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The Council of Trent: Doctrine and Reform in Early Modern Catholicism

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Wim François

This article will show how, only after long hesitations, the Catholic Church was able to convene a council in Trent, which would go through twenty-five sessions over three periods between 1545 and 1563. As an answer to the advent of Protestantism, it redefined Catholic doctrine and issued measures for internal Church reform. The article will also show how, after the council's solemn closure, its further implementation and interpretation was reserved to the pope and the curia in Rome, whereas a new type of bishop, exemplified by Charles Borromeo, proved equally instrumental in pushing through the council's decisions.

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1 Introduction

At the end of 1545, after long hesitations, a general assembly of prelates of the Catholic Church came together in Trent, with the intention to formulate a doctrinal answer to the Protestant Reformation, but also to reform the Church from within. The Council of Trent would eventually go through three periods with a total of twenty-five sessions. In the First Period (1545–1547), the Council fathers replied to the main Protestant tenets by establishing the faith's foundation in Scripture and traditions, by pronouncing the belief that humans are primarily justified by God's graceful initiative, though not without their doing good works that earn them further merits with a view to eternal salvation, and by reaffirming that there are indeed seven sacraments. It was meant as an instant response to, respectively, the Protestants' principles of '*sola fide*', '*sola gratia*' and '*sola scriptura*', as well as their limitation of the sacraments to two, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper. During its Second Period (1551–1552), the council continued dealing with the seven sacraments, with the decrees on Christ's real presence in the Eucharist and on transubstantiation, as well as those on penance and extreme unction, being the most important. During the Third Period of the council (1562–1563), the Mass was reaffirmed as a real sacrifice, while the Fathers managed, notwithstanding tough discussions, to draw up a job description for bishops, who should behave less like princes and more like pastors again, observing residence in their diocese, visiting parishes and convents under their jurisdiction, and establishing a seminary for a qualitative formation of the clergy, amongst other reform measures. Also, Trent's decree on the sacrament of marriage proved to be amongst the most influential.

Another substantial part of this essay focuses upon the implementation of the decisions of the council after it was closed at the end of 1563. First, the further development and implementation of Trent's decrees by the papacy and the curia in Rome receives due consideration, pointing to the distinction between Trent (the council's actual work) and 'Tridentinism' (Rome's subsequent interpretation). Attention will also be given to Charles Borromeo's successful implementation of the council's decisions in the ecclesiastical province of Milan and the written record of them in the Acts of the Church of Milan, which proved to be influential throughout the entire Church.

This article will extensively refer to the essays included in the *Cambridge Companion to the Council of Trent*, edited by Nelson H. Minnich and published in 2023, as well as to John O'Malley's 2013 book, which offers an excellent scholarly summary of the history of the Council of Trent (and its underlying theology), following Jedin's four magisterial volumes from the years 1949–1975. We also include the research that was presented at various scholarly meetings in that very same year 2013, on the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the council's solemn conclusion, scholarship that later found written expression in excellent publications. The main ones are Walter and Wassilowsky (2016),

Catto and Prosperi (2017), and the three volumes that the author of this essay edited together with Violet Soen (Finger 2018). Of course, the article contains also references to the older literature when it offers insights, analyses and summaries that still hold up in the current state of research. A still deserving and very useful overview of the Council of Trent, its preparation, its development, and implementation, with due attention to the theological background, remains Bireley 1999: 45–69.

2 The long way to Trent

The Emperor Charles V had to cope with the Protestant Reformation in Germany that had been initiated by Luther and that posed a grave danger to the religious and political unity of his realm. It required an energy that, in the emperor's view, would be better directed against the Turks. Moreover, as a humanistically-inspired Catholic, Charles was in favour of Church reform, which should be enforced by a general council.

Resistance against genuine reform 'in head and members' of the Church as well as fear of conciliarist reflexes – so typical for the councils of the fifteenth century – prevented the pope and curia from engaging themselves fully in the convocation of a council. The idea was, moreover, opposed by the French King Francis I, who feared that a restored unity within the Church might reinforce the position of Charles, not only within Germany, but also in Europe. The French King had, further, through the Concordat of Bologna (1516), acquired considerable influence in the French Church, especially as regards the appointment of bishops, an influence Francis I was not simply prepared to yield again (Minnich 2023b: 1–5; O'Malley 2013: 23–38 and 51–59; Tallon 1997: 57–81).

The lack of interest of such popes as Leo X and Clement VII in substantial reform, the fear of conciliarist reflexes and political clashes, mainly between France and the Habsburg monarchy, delayed for many years the meeting of a council. It was eventually Paul III, Alessandro Farnese (r. 1534–1549), who made the convocation of a council his aim. He had one foot in the Renaissance papacy – father of four bastard children and champion of nepotism of the Farnese family – and the other in the Catholic reform movement (comp. Bireley 1999: 45). He did not hesitate to convene, immediately after his election, a committee of cardinals, which had to prepare the convocation of a council. The committee, chaired by Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, drafted an audacious *Advice for the Emendation of the Church's Life* (*Consilium de emendanda Ecclesia*, 1536–1537) that was decidedly critical of the Church's situation (and particularly of the Roman curia) and included an appeal for serious reform (comp. Bireley 1999: 46; O'Malley 2013: 59–70).

In the same vein, the pope summoned a council to convene in Mantua in May 1536. The Protestant States that had allied in the League of Schmalkalden, however, deemed undesirable any council held outside of Germany and headed by the pope. France, for its part, saw in a council a way for Charles to unify the Empire and grow even more powerful.

Paul III's attempts to convene a council in Mantua were unsuccessful. Another papal effort to assemble a council in Vicenza in 1538 equally failed (O'Malley 2013: 67–68; Bireley 1999: 46; also Tallon 1997: 83–115).

Once it became evident that the Protestants would not attend a council outside of Germany, Charles V strove for a religious colloquy or debate amongst theologians under imperial sponsorship, to settle the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in the Empire. If confessional unity were to come from this debate, Charles' position would be strengthened and he would be better equipped to confront the ongoing Turkish threat from the southeast. The papacy, for its part, only reluctantly agreed to support the convocation of these colloquies, in Worms in 1540 and in Regensburg in 1541 (comp. Bireley 1999: 47; O'Malley 2013: 69–70). Especially Article 5 of the Regensburg Book would make history because of the agreement concluded by theologians such as Johann Gropper (Catholic) and Martin Bucer (Protestant) around the idea of double justification. It accepts that God's Spirit renews humans from within (inherent righteousness), which should, however, be supplemented by God forensically declaring humans righteous (imputed righteousness), notwithstanding their persisting sinfulness. The higher authorities of both confessions did not accept the compromise (Lane 2020; also Beck 2020: 140–145).

Eventually, the pope complied with Charles' wish that a council be convened in Trent. This town was a compromise location: it was situated within the Empire and thus satisfied the demand for a council on German territory, but it was situated on the Italian side of the Alps, with a substantial Italian-speaking population and with the city of Rome within easy reach of couriers. On 22 May 1542, Paul III formally invited the council to meet there the following 1 November. In the interim, the Turks, allied with the French, captured Buda, reigniting the open conflict between Charles and Francis. Only a few delegates arrived in Trent, forcing the pope to suspend the council (comp. Bireley 1999: 47; Minnich 2023b: 5–6; O'Malley 2013: 70–72).

Once the problems between Charles and Francis were settled through the Peace of Crépy (18 September 1544), the reopening of the council was planned for spring 1545. In addition, Paul III agreed to provide Charles with financial and military assistance for his planned offensive against the Schmalkaldic League. The objective was to militarily defeat the Protestants and force them to participate in the council (O'Malley 2013: 72–73; Bireley 1999: 47–48).

