

CHAPTER 32 : PROTESTANTISM CRUSHED IN ITALY AND BEYOND THROUGH THE ROMAN INQUISITION

There is one arm of the Jesuits to which we have not yet adverted. The weapon that we refer to was not indeed unknown to former times, but it had fallen out of order, and had to be refurbished, and made fit for modern exigencies. No small part of the success that attended the operations of the Jesuits was owing to their use of it. That weapon was the Inquisition. We have narrated the earnest attempt made at the Conference of Ratisbon to find a basis of conciliation between the Protestant and the Popish churches. The way had been paved at Rome for this attempted reconciliation of the two creeds by an infusion of new blood into the College of Cardinals. Gaspar Contarini, a senator of Venice, who was known to hold opinions on the doctrine of justification differing very little, if at all, from those of Luther, was invested with the purple of the cardinalate. The chair of the Doge almost within his reach, Contarini was induced to come to Rome and devote the influence of his high character and great talents to the doubtful experiment of reforming the Papacy. By his advice, several ecclesiastics whose sentiments approximated to his own were added to the Sacred College, among other Sadoletto, Gioberto Caraffa, and Reginald Pole.

In the end, these new elections but laid a basis for a more determined and bloody resistance to Protestantism. This was in the future as yet; meanwhile the reforming measures, for which this change in the cardinalate was to pave the way, were taken. Deputies were sent to the Ratisbon Conference, with instructions to make such concessions to the Reformers as might not endanger the fundamental principles of the Papacy, or strip the tiara of its supremacy. The issue was what we have announced in a previous part of our history. When the deputies returned from the Diet, and told Paul III that all their efforts to frame a basis of agreement between the two faiths had proved abortive, and that there was not a country in Christendom where Protestantism was not spreading, the Pope asked in alarm, "What then is to be done?" Cardinal Caraffa, and John Alvarez de Toledo, Bishop of Burgos, to whom the question was addressed, immediately made answer, Re-establish the Inquisition.

The proposal accorded well with the gloomy genius, unbending opinions, and stern bigotry of the men from whom it came. Caraffa and Toledo were old Dominicans, the same order to whom Innocent III had committed the working of the "Holy Tribunal," when it was first set up. Men of pure but austere life, they were prepared to endure in their own persons, or to inflict on the persons of others, any amount of suffering and pain, rather than permit the Roman Church to be overthrown. Re-establish the Inquisition, said Caraffa; let the supreme tribunal be set up in Rome, with subordinate branches ramifying over all Europe. "Here in Rome must the successors of Peter destroy all the heresies of the whole world." The Jesuit historians take care to tell us that Caraffa's proposal was seconded by a special memorial from the founder of their order, Ignatius Loyola.

The bull re-establishing the Inquisition was published July 21st, 1542. The "Holy Office" revived with terrors unknown to it in former ages. It had now a plenitude of power. Its jurisdiction extended over all countries, and not a man in all Christendom, however

exalted in rank or dignity, but was liable to be made answerable at its bar. The throne was no protection; the altar was no shield; withered age and blooming youth, matron and maiden, might any hour be seized by its familiars, and undergo the question in the dark underground chamber, where, behind a table, with its crucifix and taper, sat the inquisitor, his stern pitiless features surmounted by his black cowl, and all around the instruments of torture. Till the most secret thought had been wrung out of the breast, no mercy was to be shown. For the inquisitor to feel the least pity for his writhing victim was to debase himself. Such were the instructions drafted by Caraffa. The history of the man who restored the Inquisition is one of great interest, and more than ordinary instruction, but it is touchingly sad.

Caraffa had been a member of the Oratory of Divine Love, which was a little circle of moderate Reformers, that held its sitting in the Trastevere at Rome, and occupied, as regarded the Reform of the Roman Church, a position midway between the champions of things as they were, and the company of decided adherents of the gospel, which held its reunions at Chiaja, in Naples, and of which we shall speak below. Caraffa had "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," but the gracious stirrings of the Spirit, and the struggles of his own conscience, he had quelled, and from the very threshold of Rest which he was seeking in the gospel, he had cast himself again into the arms of an infallible Church.

With such a history it was not possible that Caraffa could act a middle part. He threw himself with sterner zeal into the dreadful work of reviving the Inquisition than did even Paul III, under whom he served, and whom he was destined to succeed. "Caraffa," says the historian Ranke, "lost not a moment in carrying this edict into execution; he would have thought it waste of time to wait for the usual issue of means from the apostolic treasury, and, though by no means rich, he hired a house for immediate proceedings at his own expense; this he fitted up with rooms for the officers, and prisons for the accused, supplying the latter with strong bolts and locks, with dungeons, chains, blocks, and every other fearful appurtenance of his office. He appointed commissioners-general for the different countries."

