

The Reformation

Written by W.J.Pais

The usual term for the religious movement which made its appearance in Western [Europe](#) in the sixteenth century, and which, while ostensibly aiming at an internal renewal of the [Church](#), really led to a great revolt against it, and an abandonment of the principal [Christian](#)

[beliefs](#)

. We shall review the general characteristics of this movement from the following standpoints:

- [Causes of the Reformation](#)
- [Original ideas and purposes of the Reformers](#)
- [Methods of spreading the Reformation](#)
- [Spread of the Reformation in the various countries](#)
- [Different forms of the Reformation](#)
- [Results and consequences of the Reformation.](#)

The first impulse to secession was supplied by the opposition of [Luther](#) in [Germany](#) and of [Zwingli](#)

in German

[Switzerland](#)

to the

[promulgation](#)

by

[Leo X](#)

of an

[indulgence](#)

for contributions towards the building of the new

[St. Peter's](#)

at

[Rome](#)

. For a long time it had been customary for the

[popes](#)

to grant

[indulgences](#)

for buildings of public utility (e.g. bridges). In such cases the

[true](#)

[doctrine](#)

of

[indulgences](#)

as a remission of the punishment due to

[sin](#)

(not of guilt of

[sin](#)

) had been always upheld, and the

[necessary](#)

[conditions](#)

(especially the

[obligation](#)

of a

[contrite](#)

confession to obtain

[absolution](#)

from

[sin](#)

) always inculcated. But the

[almsgiving](#)

for a good object, prescribed only as a good

[work](#)

supplementary to the chief

[conditions](#)

for the gaining of the

[indulgence](#)

, was often prominently emphasized. The

[indulgence](#)

[commissaries](#)

sought to

[collect](#)

as much money as possible in connexion with the

[indulgence](#)

. Indeed, frequently since the

[Western Schism](#)

the spiritual needs of the people did not receive as much consideration as a motive for

[promulgating](#)

an

[indulgence](#)

, as the need of the good object by promoting which the

[indulgence](#)

was to be gained, and the consequent need of obtaining

[alms](#)

for this purpose. The

[war](#)

against the

[Turks](#)

and other crises, the erection of churches and

[monasteries](#)

, and numerous other causes led to the granting of

[indulgences](#)

in the fifteenth century. The consequent abuses were heightened by the fact that secular rulers frequently forbade the

[promulgation](#)

of

[indulgences](#)

within their territories,

[consenting](#)

only on condition that a portion of the receipts should be given to them. In practice, therefore, and in the public mind the

[promulgation](#)

of

[indulgences](#)

took on an

[economic](#)

aspect, and, as they were frequent, many came to regard them as an oppressive tax. Vainly did earnest men raise their voices against this abuse, which aroused no little bitterness against the

[ecclesiastical](#)

order and particularly the

[Papal Curia](#)

. The

[promulgation](#)

of

[indulgences](#)

for the new

[St. Peter's](#)

furnished

[Luther](#)

with an opportunity to attack

[indulgences](#)

in general, and this attack was the immediate occasion of the Reformation in

[Germany](#)

. A little later the same motive led

[Zwingli](#)

to put forth his

[erroneous](#)

teachings, thereby inaugurating the Reformation in German

[Switzerland](#)

. Both declared that they were attacking only the abuses of

[indulgences](#)

; however, they soon taught

[doctrine](#)

in many ways contrary to the teaching of the

[Church](#)

.

Jesus Christ showed us by example that we should forgive, and not sit in judgment of others. □ We should know history, so that we avoid similar mistakes in our own lives. That is to say, "Not to throw the Baby, with the Bath water".

When you study about this part of the history of our Faith, we should do so with love. Many of our fellow Christians, are sincerely believing what they do, and only God is the one, who will understand them, and may be more charitable to them, than those who claim to have the Truth, like the Pharisees did.

[Learn More](#)

In response to this upheaval of the Catholic Church, it called an ecumenical council, in which the Reformers did not participate. □ By a mysterious act of God, he had a soldier named Ignatius shot in his foot and hospitalized. □ He later became a Saint, and was the founder of the Jesuit Order, who played an important part in the Council of Trent.

Council of Trent

The nineteenth [ecumenical council](#) opened at [Trent](#) on 13 December, 1545, and closed there on 4 December, 1563. Its main object was the definitive determination of the doctrines of the [Church](#) in answer to the [heresies](#) of the [Protestants](#); a further object was the execution of a thorough reform of the inner life of the [Church](#) by removing the numerous abuses that had developed in it.

On 28 November, 1518, [Luther](#) had [appealed](#) from the [pope](#) to a [general council](#) because he was convinced that he would be condemned at [Rome](#) for his [heretical](#) doctrines. The Diet held at [Nuremberg](#) in 1523 demanded a "free

[Christian](#)

council" on German soil, and at the Diet held in the same city in 1524 a demand was made for a German national council to regulate temporarily the questions in dispute, and for a

[general council](#)

to settle definitely the accusations against

[Rome](#)

, and the religious disputes. Owing to the feeling prevalent in

[Germany](#)

the demand was very dangerous.

[Rome](#)

positively rejected the German national council, but did not absolutely object to holding a

[general council](#)

[Emperor Charles V](#)

forbade the national council, but notified

[Clement VII](#)

through his ambassadors that he considered the calling of a

[general council](#)

expedient and proposed the city of

[Trent](#)

as the place of assembly. In the years directly succeeding this, the unfortunate dispute between emperor and

[pope](#)

prevented any further negotiations concerning a council. Nothing was done until 1529 when the

[papal](#)

ambassador,

[Pico della Mirandola](#)

, declared at the Diet of

[Speyer](#)

that the

[pope](#)

was ready to aid the

[Germans](#)

in the struggle against the

[Turks](#)

, to urge the restoration of peace among

[Christian](#)

rulers, and to convoke a

[general council](#)

to meet the following summer.