3 The Council of Trent and how its theology took shape

Finally, after still further delays, the council convened in Trent on Gaudete Sunday, 13 December 1545. All in all, the Council of Trent would hold twenty-five sessions during

three distinct periods over the next eighteen years: a first period from December 1545 to March 1547; a second from May 1551 to April 1552; and then, after a ten-year interruption, from January 1562 to December 1563 (comp. Bireley 1999: 48). When the council was solemnly opened on 13 December 1545, between twenty-six and thirty archbishops and bishops, next to five superior-generals of mendicant orders and three Benedictine abbots were present. The low number of prelates present at the council has often been pointed out: especially during the first two periods, it never reached a hundred (out of about 700 bishops). It is, however, important to point to the fact that often more theologians were present than bishops; at the solemn opening, they were forty-two. In this sense, the Council of Trent has sometimes been called a 'council of theologians', and their role has been examined by Günther Wassilowsky (2010), amongst other authors. This was particularly important since not all bishops had a sufficient theological knowledge. The number of bishops participating in the council did reach a peak in the third period, when in the second year, 1563, there were always about 200 prelates present, with a peak of 280 participants in the summer of 1563. It is unclear whether all bishops were expected to go or were able to go; the bishops were, as already mentioned, to a large extent also councillors of princes, and it seems to have been in the hand of these princes to put together delegations. Whatever the case may be, most bishops were Italians or Spaniards, and the number of participants from the North varied from period to period. In addition to these ecclesiastical delegations, monarchs also sent official ambassadors to help determine the direction they wanted the Church to take (Washburn 2023: 39–49; O'Malley 2013: 73–76).

3.1 First period, under Paul III, 1545–47

During its first period, the council was chaired by three papal legates, viz. Giovanni Maria del Monte (1487–1555), Marcello Cervini (1501–55), and Reginald Pole (1500–58). The first deliberations were devoted to procedural questions. In the discussion whether the Council fathers themselves had the right to put issues on the agenda, or whether this was reserved for the papal legates, the latter won an exclusive right and, moreover, they had received clear instructions to keep delicate matters off the agenda, especially the reform of the Roman curia and the sensitive relationship between the pope and the council. The Fathers also agreed to follow a twin-track approach. They would first define Catholic doctrine and practice, issuing decrees de fide. Apart from 'positive' definition of Catholic doctrine, they also issued condemnations of all kinds of new teachings and practices that were considered incompatible with the Catholic faith – 126 anathemata in total, without, however, naming the Protestants (in contrast to earlier councils, which were explicit about the adversaries they addressed). In parallel, the Council fathers would also propose serious reforms in Church life, which was a demand of the emperor, and which would lead to decrees *de reformatione* (Washburn 2023: 32–38; O'Malley 2013: 77–89).

The Council fathers understood that their actual work should start by determining the (formal) sources upon which the sound faith rested and thus provide an answer to Luther's notion of ‘Scripture alone’, the idea that Scripture was the only necessary and sufficient source for faith and life. Hence in Session 4 (8 April 1546; François 2023; O’Malley 2013: 89–98; also Wicks 2008; Bedouelle 1989), they issued a doctrinal decree stating that the Gospel message, as the source of all truths in faith and morals, had been handed down through two channels, viz. Scripture and apostolic traditions, with the latter being believed to have been passed on within the Church through an unbroken chain of succession. The Council fathers did not mention any of these unwritten traditions, but in the lead-up to the Church meeting, theologians had referred to infant baptism, as well as other customs and even tenets of the faith that were called into question by the Protestants, including indulgences, auricular confession, and purgatory. It is important to remark that the council spoke of a single source transmitted through two channels, whereas in later systematizations of the doctrine of Trent in all kinds of catechisms and handbooks, there was talk of Trent’s ‘two sources’ doctrine, whereby reference was made to Scripture and Tradition (with capital T and in singular) (Ratzinger 1966; Geiselmann 1957; also Bedouelle 1989: 329–332). The same doctrinal decree promulgated at Session 4 also established a list of canonical books of the Bible that was in line with the Council of Florence 1442 (and Augustine’s viewpoint), and thus continued to include the Old Testament books that were originally written in Greek and that had found their way into the Septuagint (but were absent from the Hebrew Bible). Also in this case, the council took its distance from the Lutherans who, in line with Jerome and biblical-humanist preferences, stuck to the strict canon, only accepting the books that were originally written in Hebrew (Bedouelle 1989: 332–339; also Wicks 2008: 624–627; for the text of the decree, see Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.663–664).

In a reform decree that the Council fathers promulgated in the same Session 4 of 8 April 1546, they declared the Latin Vulgate to be the authentic Bible version of the Catholic Church, faithful to the original Gospel message and hence free of doctrinal error. It was the only one to be used in public lessons, disputations, expositions, and sermons of the Church. Hidden in the midst of the regulations regarding book printing, the reform decree expressed its hope that an as-good-as-possible emended edition (‘*emendatissime*’) of the Vulgate would be printed (thus implicitly recognizing the biblical-humanist argument that the text of the Vulgate needed correction). The council insisted on the right of the Church to interpret Scripture authoritatively, and opposed private interpretation, since such may lead to erroneous opinions. It also lashed out against printers who, on their own initiative, ‘print the texts of Sacred Scripture with added notes and commentaries of anyone at all’, and required them to seek approval from the ordinary of the place prior to the publication of each book. Curial circles in Rome that were – paradoxically – more outspokenly biblical-humanist-minded than the Council fathers in Trent immediately

gave vent to their discontentment at the Council fathers for not having mentioned that the Greek and Hebrew ‘originals’ of the Bible should be used for the emendation of the Vulgate (Wicks 2008: 627–629 and 632; Bedouelle 1989: 342–343; the texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.664–665). To all this should be added that, after fierce debates, in which the proponents and adversaries kept each other in balance, the council failed to reach a decision regarding the legitimacy of Bible translation and Bible reading in the vernacular. As a consequence, practices of vernacular Bible translation and reading continued to exist in large parts of the Catholic regions (François and Agten 2018).

The first part of Session 5 (17 June 1546; O’Malley 2013: 99–102) continued to expound upon the place that Scripture should have in the Catholic Church, decreeing that lectureships on the Holy Scriptures were to be established in schools where clerics were to be educated, as well as in male religious houses, and even in public schools for advanced education. The main aim was the improvement of biblical knowledge and hence the quality of preaching, thereby reducing the number of sermons dealing with controversial questions, curious stories, and sensational fables. An important element here is that bishops and pastors were also encouraged to preach on Sundays and feast days. Jared Wicks has rightly argued that ‘Trent’s June 1546 decree on lectureships and preaching represented the high-water-mark of biblical humanist influence on charting the path of Catholic renewal’ (Wicks 2008: 632; McGinness 2006; Bedouelle 1989: 344–347; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.667–670).

