did not return to Rome as was attempted under the reign of “Bloody Mary”.

France - In France, Protestants known as the Huguenots (conspirators) struggled for forty years against French Catholics. Their name probably came from their “conspiracy” with Protestant nobles in an attempt in 1560 to capture King Francis II of France. Finally, the Protestant King Henry IV embraced Catholicism and issued the Edict of Nantes in 1598 that gave freedom of worship for all French citizens. This created a Protestant political enclave in France. The Edict was revoked in 1685.

Sweden - The Catholic King Sigismund enlisted the Jesuits to help him restore Sweden to the Catholic Church. However, Sigismund was defeated by his Protestant uncle, Charles in 1598.

Germany - The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 had established the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* (whose region, his religion) which respected the religious preference of the prince within his region, but during the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48) this principle had been attacked. The success of the reform initiated by Trent, the activities of missionaries like the Jesuits and the nearly successful attempt of the Catholic Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand of Austria to impose Catholicism politically in Germany challenged the principles of the Peace of Augsburg and threatened to make Germany a Catholic country again.

Ferdinand was not successful because the Protestant King Gustavus of Sweden intervened with the help of the Richelieu, a powerful Catholic cardinal of France. They formed a military alliance against Austria in 1631. With France committed to the war, conflict spread into Italy, Scandinavia, the Low Countries and parts of Spain. Finally, the Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648.

The war left Germany in ruins and the population severely depleted. The Holy Roman Empire was significantly weakened and France became a major power. With the restoration of *cuius regio, eius religio*, the Protestant states, including the Calvinists, had secured their right to exist with freedom of worship. Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists were now equal before the law. The War was also a blow to the Catholic Church, for the Treaty recognized the right of secularized property, gave Church property as compensation, and ignored the condemnation of the Treaty by Pope Innocent X.

Final Note

Christendom was gone, but the Catholic Church had been reformed and remained strong. The theology of the reform was very conservative, doctrinal development was arrested for many years. The Pope emerged in complete command of the Church. Trent had not healed the Protestant reformation and such attempts would not be made for over 400 years.