The resolution to restore the Inquisition was taken at a critical moment for Italy, and all the countries south of the Alps. The dawn of the Protestant day was breaking around the very throne of the Pope. From the city of Ferrara in the north, where the daughter of Louis XII, the correspondent of Calvin, sheltered in her palace the disciples of the gospel, to the ancient Parthenope, which looks down from its fig and aloe covered heights upon the calm waters of its bay, the light was breaking in a clearness and fullness that gave promise that in proportion to the depth of the previous darkness, so would be the splendors of the coming day. Distinguished as the land of the Renaissance, Italy seemed about to become yet more distinguished as the land of Protestantism. At the foot of Fiesole, and in that Florence on which Cosine and the brilliant group of scholars around him had so often looked down, while they talked of Plato, there were men who had learned a better knowledge than that which the Greek sage had taught. In Padua, in Bologna, in Lucca, in Modena, in Rome, and in other cities of classic fame, some of the first families had embraced the gospel.

Men of rank in the state, and of eminence in the church, persons of mark in the republic of letters, orators, poets, and some noble ladies, as eminent for their talents as for their birth, were not ashamed to enroll themselves among the disciples of that faith which the Lutheran princes had confessed at Augsburg, and which Calvin was propagating from the little town on the shores of the Leman, then beginning to attract the notice of the world. But of all the Protestant groups now forming in Italy, none equaled in respect of brilliance of rank, luster of talent, and devotion of faith, that which had gathered round Juan di Valdez on the lovely shore of Naples.

This distinguished Spaniard had been forced to leave the court of Charles V and his native land for the sake of the gospel. On the western arm of the Bay of Naples, hard by the tomb of Virgil, looking forth on the calm sea, and the picturesque island of Capri, with the opposite shore, on which Vesuvius, with its pennon of white vapor atop, kept watch over the cities which 1,400 years before it had wrapped in a winding-sheet of ashes, and enclosed in a tomb of lava, was placed the villa of Valdez. There his friends often assembled to discuss the articles of the Protestant creed, and confirm one another in their adherence to the gospel. Among these was Peter Martyr Vermigli, Prior of St. Peter's ad aram. In the wilderness of Romanism the prior had become parched with thirst, for no water could he find that could refresh his soul. Valdez led him to a fountain, whereat Martyr drank, and thirsted no more. In his turn he zealously led others to the same living stream. Another member of that Protestant band was Caserta, a Neapolitan nobleman. He had a young relative, then wholly absorbed in the gaities and splendors of Naples; him Caserta introduced to Valdez. This was Galeazzo Caraccioli, only son of the Marquis of Vice, who embraced the gospel with his whole heart, and when the tempest dispersed the brilliant company to which he had joined himself, leaving his noble palace, his rich patrimony, his virtuous wife, his dear children, and all his flourishing honors, he cleaved to the cross, and repairing to Geneva was there, in the words of Calvin, "content with our littleness, and lives frugally according to the habits of the commonalty—neither more nor less than any one of us."

In 1536 this select society received another member. Bernardino Ochino, the great orator of Italy, came at that time to Naples to preach the Lent Sermons. A native of Sienna, he assumed the cowl of St. Francis, which he afterwards exchanged for the frock of the more rigid order of the Capuchins. He was so eloquent that Charles V said of him, "That man is enough to make the stones weep." His discourses were impregnated with the great principles of the Protestant faith, and his eloquence drew overwhelming crowds to the Church of St. Giovanni Maggiore, where he was now preaching. His accession to the society around Valdez gave it great additional strength, for the preacher was daily scattering the seeds of Divine truth among the common people. And not among these only, for persons of all ranks crowded to hear the eloquent Capuchin. Among his audience might be seen Giulia de Gonzaga, widow of the Duke of Trajetto, reputed the most beautiful woman in Italy, and, what was higher praise, one of the most humble and sincere of its Christians. And there was Vitteria Colonna, Marchioness of Pescara, also renowned for the loveliness of her person, and not less renowned for her talents and virtues.