After having reaffirmed the important position of Scripture in the Catholic Church, be it to be supplemented with ecclesiastical traditions, the Council fathers started the discussions about the Fall of humankind and its justification, as a response to Luther’s emphasis on ‘faith alone’ and ‘grace alone’. The Fathers had, moreover, to find a consensus between the various theological schools represented in Trent. Even on Adam’s original justice there were differing opinions: whereas Scotists, the followers of Duns Scotus’ theology, ‘held that Adam was created in puris naturalibus and only later received sanctifying grace and friendship with God’, Thomists, the partisans of Thomas Aquinas, argued ‘that Adam was created in the state of holiness’ (Washburn 2023: 59). The schools also differed in their opinions on the Fall and essence of original sin. Anselm of Canterbury, in the eleventh century, already defined original sin as the privation of original justice that Adam and all humans ought to possess; hence, they are liable for the debt they can never render themselves. Peter Lombard, for his part, continued in the twelfth century the (Augustinian) identification of original sin with concupiscence. Thomas Aquinas tried to combine both definitions, by defining the loss of the supernatural gifts of grace (which had allowed humans to hold their lower powers under control of reason) as the form of original sin, and concupiscence as its matter. Duns Scotus identified original sin with the loss of sanctifying grace, while minimizing the role of concupiscence. Luther, for his part, identified original sin with concupiscence, which was called a sin in the proper and literal sense of word,

even before any voluntary consent. The Council fathers reached fairly quickly a consensus on the Fall and original sin on the broad basis of Augustine's theology, and a doctrinal decree – actually a series of anathemata – was promulgated at Session 5, on 17 June 1546 (O'Malley 2013: 102–106). The council argued that, due to his disobedience to God, Adam lost both his sanctity and the justice 'in which he was constituted' ('in qua constitutus fuerat'). As a consequence of the Fall, the Council went on, Adam was subject to the concupiscence of the flesh, bodily corruption, and death. In its formulation, the council conveniently avoided any siding with one of the theological schools (Washburn 2023: 59 and 69). And it continued: Adam's sin and its consequences were transmitted by sexual propagation from one generation to the next, and it affects all members of the human race in their body and soul. But there was a remedy: in baptism humans receive, by virtue of Jesus' cross, the grace of God, by which their sins are forgiven, both original sin and personal sins, and their soul is regenerated from inside, so that there is nothing left in the reborn that God would detest. The council, therefore, firmly opposed Luther's identification of concupiscence with original sin and thus the viewpoint that the guilt of sin remained even in the baptized, although God did not impute or 'attribute' it. And though the council did accept that concupiscence even remained in the baptized, it emphasized against Luther and the Protestants that concupiscence is not a sin in the true and proper sense of the word, but rather the consequence of sin and an inclination to actual sin. It only becomes an actual sin when humans give in to the allurements of sin with the free consent of their will (Root 2023: 97–104; Alszeghy and Flick 1971; Vanneste 1964 and 1965; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.665–667).

In the wake of the decree on original sin, the Council fathers started in the summer of 1546 the debates on justification. These proved to be long and lasted for about six months, for the Fathers had to profile Catholic doctrine as accurately as possible against this key tenet of Lutheranism, while each theological school again tried to weigh in on this discussion and bring in its own emphases. The imminent Schmalkaldic War also delayed the discussions. The draft documents were largely prepared by Girolamo Seripando (1493–1563), the superior general of the Augustinian Hermits, who from the outset tried to sneak in the theory of double justification, brought forth by a justice that renews a person from within, as well as the justice of Christ that was imputed to the justified person. As abovementioned, the theology had been earlier defended by such divines as Johann Gropper and was designed to bridge the gap between Catholics (with their emphasis on inherent justice) and Lutherans (imputed justice). Although Seripando claimed his theology was genuinely Augustinian and therefore fit to reach reconciliation, the Council fathers did not recognize it as such and they rejected it. The council eventually agreed on a doctrine of justification, thoroughly influenced by Augustine's genuine theology, though Thomas Aquinas' interpretation was never far away during the debates and eventually left its imprint on their outcome (Washburn 2023: 59–62; also Cessario 2021: 168–169).

The decree on justification was eventually promulgated at Session 6, on 13 January 1547 (O'Malley 2013: 107–116), and was primarily formulated as 'positive' doctrine. Its first nine chapters outline the path from sin to justification. The council argued that humans in the state of original sin, strictly speaking, cannot do a single work on their own to prepare for their salvation, for humans' capacities had been weakened and sapped of their strength, without, however, being completely annihilated (and thus de iure humans can act well). Regarding the process of justification, the absolute initiative of God's grace in all stages was taken for granted. It is through Christ's merits on the cross that the grace of God is granted to those who receive baptism, so that their sins are forgiven, both original sin and personal sins. Moreover, the soul of the baptized is regenerated, which means that God's grace and the concomitant virtues of faith, hope, and charity are poured forth into humans' hearts by the agency of the Holy Spirit, so as to renew them from within. The council thus reconfirmed the theological idea of inherent grace, which was at odds with the idea of imputed righteousness often associated with Martin Luther's theology. The council also pronounced on the connected question whether humans can know with a 'certainty of faith' if they are justified or not. It stated that such a certitude of grace cannot be reached in faith, leaving open, however, the possibility of a different kind of certainty, such as a 'special revelation'. In this way, the Council took its distance from Luther, who claimed that such certainty of faith was possible and even necessary, while reaching a compromise between Thomists and Scotists, whereby the former categorically denied that humans can reach such a certitude of faith, while the latter were divided over the question. After having outlined the road from sin to justification, the decree's chapters 10 through 15 depict the life in which justification is affirmed, increased, and, if necessary, restored. The Council fathers stressed that adult humans have to consent freely to the 'movement of grace', which is expressed in their doing good works that earn further merits with a view to eternal salvation. The justified who fall, on the other hand, can, with God's aid, turn to the sacrament of penance and be restored to grace. In other words, the council recognized the abilities of humans' wills to withstand the allurements of sin and to cooperate in their eternal salvation by doing good works, be it first stimulated by and with the help of God's grace. 'Eternal life is both a grace and a reward for meritorious works, both on the basis of God's promises', as Michael Root summarized. On predestination the council was short, warning against a rash presumption of being amongst the predestined. For the sake of completeness, it should be added that, to its rich and positive text on justification, the council nevertheless added a list of anathemata (Root 2023: 104–120 [quotation p. 120]; Leppin 2016; McGrath 2005: 3: 86–97; Lane 2002: 60–85; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.671–81). The decree inevitably represented a compromise text, which still left room for further interpretation, so that precisely with regard to the topics of grace, free will, and predestination, diverging opinions would pop up and often bitter controversies between the schools broke out, eventually erupting into the crises of Baianism and, later, Jansenism (François and Gerace 2019).

The reform decree of Session 6 also dealt for the first time explicitly with another thorny issue, namely the requirement that bishops should effectively reside in the dioceses where they enjoyed their benefice – non-residence being one of the most criticized abuses in the late medieval Church (O'Malley 2013: 112–113). Tying in with the Bonus pastor idea, thus aligning themselves with the theological and spiritual motifs that reform-minded authors such as Jean Gerson had used in the preceding decades and centuries to instil the bishops with a sense of their pastoral responsibilities, the Fathers admonished the bishops to personally take care of their flock, as good shepherds do, never abandoning them into the hands of hirelings. As a consequence, the council decreed as a principle that bishops should reside in the cathedral church where they held their benefice, while financial punishments were foreseen for those not meeting their obligations. The same duty of residence rested upon the clergy of lower rank who were entrusted with pastoral duties, although the decree fatally kept open the possibility of temporary concessions and dispensations (Lavenia 2023: 191–194; Wiesner 2022: 135–141; Lemaitre 2018; Mara DeSilva 2012; Tellechea and Ignacio 1997; Jedin 1979: 410–414; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.681–683).

