

The Fifth Age of the Church

The Catholic Response

Brutal Age

- War was near constant; Cardinals and bishops led armies
- People had little regard for human life
- Mob rule common; violent vigilante justice frequent
- “Within four years [of Diet of Worms] the number of Germans killed or executed approached a quarter-million. Their faith cannot be indicted for their deaths. The homicidal lust had long been latent” (William Manchester, *A World Lit Only By Fire*, 178).

Sack of Rome 1527

- Charles V, at war with Francis I and Pope Clement VII, unable to pay troops.
- Many, mostly German Protestant mercenaries, mutinied and forced their commander, Duke of Bourbon, to march on Rome.
- Rome fell quickly, Bourbon killed, city savagely terrorized for eight months.
- On May 6, Swiss Guard made stand that enabled Pope to escape by secret tunnel to Castel Sant’Angelo where he was held hostage for and eventually ransomed for huge amount.

End of Renaissance

- Charles V was embarrassed by mutinous troops, but still took advantage of the situation to gain power over Pope Clement.
- Christian humanism and the arts (hallmarks of the Italian Renaissance) were suppressed.
- Doctrinal orthodoxy emphasized, Inquisition in Italy and Spain rekindled.
- Cemented Protestant split.
- Charles V called for general Church council, Clement resisted.
- Eventually, Pope Paul III agreed to council.

Council of Trent

- Charles V wanted council for reform of the Church and reconciliation with Protestants. Also to curb papal power.
- After several false starts, council eventually convened in Trent in Northern Italy, which was part of German (Holy Roman) Empire.
- Paul III genuinely wanted reform and did invite Protestants to the council, though none came.
- There ended up being three council gatherings consisting of 25 sessions over 18 years. It was a reactionary council.
- Charles V demanded that no popes attend the council, and that proscription was followed.
- There were thousands of bishops at the time, but the maximum number at any session was 255.

Opening Council 1545-1547

- Sessions 1-10, maximum attendance 68 bishops.
- Dealt with strict moral living for clergy and proper training for clergy and monks.
- Affirmed Creed, Vulgate as official Scripture, Justification by works and grace, 7 Sacraments, Original Sin and infant baptism.
- Set out administrative reforms:
 - No multiple benefices (dioceses)
 - Bishops must be qualified and reside in diocese
 - Churches must be kept in repair

Second Council Period 1551-1552

- New pope, Julius III, maximum attendance 51 bishops.
- Dealt with Eucharist/Real Presence, Transubstantiation, Penance/Extreme Unction, discipline of bishops (only by ecclesiastical court), safe conduct of Protestant representatives.
- Was interrupted by war.

Paul IV 1555-1559

- Julius III died in 1555 and was replaced by the Vatican librarian who became Marcellus II. He died within one month.
- Paul IV elected new pope. He was a rigid doctrinalist. Saw no reason to continue council as he didn't desire reconciliation with Protestants or heretics. Established Jewish ghetto in Rome.

Final Council Period 1562-1563

- Most productive and best attended; max 255 bishops.
- Dealt with proper sacrifice of the Mass, Sacrament of Holy Orders (especially qualifications and training of priests), Purgatory, veneration of Saints, indulgences, and finalized documents from previous sessions, most notably Tridentine Creed.
- French joined council for first time.

Results of Council of Trent

- Unity of doctrine. Catechism based on Trent published in 1566 and not replaced until 1992.
- Reform of clergy and monasteries.
- Led directly to the establishment of the seminary system for priest formation.
- Formalized doctrinal rigidity which rekindled Inquisition and removed chance of reconciliation with Protestants.
- Index of forbidden books. Set back theological and scripture study for generations.

Reflection

- There has been a tension in the Church since the fourth century between the power of the pope and that of the college of bishops. This was particularly heightened during the late medieval and renaissance periods.
- Discuss papal authority versus the power of councils. Is the pope a supreme authority? Should councils of bishops have equal or more authority? How do you see this issue playing out in the modern world?

The Missions

- Nations claimed territories in the Americas and Africa and missionaries became an extension of national identity.
- Many did good work and helped curb excesses of conquering Europeans.
- Many participated in the abuses.
- Established the Church as permanent part of new nations.

The Society of Jesus

- In addition to convening the Council of Trent, Pope Paul III also approved the Society of Jesus as a religious order.
- Had huge impact promoting education and missionary success of Church.
- Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius became normative.