And there was Pietro Carnesecchi, a patrician of Florence, and a former secretary of Clement VII, now a disciple, and afterwards to be a martyr, of the gospel. Such were the illustrious men and the high-born women that formed this Protestant propaganda in Naples. It comprehended elements of power which promised brilliant results in the future. It formed a galaxy of rank, talent, oratory, genius, and tact, adapted to all classes of the nation, and constituted, one would have thought, such an organization or "Bureau" as was sure to originate, and in due time accomplish, the Reformation of Italy. The ravages the Gothic nations had inflicted, and the yet greater ravages of the Papacy, were on the point of being repaired, and the physical loveliness which Italy had known in her first days, and a moral beauty greater than she had ever known, were about to be restored to her. It was during those same years that Calvin was beginning his labors at Geneva, and fighting with the Pantheistic Libertines for a secure foothold on which to place his Reformation, that this little phalanx of devoted Protestant champions was formed on the shore of Naples.

Of the two movements, the southern one appeared at that hour by much the more hopeful. Contemplated from a human point of view, it had all the elements of success. Here the flower of an ancient nation was gathering on its own soil to essay the noble task of evoking into a second development those mighty energies which had long slumbered, but were not dead, in the bosom of a race that had given arts and letters and civilization to the West.

Every needful power and gift was present in the little company here confederate for the glorious enterprise. Though small in numbers this little host was great in names, comprehending as it did men of ancient lineage, of noble birth, of great wealth, of accomplished scholarship, of poetical genius, and of popular eloquence. They could appeal, moreover, to a past of renown, the traditions of which had not yet perished, and the memory of which might be helpful in the struggle to shake off the yoke of the present. These were surpassing advantages compared with the conditions of the movement at Geneva—a little town which had borrowed glory from neither letters nor arms; with a population rude, lawless, and insolent; a diminutive territory, overshadowed on all sides by powerful and hostile monarchs, who stood with arm uplifted to strike down Protestantism should it here raise its head; and, most discouraging of all, the movement was guided by but one man of note, and he a stranger, an exile, without the prestige of birth, or rank, or wealth. The movement at Geneva cannot succeed; that at Naples cannot fail: so would we have said. But the battle of Protestantism was not to the strong. The world needs to have the lesson often repeated, that it is the truth of principles and not the grandeur of names that gives assurance of victory. The young vine planted beneath the towers of the ancient Parthenope, and which was shooting forth so hopefully in the golden air of that classic region, was to wither and die, while that which had taken root beneath the shadow of the Alps was to expand amid the rude blasts of the Swiss mountains, and stretch its boughs over Christendom.

The re-establishment of the Inquisition decided the question of the Reformation of Italy. The country, struck with this blow as it was lifting itself up, instantly fell back into the

old gulf. It had become suddenly apparent that religious reform must be won with a great fight of suffering, and Italy had not strength to press on through chains, and dungeons, and scaffolds to the goal she wished to reach. The prize was glorious, she saw, but the price was great. Pallavicino has confessed that it was the Inquisition that saved Italy from lapsing into Protestantism.

The religious question had divided the Italians of that day into three classes. The bulk of the nation had not thought on the question at all, and harbored no purpose of leaving the Church of Rome. To them the restoration of the Inquisition had no terrors. There was another and large class who had abandoned Rome, but who had not clearness to advance to the open profession of Protestantism. They were most to be pitied of all should they fall into the hands of the inquisitors, seeing they were too undecided either to decline or to face the horrors of the Holy Office. The third class were in no doubt as to the course they must pursue. They could not return to a Church which they held to be superstitious, and they had no alternative before them but provide for their safety by flight, or await death amid the fires of the Inquisition. The consternation was great; for the Protestants had not dreamed of their enemies having recourse to such violent measures. Numbers fled, and these fugitives were to be found in every city of Switzerland and Germany. Among these was Bernardino Ochino, on whose eloquent orations all ranks of his countrymen had been hanging but a few months before, and in whose audience the emperor himself might be seen when he visited Italy. Not, however, till he had been served with a citation from the Holy Office at Rome did Ochino make his escape. Flight was almost as bitter as death to the orator. He was leaving behind him the scene of those brilliant triumphs which he could not hope to renew on a foreign soil. Pausing on the summit of the Great St. Bernard, he devoted a few moments to those feelings of regret which were so natural on abandoning so much that he could not hope ever again to enjoy. He then went forward to Geneva. But, alas! the best days of the eloquent monk were past. At Geneva, Ochino's views became tainted and obscured with the new philosophy, which was beginning to air itself at that young school of pantheism.