Returning to determining doctrine, and after having replied to the Lutheran '*sola scriptura*', '*sola gratia*', and '*sola fide*' doctrines, the Council fathers felt that they should answer the Protestants' theology of the sacraments, as well as their denial that they are seven in number. This was another issue at the heart of the controversy, for Martin Luther had, in his 1520 treatise On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, reduced the number of sacraments to two, viz. baptism and Eucharist, while accepting penance as a sacramental sign (without regarding it as a sacrament strictly speaking). And, further, for 'Luther a sacrament had to be clearly instituted by Christ in the Scripture and contain the promise of grace. What makes the grace operative is the justifying faith with which it is received', while 'God's objective offer of grace', let alone any '*ex opere operato*' efficacy was regarded with suspicion (Baldovin 2023: 126–128). In Session 7 (3 March 1547; O'Malley 2013: 118–121), the Fathers mainly built upon what the Council of Florence had promulgated in its Decree for the Armenians (1439), while at the same time avoiding taking sides amongst the various theological schools, but keeping Luther and the other Protestants as their main target. As a retort to the Reformers' theology, the Fathers at Trent reaffirmed, in thirteen polemical canons, Catholic doctrine on the sacraments in general. They declared that there are seven sacraments and that they were instituted by Christ (though not by necessity included in the written Scriptures). They also emphasized that the sacraments are visible and efficacious signs, since they bestow grace on the recipients in virtue of their administration, while 'the necessity of active faith for the true fruitfulness of the sacramental celebration' was neglected. Very famous is the expression – actually by Augustine – that the sacraments confer grace 'ex opere operato', 'by the act itself being performed' or 'through the sacramental action itself', a statement the

Fathers were eager to include in canon 8 of Session 7. The sacraments were also believed to cause grace irrespective of the moral worthiness of the ministers (Baldovin 2023: 122–132 [pp. 128 and 130 for the quotations]; Bourgeois 1995: 144–155; Seybold 1976; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.684–685). In the same Session, the Council fathers issued fourteen canons on baptism, which related to the doctrine of original sin (Session 5) and that of justification (Session 6), and thus stressed the necessity of baptism for the remission of sin, both original sin and personal sins, and in view of salvation. Nevertheless, the canons were fairly polemical and defensive in tone. Against Luther's emphasis on faith in the reception of the sacraments, the Fathers in Trent insisted upon the use of water and the trinitarian formula for an efficacious bestowal of grace. Contrary to the Anabaptists (but in agreement with mainstream Protestants), they reaffirmed the necessity of baptizing children, who had not yet sinned personally, but were subject to original sin (Rom 5:12). Since the baptized may lose grace by post-baptismal sinning, they need the sacrament of penance. The three canons on confirmation re-emphasized its genuine sacramentality against Luther and other Reformers' blunt denial, without however mentioning its institution by Christ. A condemnation was levelled against those 'who deny spiritual power to the chrism', while the bishop was called 'the ordinary minister of confirmation' (Baldovin 2023: 132–137 [p. 137 for the quotations]; Bourgeois 1995: 155–158; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.685–686).

Building upon the blueprint of the bishops' tasks and obligations promulgated in the previous session, the reform decree of Session 7 added further elements (O'Malley 2013: 116–118). It repeated the time-honoured canonical requirements for the episcopal office, viz. legitimate birth, the minimum age – the bishop should be in the thirtieth year of his life, thus having reached the full twenty-nine years – morally correct behaviour, and decent schooling, building upon earlier legislation in the Church. The Council fathers further reused the biblical-patristic image of the Bonus pastor, as well as the ensuing obligation for pastors to reside in the place where the pastoral care should be executed. It was now elaborated with the important implication that they were also forbidden to cumulate multiple benefices and to invoke any exemption in this regard. But in case a pastor was not residing in his benefice, legitimately or not, the ordinary was obliged to appoint a competent vicar instead, providing him with a portion of the revenues connected to the benefice. Renewed reference was also made to the ordinary's obligation to visit the churches of his diocese at least once a year, with a special mentioning of those churches where pastoral care was supplied by a vicar (Jedin 1979: 414–418; Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.686–689). Unfortunately, the loophole of possible papal dispensations was kept open, so that not much progress was to be expected at this moment.

3.2 The first interruption, in Bologna

When the Council fathers had started the discussion on the sacrament of the Eucharist, the first alarming signs of a contagious disease had manifested themselves in Trent. The rumour went that plague had broken out in the town (although it was, in fact, most probably a limited outbreak of typhus). The papal legates made no effort at all to quiet down the anxiety, especially since a transfer of the council would suit their purposes. Charles V was on the verge of gaining a victory over the Schmalkaldic League, and it was feared that a far mightier emperor would succeed in bending the council – actually taking place on his territory – to his will and steer it towards more radical reforms. The papal legates availed themselves of the anxiety about a possible outbreak of the plague to convince the majority of the Fathers to move to Bologna (March 1547), situated in the Papal States. The emperor, who had gained a victory at Mühlberg and still hoped to engage the Protestants, was furious about the transfer of the council to the Papal States. The bishops and theologians in Bologna nevertheless continued to discuss the sacrament of the Eucharist and, especially, those of penance and extreme unction (anointing of the sick). They were examining the biblical grounds of these sacraments, but had huge difficulties taking into account historical evolutions in the practices of penance and anointing the sick, and were especially discussing on a scholastic level. Doctrinal differences between Scotists and Thomists resurfaced, with Bologna being considered a Thomist stronghold (Cessario 2021: 169–170). In the summer months of 1547, the Council fathers reached agreement on the wording of decrees on penance, extreme unction, and ordination, but these decrees were never promulgated. Especially due to the boycott by the Emperor Charles, who forbade the bishops from his states to attend the council in Bologna, the council bled to death in the course of the years 1548–1549 (Rusconi 2023: 140–144; O'Malley 2013: 121–126 and 128–134).

3.3 Second period, under Julius III, 1551–52

The new Pope Julius III (r. 1550–55), Giovanni Maria del Monte, one of the legates at the council, reconvened the Church meeting at Trent for a second period (1551–52), on the condition that papal authority was not called into question and the reform of the Roman curia was not discussed. Charles V, who had considerably strengthened his position in Germany, took it upon himself to delegate an important group of German prelates, including even representatives from the Protestant areas.

On 1 May 1551, the council was solemnly reopened, with Marcello Crescenzio, a conservative cardinal from the curia, as the sole cardinal legate. He was assisted by two co-president nuncios. At the opening ceremony, only fifteen bishops were present, most of them Spaniards. Gradually, other prelates arrived, for the first time also Germans (including the three archbishop-electors of Mainz, Cologne, and Trier). The French continued to boycott the council (O'Malley 2013: 138–145; also Tallon 1997: 219–247).

Discussions about the sacraments, already started in Trent and continued in Bologna, were resumed. The doctrine on the sacrament of the Eucharist was especially debated at the council's second period, more specifically from early September until mid-October 1551, since it was a bone of contention between Catholics and Protestants. Regarding the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, Protestants were even divided amongst themselves. The Swiss Reformers, such as Huldrich Zwingli but also John Oecolampadius, argued that the elements of bread and wine at the Supper 'are simply signs or reminders of Christ's body and blood', Christ himself being in heaven. Luther, for his part, was ready to accept real presence, because when Christ held the bread and the cup of wine in his hands and spoke the words 'This is my body' and 'This is my blood', He did not use the term 'is' in the sense of 'signified', but referred to something real, his actual body and blood (Marshall 2023: 156–162 [quotation p. 158]). At Session 13 (11 October 1551; O'Malley 2013: 145–149), the Council fathers at Trent reaffirmed in the decree on the Eucharist that 'Christ's body and blood are "contained under" the forms or species of bread and wine, and are thus really present to us'. Moreover, the decree states that 'by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place the conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ … and of the whole substance of the wine into his blood'. The concept of 'conversion' is central to the Tridentine decree, while it also accepts 'transubstantiation' as an equally suitable or apt term, aligning itself in this regard with Lateran IV and scholastic theology. With the ideas of 'conversion' and a fortiori 'transubstantiation', the paths of the Council parted from those of Luther and his followers, since the latter held 'to a copresence in the Eucharist of bread and wine, in themselves unchanged, with Christ's body and blood'. In the history of theology, this has also been called 'consubstantiation' (Marshall 2023: 162–166 [quotation p. 162]). The Council further accepted that, even after the conclusion of the Mass, Christ remains in his total reality present in the species of bread and wine, where it can be legitimately worshipped, carried along in Corpus Christi processions, and distributed to the sick. Such practices were idolatry for most Protestants, who abhorred worshipping what they considered mere bread as if it were God (Marshall 2023: 166–169). Trent's decree also encouraged the faithful to take communion regularly. The question of granting the Eucharistic cup to the laity was postponed until the arrival of the Protestants. The German Lutherans were granted a safe-conduct, allowing envoys of the Lutheran princedoms to arrive in the town (see also Sesboüé 1995a: 158–165; Jones 1994: 146–161; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.693–698).