[Charles](#)

and

[Clement VII](#)

met at Bologna in 1530, and the

[pope](#)

The Reformation

Written by W.J.Pais

agreed to call a council, if
[necessary](#)

. The
[cardinal](#)
[legate](#)

,
[Lorenzo Campeggio](#)

, opposed a council, convinced that the
[Protestants](#)

were not honest in demanding it. Still the
[Catholic](#)

princes of
[Germany](#)

, especially the dukes of
[Bavaria](#)

, favoured a council as the best means of overcoming the
[evils](#)

from which the
[Church](#)

was suffering; Charles never wavered in his determination to have the council held as soon
as there was a period of general peace in

[Christendom](#)

.

The matter was also discussed at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, when Campeggio again
opposed a council, while the emperor declared himself in favour of one provided the [Protest](#)
[ants](#)

were willing to restore earlier
[conditions](#)

until the decision of the council.

[Charles's](#)

proposition met the approval of the

[Catholic](#)

princes, who, however, wished the assembly to meet in
[Germany](#)

. The emperor's letters to his ambassadors at
[Rome](#)

on the subject led to the discussion of the matter twice in the congregation of
[cardinals](#)

appointed especially for German affairs. Although opinions differed, the
[pope](#)

wrote to the emperor that Charles could promise the convoking of a council with his
[consent](#)

, provided the

[Protestants](#)

returned to the obedience of the

[Church](#)

. He proposed an Italian city, preferably

[Rome](#)

, as the place of assembly. The emperor, however, distrusted the

[pope](#)

,
[believing](#)

that Clement did not really desire a council. Meantime, the

[Protestant](#)

princes did not agree to abandon their doctrines. Clement constantly raised difficulties in regard to a council, although Charles, in accord with most of the

[cardinals](#)

, especially

[Farnese](#)

,
[del Monte](#)

, and Canisio, repeatedly urged upon him the calling of one as the sole means of composing the religious disputes. Meanwhile the

[Protestant](#)

princes refused to withdraw from the position they had taken up.

[Francis I, of France](#)

, sought to frustrate the convoking of the council by making impossible

[conditions](#)

. It was mainly his fault that the council was not held during the reign of

[Clement VII](#)

, for on 28 Nov., 1531, it had been unanimously agreed in a consistory that a council should be called. At Bologna in 1532, the emperor and the

[pope](#)

discussed the question of a council again and decided that it should meet as soon as the approval of all

[Christian](#)

princes had been obtained for the plan. Suitable

[Briefs](#)

addressed to the rulers were drawn up and

[legates](#)

were commissioned to go to

[Germany](#)

,
[France](#)

, and

[England](#)

. The answer of the French king was unsatisfactory. Both he and

[Henry VIII](#)

of

[England](#)

avoided a definitive reply, and the German

[Protestants](#)

rejected the

[conditions](#)

proposed by the

[pope](#)

.

The next [pope](#) , [Paul III](#) (1534-49), as [Cardinal Alessandro Farnese](#) , had always strongly favoured the convening of a council, and had, during the

[conclave](#)

, urged the calling of one. When, after his election, he first met the

[cardinals](#)

, 17 October, 1534, he spoke of the

[necessity](#)

of a

[general council](#)

, and repeated this opinion at the first consistory (13 November). He summoned distinguished

[prelates](#)

to

[Rome](#)

to discuss the matter with them. Representatives of

[Charles V](#)

and Ferdinand I also laboured to hasten the council. The majority of the

[cardinals](#)

, however, opposed the immediate calling of a council, and it was resolved to notify the princes of the

[papal](#)

decision to hold a church assembly.

[Nuncios](#)

were sent for this purpose to

[France](#)

,

[Spain](#)

, and the German king, Ferdinand.

[Vergerio](#)

,

[nuncio](#)

to Ferdinand, was also to apprise the German electors and the most distinguished of the remaining ruling princes personally of the impending proclamation of the council. He executed his commission with

[zeal](#)

, although he frequently met with reserve and distrust. The selection of the place of meeting was a source of much difficulty, as

[Rome](#)

insisted that the council should meet in an Italian city. The

[Protestant](#)

rulers, meeting at Smalkald in December, 1535, rejected the proposed council. In this they were supported by Kings

[Henry VIII](#)

and

[Francis I](#)

. At the same time the latter sent assurances to

[Rome](#)

that he considered the council as very serviceable for the extermination of

[heresy](#)

, carrying on, as regards the holding of a council, the double intrigue he always pursued in reference to German

[Protestantism](#)

. The visit of

[Charles V](#)

to

[Rome](#)

in 1536 led to a complete agreement between him and the

[pope](#)

concerning the council. On 2 June,

[Paul III](#)

published the

[Bull](#)

calling all

[patriarchs](#)

,

[archbishops](#)

,

[bishops](#)

, and

[abbots](#)

to assemble at

[Mantua](#)

on 23 May, 1537, for a

[general council](#)

.

[Cardinal](#)

[legates](#)

were sent with an invitation to the council to the emperor, the King of the Romans, the King of

[France](#)

, while a number of other

[nuncios](#)

The Reformation

Written by W.J.Pais

carried the invitation to the other
[Christian](#)
countries. The Netherlander Peter van der Vorst was sent to
[Germany](#)
to persuade the German ruling princes to take part. The
[Protestant](#)
rulers received the ambassador most ungraciously; at Smalkald they refused the invitation
curtly, although in 1530 they had demanded a council.
[Francis I](#)
took advantage of the
[war](#)
that had broken out between himself and
[Charles](#)
in 1536 to declare the journey of the
[French](#)
[bishops](#)
to the council impossible.