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PAPAL ATTEMPTS AT REFORMATION.

"BACK to the Gospels!" comes the cry from the Vatican, sounding the knell of Catholicism. After centuries of crafty misrepresentation of the Scriptural teachings, the Church of Rome has been forced to acknowledge the error of its ways, and at last a man has been found honest enough and of sufficient boldness of heart to say, "We have sinned; let us return to the truth." A Reformer in the Vatican! It is a difficult *role* to play. Will Pius X. be able to carry it through effectively?

Five centuries ago John Huss made the first attempt, in Germany, to bring about a reformation in the Catholic Church, but the time was not yet, and the priests were too strong for him. Despite the fact that he carried a safe-conduct, under the seal and hand of the German Emperor himself, for his journey to Constance, he was seized, condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake. A century later saw the rise of three mighty champions for Truth – Luther, Calvin and Zwingli – who successfully drew from the otherwise rotten body of the Almighty Church of the Middle Ages the only healthy elements therein, wherewith [R3646 : page 309] to build up the real Church of Christ. The rich priests and tyrannical nobles however, assisted by the cunning and unscrupulous Jesuits, tightened their hold upon the ignorant masses and wrapped the cloak of ignorance more closely around them. These brought a rich income to their worthy masters, who repaid them with adulterations of Christ's teachings suited to their vile purposes. The truths of the Gospels became hidden or utterly unrecognizable under the accumulated dogmas of centuries of Popery. The Council of Trent but added to the venerable collection of fraudulent misrepresentations, and even as late as the third quarter of last century the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope was promulgated afresh by the Council of the Vatican.

Even nature must suit herself to the Catholic dogmas. When Galileo discovered the rotation of the earth he naturally upset the Popedom, and was informed that he was wrong and must admit his mistake or _____! Galileo was not of the stuff of which martyrs are made, or it may be he was wise in his generation. He knew he was right, but he preferred a natural death, and he felt confident that the time would come when this scientific truth would be acknowledged in spite of the Pope and all his minions, so he acquiesced in the Papal fallacy. Nature, however, eventually triumphed, as Truth is now doing, and the Lion of Rome continues to retire beaten and cowed before a power too great even for its mighty strength.

From the many official booklets which have been published of late, and which have been directly inspired by the present Pope, it is easy to see that he, along with many of his high-placed followers, has come to the conclusion that some measure of reformation has become an urgent necessity within the Roman Catholic Church, otherwise the mighty edifice may totter to a fall. The **[R3646 : page 310]** direct reforms at which Pius X. aims may be summed up as follows: –

(1) To transform the religious cult into keeping with the sense of the true religion of Christ, insisting more upon the worship of the Redeemer and less upon that of the Virgin Mary, the saints, holy relics, etc.

(2) Complete reform, i.e., restriction and simplification, of the Papal Court.

(3) Restriction of the numbers of Orders, which now runs into hundreds, to about five or six; and purification of monastic and convent life, which at present teems with abuses.

(4) Modernization of the teaching of divinity in the Roman Catholic Colleges.

(5) Greater liberty to the Catholic scientist, and the prevention of rash condemnation, such as that experienced by the Abbe Loisy and others.

(6) Reform in the Papal diplomacy, and the foundation of a sound school of diplomatists.

(7) Reduction of the 264 Italian dioceses, with an equal number of bishops, to a reasonable number.

(8) Reform of the Congregations, which have not been altered since the time of Pope Sixtus V.

(9) Thorough reform of the entire Roman Catholic religion, morally and intellectually!

(10) Formal renouncement of all claim to temporal power in Italy; and finally, in fact, a return of Catholicism to the Gospels!

Reform literature has been particularly in evidence throughout Italy of late, and the publication of pamphlets goes on continually. Bishop Bonnemelli of Cremona, for instance, has published a pastoral letter in book form, and with the full permission of the Pope, which may be taken as a typical example. Referring to the worship of the Virgin Mary, he says: "It shocks Christian feeling and common sense to see the Virgin Mary and many saints placed upon the same level as our Lord Jesus Christ." The Bishop then goes on to criticize the superstitious worship of Saint Antonius of Padua and the financial exploitation connected therewith. "Not only are there people who believe in him," he says, "but there are those who turn him to good business account, and also others who afford permission for the conduct of such transactions." Monsignor Bonomelli frankly admits that it is quite comprehensible to him that in Italy the educated classes – be they patricians, merchants or workers – do not desire any connection with the Roman Catholic Church. What an admission from a Catholic Bishop! And why is this? Simply because that

religion represents a *pot pourri* of absurd ceremonies, customs, devotions, etc., which may have the effect of subduing the ignorant masses to due reverence and respect for their spiritual (?) guides, but offends the good sense of the educated and enlightened.

Since the above article was written, a Rome correspondent informs us that Pius X. has appointed a committee consisting of several Cardinals and Doctors of Catholic Divinity, to consider and decide upon the measures of reform to be adopted. The Intransigents and Jesuits, continues the correspondent, are highly indignant at the lines of the policy taken up by the Pope, as they can see only too well that should the meditated reforms be carried out the knell of the priesthood's power is sounded, and their hitherto uncurbed license at an end. These latter views find strong confirmation in the fact that outside of Italy the Catholic priests are careful not to breathe a word of the movements, pregnant with meaning, which are going on in Papal circles, since they fear, and with good cause, that as soon as the Vatican announces that the dogmas hitherto propagated by them as Gospel truths are entirely wrong and merely the results of former abuses on the part of the clergy, people will immediately come to the conclusion that where so much is false it is useless to look for aught that savors of the truth, and will, in their disgust at the manner in which they have been misled, turn their thoughts towards the true faith and so swell the ranks of the Protestant believers.

– *The Bulwark.*

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But, alas! how few they will find of true Protestants – holding the Bible as God's inspired Word and protesting against the errors of the "dark ages." By that time "higher criticism" will have infidelity entrenched in pulpit and pew. But, God be praised, some are already seeing Present Truth.

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