The discussion on the sacraments of penance and extreme unction, begun in Bologna, was taken up again in Trent from mid-October to the end of November 1551. At Session 14 (25 November 1551; O'Malley 2013: 149–154), the Council fathers affirmed, rather unhistorically, that 'confessing secretly to a priest alone, which the Catholic Church has always observed from the beginning', complies with Christ's command and is not a 'human

invention’. Therefore, it was required ‘by divine law’ that the faithful should privately confess with a priest at least once a year and that this confession should explicitly include their mortal sins. The priest had the power to impart absolution to the penitent (or to withhold it). As regards extreme unction, it was stated that it had its foundation in Scripture (Jas 5:14–15) and in ecclesiastical tradition. The priest should use oil blessed by the bishop and say the words contained in the ritual. The dying Christian was comforted in body and soul and, especially, any remnants of sin were taken away (Rusconi 2023: 144–148; Sesboüé 1995b: 170–184; Duval 1985: 151–279; also Prosperi 2001: 175–197; text and quotations from Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.703–713). The question of the extent of Thomist influence on the formulation of the decrees on the sacraments, and especially on the doctrine on transubstantiation and those related to penance and confession, as well as extreme unction, remains contested. While Cessario sees a clear influence of Thomas Aquinas' theology (Cessario 2021: 169–70), Marshall and Rusconi are a lot more cautious and rather stress Trent's concern not to decide between the theological schools (Rusconi 2023: 141–142; Marshall 2023: 166).

The position of the Protestants at the council was, of course, liable to discussion. The pope required that they submit themselves to the council and its decisions, which most Protestant delegates refused, except for the envoy of Brandenburg. The Protestants were, therefore, only able to express their creedal statements in a non-official meeting, which was even too much for the pope. Since the Protestants at home plotted against the emperor and since they were joined by the new French King Henry II, the council was in April 1552 suspended for ‘two years’ (O’Malley 2013: 155–158; also Washburn 2023: 45–47).

3.4 The second, major interruption, under Paul IV

During this interruption, Charles had to come to an agreement with the now advancing Protestant princes. This happened first with the Peace of Passau (1552), which already anticipated the Peace of Augsburg (1555) and the *cuius regio, eius religio* principle proclaimed there. A weary Charles, however, abdicated in 1555, leaving the implementation of religious compromises in the Holy Roman Empire to his brother Ferdinand; Spain and the Seventeen Provinces he reserved for his son Philip II. Julius III also died in 1555. He was succeeded by Marcello Cervini, who had been his fellow legate during the council's First Period. Marcellus II died after only three months, after which the conclave chose Gian Pietro Carafa as his successor. He chose the name Paul IV (r. 1555–1559). He was very anti-Habsburg, which drove him into an alliance with the French. He was also very anti-Protestant and wished to reform the Church according to his own counter-reformation agenda, by imposing strict discipline, strengthening the Inquisition, accelerating repression, and other methods of constraint to annihilate Protestantism. His *Index* of forbidden books (1559) was so extreme, e.g. curbing vernacular Bible reading

entirely and making it dependent on exclusive papal approval, that it was rejected by most Catholic states. There was no question of a (new) convocation of the council (O'Malley 2013: 158–162).

3.5 Third Period, under Pius IV, 1562–63

After Paul IV had passed away in 1559, he was succeeded by Pope Pius IV, Giovanni Angelo de' Medici (r. 1559–1565), who was prepared to reconvene the council at Trent. At that moment, the politico-religious situation in Europe had dramatically changed. The political rivals, Charles V and Francis I / Henry II, had disappeared from the political scene, and the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) had been concluded between the Habsburg monarchs and the French kings. Moreover, the French Catholic leaders had to cope with a very militant – and in some regions even iconoclast – Calvinist movement. Since the French inclined to resolve their confessional issues, such as the view on the Eucharist, by a national religious colloquy in Poissy, the pope tried to keep the initiative in his own hands by reconvening the Council of Trent. Whereas in the 1540s the council was mainly intended to provide a solution for the Lutheran Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire, the Third Period became necessary due to the pressure of increasingly militant Calvinism in France, not to forget the similar religious disturbances that took place in the Netherlands (O'Malley 2013: 162–167; also Tallon 1997: 337–417 and 777–807).

On 18 January 1562, the council declared itself opened. It was chaired by five legates, amongst whom Ercole Gonzaga (1505–1563), Girolamo Seripando (1493–1563), and Ludovico Simonetta (1500–68) were the most important. The number of bishops present was highest in the third period, with a peak of 280 in the summer of 1563.

The Fathers at Trent resumed the debates and came to some conclusions in the course of 1562, although according to O'Malley there were at most only lingering debates (O'Malley 2013: 176–195). At Session 18 (26 February 1562), the council agreed to undertake a revision of the Index of Forbidden Books of Pope Paul IV, a review that was entrusted to a committee of Council fathers (Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.723–724). The question of communion under two kinds dominated the debates from the spring of 1562 onwards. The Fathers were fully aware that the practice of communion under two species had been common in the early Church, but did not see any divine mandate making it necessary, let alone obligatory, for the laity, so reaffirmed the right of the Church to limit communion for the laity to the sacred host – as it had done since the later Middle Ages. No agreement, however, was possible about the question whether the Church may also re-allow communion under both species or not, since proponents and adversaries of the laity being given the cup were balancing each other out, with the German representatives in favour and the Spaniards against. The decision about the question was eventually left to the pope (Marshall 2023: 169–171; Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.741). The debate on

communion under both species became interwoven with that on the Mass as a sacrifice. Against Luther and the Protestants, who stressed the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and abhorred the idea of the Mass as a meritorious work, the council's Session 22 (17 September 1562) reaffirmed that the Mass was truly a sacrifice. It emphasized that the eucharistic sacrifice represented, in the sense that it made present again, Christ's 'sacrifice in blood once for all carried out on the cross' (thereby avoiding any connotation of a repetition). At the same time, Christ was also described as the high priest bringing the offer, securing the 'identity both of what is offered (Christ's body and blood) and of the one who offers (Christ the high priest)'. At Mass, also the fruits that Christ gathered at Calvary are made available to those devoutly attending, especially the forgiveness of sins and the outlook to eternal salvation, not the least for the souls suffering in purgatory (Marshall 2023: 172–178 [see p. 175 for the quotation]; Power 1987; also Daly 2013: 164–168; McHugh 1991; Duval 1985: 61–150; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.732–736). While the Council fathers in their reaffirming the Mass as a sacrifice clearly distanced themselves from the Protestants, it remains unclear to what extent they were more likely to use Thomism as their point of reference than the other schools, with Cessario taking it as a given that Thomas' Summa theologiae 'especially influenced the definition and the explanation of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist' (Cessario 2021: 170). The issue of episcopal residence had also resurfaced in the spring of 1562, but since an agreement was never reached, the reform decree connected to Session 22 limited itself to repeating the canonical dispositions formulated in Session 7, while expanding on them with the requirement that bishops should have a degree – be it master, doctor, or licentiate – in theology or in canon law (Lavenia 2023: 195–197; Wiesner 2022: 142–144; Jedin 1979: 418–423; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.737–741).