Peter Martyr Vermigli soon followed. He was presiding over the convent of his order in Lucca, when the storm came with such sudden violence. He set his house in order and fled; but it was discovered after he was gone that the heresy remained although the heretic had escaped, his opinions having been embraced by many of the Luccese monks. The same was found to be the case with the order to which Ochino belonged, the Capuchins namely, and the Pope at first meditated, as the only cure, the suppression of both orders. Peter Martyr went ultimately to Strasburg, and a place was found for him in its university, where his lamp continued to burn clearly to the close. Juan di Valdez died before the tempest burst, which drove beyond the Alps so many of the distinguished group that had formed itself around him at Pausilippo, and saw not the evil days which came on his adopted country. But the majority of those who had embraced the Protestant faith were unable to escape. They were immured in the prisons of the various Holy Offices throughout Italy; some were kept in dark cells for years, in the hope that they would recant, others were quickly relieved by martyrdom. The restorer of the Inquisition, the once reforming Caraffa, mounted the Papal chair, under the name of Paul IV. The rigors of the Holy Office were not likely to be relaxed under the new Pope; but twenty

years were needed to enable the torture and the stake to annihilate the Protestants of Italy.

Of those who suffered martyrdom we shall mention only two—Mollio, a Bolognese professor, renowned throughout Italy for his learning and his pure life; and Tisserano, a native of Perugia. On the 15th of September, 1553, an assembly of the Inquisition, consisting of six cardinals with their episcopal assessors, was held with great pomp at Rome. A train of prisoners, with burning tapers in their hands, was led in before the tribunal. All of them recanted save Mollio and Tisserano. On leave being given them to speak, Mollio broke out, says McCrie, "in a strain of bold and fervid invective, which chained them to their seats, at the same time that it cut them to the quick." He rebuked his judges for their lewdness, their avarice, and their blood-thirsty cruelty, and concluded as follows: —

"Wherefore I appeal from your sentence, and summon you, cruel tyrants and murderers, to answer before the judgment-seat of Christ at the last day, where your pompous titles and gorgeous trappings will not dazzle, nor your guards and torturing apparatus terrify us. And in testimony of this, take back that which you have given me.' In saying this, he threw the flaming torch which he held in his hand on the ground, and extinguished it. Galled, and gnashing upon him with their teeth, like the persecutors of the first Christian martyrs, the cardinals ordered Mollio, together with his companion, who approved of the testimony he had borne, to instant execution. They were conveyed, accordingly, to the Campo del Flor, where they died with the most pious fortitude."

The eight years that elapsed between 1534 and 1542 are notable ones in the annals of Protestant Christianity. That epoch witnessed the birth of three movements which were destined to stamp a character upon the future of Europe, and powerfully to modify the conflict then in progress in Christendom. In 1534 the Jesuits recorded their first vow in the Church of Montmartre, in Paris. In 1540 their society was regularly launched by the Papal edict. In 1542, Paul III issued the bull for the re-establishment of the Inquisition; and in 1541 Calvin returned to Geneva, to prepare that spiritual army that was to wage battle with Jesuitism backed by the Inquisition. The meeting of these dates—the contemporaneous rise of these three instrumentalities, is sufficiently striking, and is one of the many proofs which we meet in history that there is an Eye watching all that is done on earth, and that never does an agency start up to destroy the world, but there is set over against it a yet more powerful agency to convert the evil it would inflict into good.

It is one of these great epochs at which we have arrived. Jesuitism, the consummation of error — the Inquisition, the maximum of force, stand up and array themselves against a now fully developed Protestantism. In following the steps of the combatants, we shall be led in succession to the mountains of the Waldenses, to the cities of France, to the swamps of Holland, to the plains of Germany, to Italy, to Spain, to England and Scotland. Round the whole of Christendom will roll the tide of this great battle, casting down one nation into the darkness of slavery, and lifting up another into the glory of freedom, and causing the gigantic crimes of the persecutor and the despot to be forgotten in the excelling splendor of the patriot and the martyr. This is the struggle with the record of which we shall presently be occupied.

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This second volume in a two-part series on church history is primarily an edited version of the following works on church history and Biblical interpretation:

James A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism* (Cassell & Company, Limited: London, Paris & New York. 1878). (see electronic version at <http://www.whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/James.A.Wylie.html>)

Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA, 1997). (see electronic version at <http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/About.htm>)

J. Parnell McCarter, *Sabbath Bible Survey Tests and Assignments* (PHSC: Grand Rapids, MI, 2003). (see electronic version at <http://www.puritans.net/curriculum/>)

J. Parnell McCarter, *Let My People Go* (PHSC: Grand Rapids, MI, 2003). (see electronic version at <http://www.puritans.net/curriculum/>)

The on-line resources of Historicism Research Foundation at <http://www.historicism.net/> also proved invaluable for my understanding of Biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy concerning Christian church history, especially as revealed in the book of Revelation, serves as the foundation upon which all church histories should be based.