The delicate matter of episcopal residence, which had been shelved until discussions began on the sacrament of the holy orders, plunged the council into a deep crisis from December 1562 onwards. The obligation imposed upon the bishops to reside in their diocese and the concomitant prohibition to cumulate multiple benefices, had had little effect due to the fact that the loophole of possible papal dispensations was kept open. Moreover, the question of episcopal residence had become related to the equally contentious matter of the origin of the bishop's office, so that the Council fathers found themselves fundamentally divided. Some of them (in particular the Spanish bishops) argued that the bishops had received their authority directly from God by virtue of their ordination, for Christ had instituted the office of bishop and made the Apostles the first to hold it. This group was convinced that residence could only be effectively implemented by declaring that the presence of a bishop in his diocese was required by divine law ('*ius divinum*'). As a consequence, the pope was no longer in a position to grant dispensations. Other fathers (especially the Italians) asserted that Christ made only Peter a bishop, after which Peter then passed on episcopal authority to the other Apostles, hence the office of

bishop is in the hands of the pope. Episcopal residence was a question of ecclesiastical law, not divine law, and dispensations remained possible.

The question gave rise to the council's most severe crisis and paralyzed its activities for months. In addition, real reforms, particularly in the Roman curia, were demanded by the French bishops, the Emperor Ferdinand, and King Philip II. In the midst of the crisis, Pope Pius IV promised to take care of the issue. Undermined by the difficulties and the stress, the papal legate Ercole Gonzaga succumbed in March 1563. The same fate struck Girolamo Seripando two weeks later (on these crisis years, see O'Malley 2013: 195–204; Wiesner 2022: 144–145; Jedin 1979: 423–427).

The new papal legate, Cardinal Giovanni Morone (1509–1580), sought support from the Emperor Ferdinand and succeeded in overcoming the council's most severe crisis, ultimately reaching a satisfactory compromise on the office of bishops and priests (O'Malley 2013: 205–223; Firpo and Maifreda 2019: 591–671). The decree on holy orders (Session 23, 15 July 1563) affirmed that priesthood was a sacrament instituted by Christ, and that a hierarchy existed in the Church 'instituted by divine appointment' (Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.742–743). At this point no agreement was concluded as regards clerical celibacy. In a very important accompanying decree on reform, also promulgated on 15 July 1563, the pastors and bishops of the Church are portrayed as the shepherds whom Scripture exhort to take care of their flock, not abandon them to hirelings. 'By divine precept', this pastoral office included, further, offering the sacrifice of the Mass and administering the other sacraments, preaching and teaching, and taking care of the poor and other distressed persons, amongst other duties. The decree also 'charged and exhorted' the bishops to observe the duty of residence as being part of the same 'divine precepts', since the said pastoral tasks simply could not be 'fulfilled by those who do not stay with and watch their flock, but desert them like hirelings'. The term '*divinum praeceptum*' was preferred to the more juridically-loaded term '*ius divinum*' or 'divine law' – which had given cause to the violent discussions of the preceding months –, and the divine precept related to the entire conscientious execution of pastoral duties, not only to the duty of residence. Morone had also managed to circumvent a definitive theological pronouncement on the origin of the bishops' authority, either from God or from the pope. The council had to allow, however, that 'Christian charity, pressing need, due obedience, and the evident benefit of Church or State sometimes insistently requires the absence of some'. But those who dared to be absent in manifest contravention of this decree were threatened with the fines imposed by the council during its First Period, and they incurred, moreover, the 'guilt of deadly sin', as well as the loss of the fruits connected to the benefice they hold (Lavenia 2023: 195–202; Wiesner 2022: 145–210; Jedin 1979: 427–431; Alberigo 1965; texts and quotations in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.744–753).

In the same decree, the council mandated that each diocese establish its own seminary for the formation of the clergy, in order to address the weaknesses in the education and formation of priests and pastors. In this sense, the decree went further than Session 5 of the First Period, which basically aimed at revitalizing the cathedral schools by providing them with lectureships in Sacred Scripture (comp. Bireley 1999: 55; Negruzzo 2023; Finger 2018; O'Donohoe 1957).

In Session 24, 11 November 1563, the sacramental character of matrimony was confirmed (O'Malley 2013: 223–229). In an accompanying decree on reform, entitled Tametsi, so-called clandestine marriages were prohibited for the future. All too often, one of the parties (usually the man) denied afterwards that marriage vows had been exchanged in order to take on a new partner. In order for a marriage to be recognized as valid by the Church, consent had to be publicly exchanged in front of the pastor acting as the Church's representative and two witnesses. It was reaffirmed that marriage needs the free consent of both parties. Additionally, each parish was now required to keep an official register of marriages (as it had to do with baptisms). There is no doubt that Tametsi belongs to the most influential decrees promulgated by the Council of Trent. Canon 9 on the sacrament of marriage reiterated the ban on clergy in the major orders and religious who had taken a vow of chastity from entering into marriage. It remains subject to debate whether this should be regarded as a straightforward reaffirmation of priestly celibacy, especially since the discussion on the subject did not appear to be closed, as we shall see further (comp. Bireley 1999: 55; Zarri 2023; Reynolds 2016: 804–982; Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.753–759).

In the same Session 24, the first part of what has been called 'the general reform' was decreed (O'Malley 2013: 230–235). It contained a kind of 'job description' by which the bishop was required to organize annual synods, bringing together the clergy with pastoral charges; the archbishop, for his part, should gather provincial councils with the bishops of his suffragan dioceses every three years – during the first provincial council after Trent, all the bishops had to swear obedience to the Roman Pontiff and accept all that the council had decreed. Moreover, bishops should visit the parishes and other institutions of their dioceses at least every two years. They were obliged to preach 'the Sacred Scriptures and the Law of God' personally on Sundays and feast days, as were all the priests holding a pastoral care – a requirement that had already been formulated in Session 5 of the First Period. They, moreover, had to take care that children were instructed in the rudiments of the faith on Sundays and feast days. The duty of residence was repeated and its observance made strictly obligatory 'by all persons whatever, however distinguished their rank and even if it be that of cardinal'. In general, the council tried to protect the rights of the bishops against all kinds of exemptions and privileges granted over the past centuries

that had eroded their authority (Lavenia 2023: 202–204; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.759–773).

Session 25, the last one at the Council of Trent, followed on 3–4 December 1563. In these final days, Giovanni Morone pushed the council to its conclusion and several decrees were adopted, especially since the message was brought that Pope Pius IV had suffered a stroke and that there was reason to fear for his life (O'Malley 2013: 235–245). A continuation part was added to the 'general reform' containing a kind of 'bishops' mirror' that was more rhetorical than the 'job description' included in the first part of the general reform decree from Session 24. The first chapter of the reform decree from Session 25 implores bishops to always keep before their eyes that they were 'called not to personal advantages, nor riches nor a life of luxury […]', but that they should only be pre-occupied with the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Their exemplary life in 'moderation, modesty, continence, and of the holy humility' should be like a perpetual preaching to the flock. And they should not be tempted to use the revenues connected to their office for helping their relatives, to which a strong admonishment against nepotism was added. The council explicitly wanted these admonitions not only to be observed by bishops, but by all who occupied a Church benefice, whatever rank and condition they had, including by cardinals. The bishops could no longer neglect the clear expectations that the council had formulated at their behest. They may have arrived in Trent as princes, but they should leave it as true pastors of their flock as a result of a genuine 'episcopal turn' that had come about in these pivotal conciliar years. On the debatable issue of priestly celibacy at Trent, it should be noted that chapter 14 provided penalties for clerics living in concubinage, penalties that became more severe the more unwilling the clerics concerned were to send away their concubine. Chapter 15 added that illegitimate children of clerics could not receive benefices nor pensions from the revenues of benefices (Lavenia 2023: 205–206; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.784–796, esp. 784–785 [quotations]).

A canon on the princes had already been discussed during the preparations for Session 24. The original intention had been to regulate there the exemption of the Church and her ministers from secular jurisdiction, taxes, etc., in short, to exempt the Church from interference by the secular authorities. This, however, proved too delicate. What remained in Session 25, included in the second part on general reform, was a general exhortation to the princes 'to protect the Church from its enemies', to respect 'the appropriate boundaries regarding Church property and persons, and to act as dutiful leaders of the Christian community'. This was the most that could be done, given the pressure from Ferdinand and the consideration that the support of the princes would prove necessary for the implementation of the council (for the quotations, see O'Malley 2013: 236; Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.795–796).

The decree on the religious orders (O'Malley 2013: 238–240) contained a call to observe the rule and keep the vows. Especially with regard to the mendicant orders, the authority of the bishop over pastoral care was confirmed in general terms, but the tricky point of the many and far-reaching exemptions from the bishop's authority was avoided. It is also important that, for women's convents, the enclosure was made binding, and it was required that women take their vows voluntarily (and not under pressure from their families) (Tavuzzi 2023; Zarri 1998; Fragnito 1992; texts in Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.776–784).

Under pressure from the circumstances and at the behest of Charles de Guise, the Cardinal of Lorraine, the council made recourse to the shorter procedure for reform decrees (in comparison to that for doctrinal decrees), in order to adopt a decree on purgatory and one on indulgences, which had earlier been discussed in Bologna (O'Malley 2013: 240–244). The Council fathers reaffirmed (in an unhistorical way) that belief in purgatory and the effect of indulgences had been in place since the ancient Church. The traditional doctrine on purgatory, as accepted at the Council of Florence in 1439, was restated: 'There exists a place of purification after death ('purgatorium esse') and the souls of the faithful therein can benefit from supplications and from the fruits of the celebration of the Mass'. Closely connected to the belief in purgatory was the practice of granting indulgences. The right of the Church to grant indulgences was reaffirmed, though the conciliar decree showed concern that they should not be distributed to seek profit but only benefit the pious (Rusconi 2023: 148–150 [see p. 149 for the quotation]). The Cardinal de Lorraine was, however, particularly interested in the decree on the legitimacy of the veneration of saints, of their relics, and of sacred images, which even recognized their usefulness for teaching and growth of devotion, for it served the interests of the French Church, which had been prone to severe iconoclastic disturbances (Hall 2023; de Boer 2017; also Fabre 2019; 2018; 2017; 2013). There was also a decree on choice of foods and fasting (for the texts Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.774–776 and 797).

Session 25 further had to deal with the fact that the activities aiming at the edition of an Index, catechism, breviary, and missal were not finished, so that by decree the pope was asked to take care of the said books (Tanner and Alberigo 1990: 2.797). The Fathers reread and approved all the doctrinal decrees of the two preceding periods and, noticeably, asked the pope to confirm all the council's decrees, thus implicitly acknowledging his authority in this regard. On 4 December 1563, the Council of Trent was solemnly closed (comp. Bireley 1999: 57; O'Malley 2013: 245–247).

3.6 The main results of the Council of Trent

When we look at the results of the council (see also O'Malley 2013: 248–260), we must first note that the reconciliation or compromise with the Protestants – what Charles V

ultimately wanted the council to realize with regard to the Holy Roman Empire – was not achieved in any way. The gap between Catholics and Protestants had become so wide that reconciliation was no longer possible (Campi 2018; Selderhuis 2016). Catholics closed ranks around the reaffirmation of the 'sound' faith. The doctrine on Scripture and traditions, grace and free will, and the seven sacraments was endorsed against the Protestant '*sola scriptura*', '*sola fide*', and '*sola gratia*', in addition to its limitation of the sacraments to baptism and Eucharist. The council re-emphasized the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, according to the scholastic theology of the 'conversion' or transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The Mass was also believed to be a re-enactment of Jesus' unique sacrifice on the cross, granting the merits it entailed for those participating in the sacrament. The council laid the basis for a eucharistic spirituality, which would be very characteristic of the post-Tridentine Church. Yet the council especially ignored issues with regard to ecclesiology and, particularly, the pope's position in the Church (Bireley 1999: 57).

In addition to drawing doctrinal distinctions, the council took measures for a genuine reform of the Church and an elimination of so-called abuses. It stressed the role of bishops and parish priests as pastors, who should reside in the place where they had their ministry assigned (and the incomes generated), and who were expected to teach, preach, and take care of their flock. Measures relating to the reform and renewal of the bishops' ministry caused a paradigm shift and were amongst the most far-reaching measures of the Council of Trent, although they were not implemented to the same extent across the various regions of Europe (Bergin 1999; also Becker 2016). Yet the council did not fully address the reform of the Roman curia and devoted only scarce attention to the newly established religious orders and confraternities. It did not show particular interest in the missionary efforts across the seas, let alone the precarious position of the indigenous people of the Americas.

4 The implementation of Trent's insights

4.1 The Roman papacy and 'tridentinism'

Robert Bireley was quite outspoken when he wrote that 'the papacy immediately threw itself behind the implementation of the council' (Bireley 1999: 57). Several texts and measures that the popes and the Roman curia promulgated in the wake of Trent and that appealed to the council's authority are manifestations of what has been called 'Tridentinism' (in Italian '*Tridentinismo*', in German '*Tridentinismus*'). It more specifically evokes the idea of a papacy assisted by the Roma curia which 'succeeded in controlling the council's interpretation and augmenting its own status within the Church. The result was growing prestige and an increasing centralization in Rome' (Bireley 1999: 57–58 [quotation]; Minnich 2023b: 19–21; O'Malley 2013: 260–275).

Following the request of the council itself, Pope Pius IV confirmed all the conciliar decrees by the bull Benedictus Deus (1564), restricting the right of interpretation to the pope and forbidding the printing of commentaries or notes on them without explicit permission of the Holy See. In August 1564, Pius IV even appointed a committee of eight cardinals, chaired by Morone, to oversee its interpretation and centralize it in Rome. This laid the foundations of the Roman Congregation of the Council that was officially established by Pius V the year after. It would have to pronounce about delicate post-Tridentine questions, such as dispensations of episcopal residence, marriage impediments, or religious vows, amongst other issues (Wiesner 2022: 213–445; Meloni 2018). The same pope published a new Index of Forbidden Books (March 1564), which was prepared during the council by a committee of Council fathers, in order to substitute for the severe Index promulgated by Paul IV (De Bujanda 1991; Frajese 1998). Work on the Index would later be institutionalized in the Congregation of the Index (established in 1571, under Pius V). In November 1564, a Tridentine Confession of Faith was promulgated, summarizing the doctrinal decrees of Trent, as a response to the Protestant confessions of faith (Borromeo 2023).

Pius IV also began to deal with the issues that had been passed on to the pope. Apart from the publication of the Tridentine Index, he allowed the lay chalice in most German regions, although it fell into disuse after some time. Regarding clerical celibacy, the Council fathers were inclined to reaffirm the old regulations against married priests and a priori against clerics living in concubinage, although the Emperor Ferdinand, and later his son Maximilian II, as well as Albrecht of Bavaria continued to claim for their realms a relaxation of the discipline of celibacy. Pius IV was open and inquisitive, and one year after the conclusion of the council, in January 1565, he appointed a group of cardinals to decide on the matter. Philip II, however, was clearly in favour of maintaining the priests' celibacy. The next pope, Pius V, closed the door on any possible relaxation of celibacy (O'Malley 2013: 252–253).

Pope (Saint) Pius V (r. 1566–72) published the new Catechism in 1566 that was ordered by the Council fathers at Trent. It was a large catechism, destined for priests and preachers. It was strikingly more moderate – and less polemically anti-Protestant – than the catechism of the German Jesuit Peter Canisius, the most popular catechism at that moment (Rodríguez and Adeva 1989; Rodríguez and Lanzetti 1982; Bellinger 1970; 1987; also Wandel 2016: 26–27). Pius V also issued a new version of the Breviary (1568) and of the Roman Missal (1570). Both were imposed on all churches and religious orders who could not claim a distinct liturgical tradition of 200 years or older. For the supervision over the implementation of the Roman liturgy, the Congregation of the Holy Rites would later be established (in 1588, under Pope Sixtus V) (Geldhof 2018; 2012; Kranemann 2016). Pius V also made the Inquisition more effective and encouraged a relentless persecution

of ‘heretics’. He succeeded in eliminating Protestantism in Italy. Right doctrine was now guarded by both the Congregation of the Inquisition and the Congregation of the Index. Under Pius V, the papal court became a model of sobriety and the town of Rome an example for Christianity – comparable to Borromeo’s Milan and even Calvin’s Geneva. Prostitutes were expelled from the Holy City, and Sunday profanation was severely punished. Pius V confirmed priestly celibacy, in line with Trent's modest affirmation of the old regulations in that regard, and against the German princes' lobbying for the admission of married priests.

Gregory XIII (r. 1572–85) changed the mission of papal nuncios: instead of papal legates with an ad hoc mission, they received a permanent assignment, which was not restricted to political matters but also included the local implementation of Tridentine reform. Gregory’s special concern in this regard was Germany (Koller 2016).

His successor Sixtus V (r. 1585–90) issued new protocols for the periodic visits to Rome of bishops from around the world (ad limina apostolorum), bringing with them a report on the state of their dioceses. This proved to be extremely important for the implementation of the Catholic reform. Sixtus V also issued as a rule that provincial councils, which were held everywhere in the Catholic world to implement the council, submit their decisions and decrees to the Congregation of the Council for approval. A former professor of canon law, he believed in institutional reform. He restructured the Roman curia in 1588. He reorganized or created fifteen ‘congregations’, permanent committees of cardinals, six to oversee the government of the Papal States and nine to supervise spiritual affairs. ‘The nine included the Congregations of the Inquisition, the Index, the Council, and Bishops, all of which already existed, as well as Congregations for Regulars or Religious, for the Consistory of Cardinals, for the Signatura Gratiae, which granted papal dispensations, for the Rites, and for the Vatican Printing Press, which Sixtus created to give the papacy its own publication organ’. A thorough reform of the Roman curia, however, did not come to pass: although the lives of popes and cardinals in Rome became far less scandalous, at least since the reign of Paul IV, ‘residence requirements were often waived for papal officials’, e.g. cardinals and nuncios who were bishops, and nepotism and patronage persisted, at least until the end of the seventeenth century (comp. Bireley 1999: 63–64).

Pope Clement VIII (r. 1592–1605) published the official edition of the revised Latin Vulgate Bible, finally giving execution to a request already formulated at Trent’s Fourth Session (8 April 1546; Delville 2008: 79–80). Pope Paul V (r. 1605–21) eventually compiled into fifty volumes all the materials linked to the council and deposited them in the Vatican Archives under the title fondo Concilio. To Rome’s monopoly on interpretation was now added a restriction on access to the archives. In other words, keeping away the council’s archives from further – let alone critical – study, sealed Rome’s attempts to monopolize the interpretation of its decrees. This embargo remained in effect for about three hundred

years, and was only lifted in 1880, when Pope Leo XIII opened the Vatican Archives. It was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the Görres Gesellschaft started to publish the council's acts and thus laid the foundation for writing a critical history (Minnich 2023b: 22; O'Malley 2013: 267).

Paul V can be considered the first pope of the Baroque era: he considered the monumental Baroque style as well suited to express the élan of a revived Catholicism, the restored papacy, and eventually of the Church triumphant. He completed the Basilica of Saint Peter, started by Julius II.

4.2 Charles Borromeo and the bishops' implementation of the conciliar decrees

The reform or renewal of the Catholic Church was, more than the work of the popes, the work of bishops. Many of them got their inspiration at the council. Their nomination or approval by the pope was since the days of Gregory XIII better controlled. And although abuses of 'pluralism' (holding several benefices), nepotism, and scandalous moral lifestyle persisted here and there, the quality of episcopal nominations generally and continuously improved throughout the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. The new obligations imposed upon bishops by the council, viz. residence, pastoral visits, holding synods, and by the popes, viz. reporting to Rome, stimulated them in the renewal of their diocese, but also sometimes gave the impression that they were acting not on their own, but merely as a representative of the pope.

Charles Borromeo (1538–84) was a nephew of Pius IV who was made cardinal at the age of 22 in 1560, but underwent a kind of conversion after the death of his brother in 1562. He left the papal court for his archdiocese of Milan in 1565, which had not seen an archbishop taking effective residence for decades. There he diligently introduced the reform measures decreed by the council of Trent. He conducted six provincial councils and eleven diocesan synods. 'Pastors in every nook and valley of his jurisdiction experienced his visitation'. He established a diocesan seminary. The Jesuits, the Theatines, and the Ursulines all settled in Milan at his invitation, mainly in order to rule new schools. He founded his own diocesan congregation of Oblates, and encouraged the catechetical endeavours of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, which had its origins in the 1530s (comp. here Bireley 1999: 61). He imposed strict observation of the rule on convents and abbeys, and watched especially over seclusion in female monasteries. According to the conviction that ecclesiastical reform had to go hand in a glove with personal sanctity, Borromeo was extremely austere for himself and very exigent for his clergy and the faithful. He promoted moral rigorism, personal prayer, as well as active charity, and always gave the example himself, e.g. on the occasion of an outbreak of plague, when he paid visits to the plague-struck houses and comforted the sufferers. The means he used to implement the Tridentine reform were

copied by most other bishops of the Catholic Reformation. The decrees of his councils and synods, together with his instructions, were published as the Acts of the Milanese Church or Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis (1582) and often reprinted. They were used as a source of inspiration for other bishops everywhere in the Catholic world. The work became part of the canon of authoritative texts interpreting the Council of Trent. Earlier, in 1577, Borromeo had also published his Instructiones Fabricae et Supellectilis Ecclesiasticae or the Instructions on the Church Buildings and Furnishings, which had an equal influence on the material culture of Catholic churches, introducing the tabernacle placed at the centre of the main altar and placing confessionals along the interior church walls, amongst others. Charles Borromeo was canonized by Paul V in 1620 (Zardin 2010; Alberigo 1995).

Post-Tridentine Catholicism was rigid in faith and morals, and powerfully controlled by the hierarchy consisting of celibate men – the kind of Church that evoked opposition as the twentieth century advanced. But it was at the same time a sensuous confession, manifesting itself in beautiful architecture, sculpture, and painting, and in often eye-catching liturgies, with beautiful vestments, incense, and where possible polyphonic music. Post-Tridentine Catholicism was also a grassroots religion, organized in parishes where the local priest celebrated and administered the sacraments, especially nurturing a eucharistic spirituality, and educated, admonished, and comforted his flock.

Attributions

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